

**Teaching**



**CHINESE**

**Arts &**



**Culture**

**Content, Context, and Pedagogy**

Main Editor:  
**Kevin Hsieh**

Co-Editors:  
**Yichien Cooper & Lilly Lu**

**INSEA**  
PUBLICATIONS



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### **Main editor**

Kevin Hsieh

### **Co-editors**

Yichien Cooper and Lilly Lu

### **Cover design and layout**

Ran (Cathy) Qi

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Quinta da Cruz

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*Teaching  
Chinese Arts & Culture:  
Content, Context, and Pedagogy*







## Acknowledgements

*Teaching Chinese Arts & Culture* was initiated by Kevin, who approached Yichien and Lilly with a collaborative book project in 2019. Combining our interests and expertise in pedagogical applications in Chinese art history, calligraphy, and Chinese paintings (Kevin), Chinese and Taiwanese art history (Yichien), and multicultural art education (Lilly), we provide meaningful representations in teaching Chinese arts and culture relevant to the 21st century. Through the collective effort, we build strength to weather physical isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic and emotional downfalls caused by vicious racial attacks against Asians around the world.

We would like to express our gratitude to those who helped made this book possible. First, to the International Society of Education Through Art (InSEA)'s support in publishing this book. Thanks to the authors who contributed to this book. Their collective wisdom and experiences in teaching and learning remind us why practicing authentic, socially-responsive, and culturally appropriate art education transcends cultural, political, and social boundaries. We are in debt to Dr. Doug Blandy, Dr. Alice Lai, Dr. Melody Milbrandt, and Dr. Enid Zimmerman, who provided valuable feedback to fine tune our vision. To Dr. Glen Coutts, Dr. Doug Blandy, and Dr. Teresa Eça who wrote forewords for this publication. To Ran (Cathy) Qi, a Ph.D. candidate from the University of Arizona, who helped design the book layout and cover. To Ms. Hazel Hunley and Dr. Jayme Harpring Pekins, who edited and proofread the manuscripts. Without their time and assistance, we will not be able to complete this project.

Finally, we wish to dedicate this book to our families for their unconditional support.

Kevin, Yichien, and Lilly





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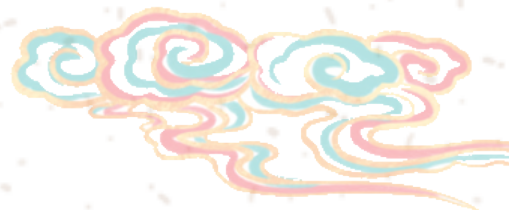
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## Foreword I

By

Glen Coutts  
Professor

University of Lapland, Finland

It is a great honour to be invited to write a short foreword for this important and timely book on Chinese arts and culture. My own background could not be further from Chinese arts and culture. I had a distinctly working-class schooling in a Western European canon of education with an emphasis on the ‘basics’ of literacy, numeracy, science, and mathematics. Luckily for me, there was also a traditional, yet vibrant art department. That education served well enough to enter art college and, eventually, a career in education. I don’t recall much in the way of “multicultural education” unless you count a poster of Paris in the French language class or the mysterious, captivating maps of countries in geography. For me, as a child growing up in Glasgow, the dark side of the moon was more familiar than Chinese arts and culture. Happily, a long career in art and education has given me opportunities that I could never have dreamed of, to read and explore the arts and cultures of many civilizations; the chance to travel and gain insights to the arts, cultures, and lands of people I thought I would never see.

A great privilege of being the President of the *International Society for Education through Art* (InSEA) is that I meet with artists, educators, and scholars from almost every continent. Learning about various ways in which artist-educators are using culturally sensitive and carefully contextualised learning opportunities in schools, colleges, museums, and communities around the world is as energizing as it is enlightening. InSEA is a global community of art educators; our members collaborate across the world to develop models of art education that embrace and respect diverse cultural values and traditions. It is through the global community of InSEA that the editors of this book began to work together on this volume. Editors Kevin Hsieh, Yichien Cooper, and Lilly Lu are well-known and highly respected international scholars in the field of art education. In this wonderful book, they present a fascinating insight to the pedagogical potential of Chinese arts and culture. The editors have brought together an outstanding collection of experts who deftly explore the complex interrelationship of historical context, culture, and arts of China by focusing on topics ranging from traditional painting, ceramics, and new media. For art educators, each chapter offers practical strategies that can be adopted or adapted by educators for teaching non-western visual art and culture.

The 19 chapters collected in this book are organized into two sections: *Teaching Chinese Arts and Culture with Multimodalities* (Section I) and *Teaching Chinese Arts and Culture with a Historical Context* (Section II). All authors are recognized art education scholars and experienced art educators with a passion for teaching arts and culture. Their depth of experience shines through

## FOREWORD I

in every essay. Each chapter offers a window into possible ways of working that any art educator will find accessible and motivating. More importantly, readers will find this book a rich source of inspiration. I am sure, once read, you will want to adopt, explore, or adapt the strategies for your own teaching practice. Moreover, you will want to return to it again and again.

A key aim of this book is to promote a culturally sensitive and engaging curriculum in art that encourages learners to explore, respect, and celebrate their own multifaceted cultural traditions as well as value those of others. The book will be of interest to a wide audience including, for example, K-12 school teachers, artists, designers, art educators, researchers, and cultural historians in addition to those with a general interest, like me, in Chinese arts and culture.

This book deserves a place on your bookshelf.



## Foreword II

By

Doug Blandy  
University of Oregon

In 2007 I was introduced to Zhang Yi Gui, a woman in her eighties, living in a traditional earthen-block house in rural Quan Bei Village in China's Shandong Province. I was introduced to Zhang Yi Gui while doing collaborative field work with scholars associated with Shandong University of Art and Design's Folk Art Research Institute. In her village Zhang Yi Gui was known for embroidering traditional baby shoes. Embroidered flowers for girls and embroidered tigers for boys. Based on my experience in the United States (US) I did not expect to find such a large teaching collection of folk art associated with an art and design school. Over the course of my work in China I discovered other art and design schools, such as the Central Academy of Fine Art in Beijing, with similar teaching collections.

Listening to Zhang Yi Gui's story I could not help but be cognizant that over the course of Zhang Yi Gui's life she witnessed multiple cultural, social, and political changes in China. Born not long after the abdication of the last Qing emperor, she saw the rise of the Communist party, the Japanese occupation of China from 1931 to 1945, a civil war, famine, the Cultural Revolution, and the global recognition of China's growing economic and cultural influence.

From 2007 through 2019 I co-directed, with Kristin Congdon, a project associated with the documentation and interpretation of China's cultural heritage. This project, titled *ChinaVine*, had as its mission to educate English-speaking/reading children, youth, and adults about China's cultural heritage. This project, first initiated in partnership with Shandong University of Art and Design's Folk Art Research Institute, was based on a collaborative methodology, including extensive fieldwork, in which scholars in Art Education and Folklore from China and the US co-created content for the project's website. It was within the context of this project that I met Zhang Yi Gui. The project would expand significantly over the next twelve years to include additional Chinese and US scholars engaged in collaborative field work in Beijing, Shanghai, Hangzhou; in rural Guizhou, Inner Mongolia, and Yunnan provinces; and the Garzê Tibetan Autonomous Prefecture in Sichuan province. The scholars associated with the project were careful to include examples from among China's fifty-six ethnic groups. While initially focused on the traditional arts such as embroidered shoes, papercuts, dough toys, puppets, kites, jewelry, clothing, paintings, and New Year woodblock prints, the project expanded to include contemporary art informed by tradition. In this regard extensive field work was conducted in the former farmers' village of Songzhuang, located east of Beijing, that was rapidly transforming into a contemporary artists village.

The course of Zhang Yi Gui's life, like the history of the region that currently constitutes the geo-political boundaries of China is long and complex. From my Chinese colleagues I learned that within this larger history of China, as early as the Western Zhou Dynasty (1046 – 771 BC), the importance of respecting culture resulted in the establishment of ministries to collect and preserve local culture such as poetry, folk songs, and musical instruments. During the Han (202 BC – 220 AD) Dynasty, Yuefu was established as a music institution to collect songs and poetry. The *Yongle Encyclopedia*, published during the Ming Dynasty (1368 – 1644) included numerous entries associated with culture. The *Siku Quanshu* [四庫全書], published during the Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1912), compiled a record of the history of China including a history of the region's culture including myths, legends, allegories, and folk songs among many other examples. In the early twentieth century, Chinese scholars published a series of studies that documented China's cultural heritage. Peking University, Sun Yat-Sen University, Xiamen University, and Hangzhou University established institutes for collecting and preserving folk literature. After the founding of *new China* in 1949, the Institute of the Folk Literature and Art and Folklore Society were established in Chinese provinces, municipalities, and autonomous regions. Following China's Cultural Revolution, many folklore institutes and college programs were founded or reestablished.

I did not bring to *ChinaVine* the ability to read Chinese or speak Mandarin or Cantonese. However, the other US scholars and I associated with *ChinaVine* recognized the importance of China's cultural heritage internationally and within the US beginning in the early nineteenth century with the immigration of Chinese laborers. Informing our work was the work of Ann Kuo, a Taiwanese art educator, as well as the students and scholars associated with her initiatives. However, limiting our work was a less than extensive treatment of mainland China's cultural heritage and pedagogical strategies available in English and by authors of Chinese descent.

This brings me to the significance of *Teaching Chinese Arts & Culture: Content, Context, and Pedagogy*. This volume, expertly edited by Kevin Hsieh, Yichien Cooper and Lilly Lu, consists of a rich array of chapters authored largely by authors of Chinese descent. I view this book as the most recent contribution to the trajectory of efforts described above to document, honor and respect an internationally important and influential heritage.

In their scholarly introduction, the editors provide a contextual primer of China's history and culture that supports the chapters that follow. The editors argue persuasively for the importance of a multicultural art education generally and the inclusion of Chinese cultural examples specifically. Hsieh, Lu, and Cooper introduce readers to the unique features of Chinese arts and culture such as storytelling and narrative; symbolic meanings; the role of imagination and creativity; interdisciplinary connections; and given China's long history the interrelationships between China's arts and culture with larger political and socio-cultural events. From this introduction follow chapters that consider multiple arts and cultural forms such as traditional and contemporary calligraphy; ritual bronzes; literati painting; seals; papercutting (traditional and contemporary), clothing; puppetry; and the contemporary visual arts. Impressive are the pedagogical strategies that the authors advocate including autoethnography, play, and rhizomatic learning among others.

*Teaching Chinese Arts & Culture: Content, Context, and Pedagogy* is scholarly and

directly applicable to a breadth of educational settings including schools, museums, and community arts centers. It is the first book of its kind, published in English, that deals extensively with Chinese art and culture within an art educational context. I am confident that this publication, along with the establishment in 2017 of the Asian Art and Culture Interest Group (AACIG) within the National Art Education Association (NAEA), will be recognized as historically significant. I am equally confident that initiatives such as these resist, and educationally mitigate, current racist, xenophobic, nativist, and deadly anti-Asian attacks within the US and elsewhere.

I encourage readers to engage *Teaching Chinese Arts & Culture: Content, Context, and Pedagogy* with curiosity. Doing so will encourage a desire to know more; discover objects and cultural processes previously unknown or unappreciated; and discover local examples of how Chinese art and culture is historically and contemporaneously influential.



### Foreword III

By

Teresa Torres de Eça  
InSEA Past-President

In the last decade of the twenty century, several scholars helped to broaden the way that art was taught (Barbosa, 2007; Chalmers, 1996; Mason & Boughton, 1999), they drew attention to the need to accept and respect the co-equality of fundamentally different frames of thought and action characteristic of diverse cultures. Since then great debates about multicultural; intercultural and cross cultural concepts had been located in the educational spheres. Social researchers, curriculum developers, and teachers are now more aware about the multicultural aspects of the societies and have taken postcolonial positions (Mignolo, 2007; Santos, 2007; Sandoval, 2016) towards views of multiculturalism or interculturalism highlighting asymmetries of power between dominant and non-hegemonic cultures; envisaging multi-layered dialogues in-between spaces as a map for elaborating strategies of self-hood.

As a response to this shift, pluriversal thinking changed the arts and cultures' scenarios in the postmodernity, arts objects from very different geolocations are now more visible in museums, galleries and in school arts education curriculum. The recognition of the value of the cultures of the others, as well as understanding contexts of tension and change, have challenged previous epistemologies and leading to a “world where many worlds exist” (Mignolo, 2007, p. 499), making possibilities for an intercultural society, where everyone learns from one another and grows together as an ecology of knowledge. Our human condition is, and has always been, characterized by mobility; migrations and communication. It is, therefore, important for educators, to understand that each person will be changed in the confluency of the different cultures, and the self-hood will be constructed in this interaction. Understanding the arts and its contexts from very different countries and preserving cultural diversity, as been a central concern in InSEA (InSEA, 2018) and UNESCO (UNESCO, 2010). As stated in the 2021 UNESCO report, education through art inspires knowledge, appreciation, and creation of culture:

Thinking and making through the arts provides new languages and means through which to make sense of the world, engage in cultural critique, and take political action. (UNESCO, 2021, p. 73)

But to be able to instill arts from different countries in the curriculum, educators need to have informed resources not only describing arts and cultures but also analyzing through critical pedagogy the very different contexts where arts have been produced; recognized and used for its different purposes. This book is welcomed because it brings to the art education community of practitioners another lens to understand how arts and cultures from China are approached by art

educators in China, Taiwan, and the United States, in relation to content, context, and pedagogy. The editors Kevin Hsieh, Yichien Cooper, and Lilly Lu collected an impressive array of testimonies supporting cultural pluralism and social equity through multimodal pedagogies and art education examples of Chinese art aesthetics and appreciation.

The book includes chapters that help readers to understand not only Chinese arts and cultures within its historical context and insights about the complex Chinese dynasty system, but also helping to examine Chinese artworks within their historical and cultural contexts, and reflect on the ideology of the time of its production and the time and places of its public appreciation.

Chinese arts and cultures through history and at present times are part of our global cultural inheritance, presenting systems of human knowledge and living with others and with nature, thus a book like this one is a gift for readers to better understand the global social-cultural tensions underlying its social representation.

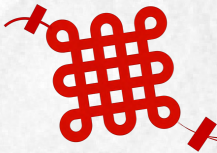
We also need to bear in our minds, that this book is also a tribute to the Chinese diaspora, including trans-cultural voices from Chinese immigrants and its descendants, embracing the stories of Chinese artists with a multi-ethnic or mixed-race identity. Their in-between cultural experiences are points of reflection for educators to raise questions with learners about how their own cultural identities are inherited and constantly reconstructed in contact with others.

The book, in its own way contributes to the ecologies of knowledge, by making visible art educators' narratives about how Chinese cultures have changed their system of thinking, and appreciating the arts. Scholars from Chinese and non-Chinese cultural backgrounds offer to us in this fantastic publication, their unique views about Chinese traditional and contemporary arts and crafts and how they try to establish its representation in educational settings and school curricula.

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Teaching Chinese Arts & Culture: Content, Context, and Pedagogy**

Kevin Hsieh

Yichien Cooper

Lilly Lu

Over the past three decades, art education has become more inclusive. From modernism to post-modernism (Efland et al., 1996; Grieder, 1985; Miles, 2006), from Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE) (Dobbs, 1992; 2004) to Visual Culture Art Education (VCAE) (Duncum, 2006; Eca & Mason, 2008; Stankiewicz, 2004), from creative expression (Bastos & Zimmerman, 2015) to socio-cultural responsive creation (Buffington & Waldner, 2012; Chung & Li, 2020), the scope and content of visual arts curricula in the United States reflect a more diverse range of ethnicities and cultures than ever before. Many art educators have long advocated for the importance of multicultural art education (Delacruz et al., 2009; Efland et al., 1996; Young, 1990). Through it, learners are exposed to the notion that all art and artifacts should be understood in light of the culture from which they originated. A culturally sensitive and responsive art curriculum empowers learners to respect and appreciate their own cultural traditions and values as well as those of others, thus helping to prevent inappropriate use or appropriation of artworks.

As Efland et al. (1996) noted, multicultural content “is not merely taught to enable individuals to acquire knowledge and understanding of art for its own sake but to change social relationships” (p. 14). Indeed, multicultural art education has many potential impacts; it can help learners build connections between cultures, connect knowledge and appreciation, foster respect for others’ cultural practices (Hsieh, 2017), and both shape and construct contemporary culture. Further, disregarding the cultural and social contexts of non-Western artistic practices poses the danger of redefining such art from a singularly Eurocentric perspective. This viewpoint inappropriately interprets cultural symbols or even perpetuates ethnic stereotypes (Chung, 2012). Moreover, as art educators move toward culturally responsive teaching and learning they should

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remain aware that “cultural appropriation is not always a pure representation of another culture but a tangled representation of political, economic, globalized, and cultural hegemony” (Han, 2019, p. 12).

Although the value of multiculturalism is now commonly acknowledged by art educators, such efforts are fragmented. Art education involving Chinese arts and culture, for example, typically reflects a disconnect between content, context, pedagogy, and practice—despite the abundant resources available to facilitate such instruction. This phenomenon increases the risk of misunderstanding, misinterpretation, and appropriation of Chinese arts and cultures. Thus comes the motivation for the question underlying this collection: “How can art teachers introduce Chinese arts and culture in ways that are meaningful and relevant in our challenging times?”

This introduction offers an overview of the development of multicultural art education in the United States, followed by a description of five unique features of Chinese arts and culture and their potential connections to art education practices. Each chapter begins with the historical context of the Chinese arts and culture it concerns. In the final section we offer our thoughts and reflections after editing this volume in the hope of extracting some essential knowledge about multicultural art education, and the teaching of Chinese arts and culture in the United States.

### **Multicultural Art Education in the United States**

Educators today face increasing challenges while preparing students from diverse cultural groups to live in a rapidly changing world. One challenge relates to providing equal and appropriate cultural representation in school curricula. In the United States, students of color (African, Latinx, and Asian American) account for three-fourths of students in many of the nation’s largest school districts (Sable et al., 2010). They are projected to represent 55% of the elementary and secondary public-school populations in the nation by 2027 (Synder et al., 2019). Some communities are questioning school curricula because families of minority students do not see their cultures and values represented fully or accurately (Desai, 2000; Gollnick & Chinn, 2016). Students of color, including Chinese Americans, have typically been taught to assimilate into the dominant culture in schools, which primarily centers on white middle-class students; this gives students of color few opportunities to learn about their own native cultural identities from school curricula. Art as a medium and a tool has great potential and power to address such challenges as omissions or limited cultural representations in schools. Art education has greatly contributed to ongoing multicultural educational reform. Art educators bring world arts and cultures into classrooms for students to explore and compare their own and others’ cultures; they also help students address and advocate for equality and social justice in their artistic practices. Multicultural art education supports cultural pluralism, provides all students with equal power to maintain their unique cultural identities, and encourages them to express their concerns and address socio-cultural issues through their art within a dominant culture.

### **Multicultural Art Education in the United States**

Art educators have been implementing multiculturalism in their teaching practices over the last three decades. In the 1980s, many art educators introduced and incorporated art from other world cultures into their classrooms. Wasson et al. (1990) proposed that six multicultural

positions<sup>1</sup> that are grounded in socio-anthropological perspectives should function as multicultural art curricula guidelines and strategies. In the 1990s, Stuhr (1994) observed that art educators had adopted Sleeter and Grant's (1987) five multicultural education approaches in their practices. These approaches focus on the following: 1) exceptional and cultural differences that equip all students with core values, skills, and information in the dominant artistic culture in the United States; 2) human relations that promote group identity and pride for students of color and eliminate stereotypes, prejudices, and biases; 3) individual cultural group studies that emphasize awareness and acceptance of and respect for the studied group in the dominant culture; 4) cultural democracy that furthers cultural pluralism and social equity through the comparison of similarities and differences between cultural groups; and 5) social reconstruction that encourages cultural diversity, challenges social inequality, and addresses socio-cultural issues. All approaches except the first one support cultural pluralism and social equity. Both the cultural democracy and social reconstruction approaches confront and challenge the dominant power and knowledge structures that have produced social inequities in the educational system.

Many art educators have practiced multicultural art approaches with different emphases. Mason (1999) echoed Stuhr (1994) by recognizing cultural democracy and social reconstruction as the driving forces for multicultural art curricula in the 1990s in the US. Some art educators have continuously promoted cultural pluralism (Dilger, 1994; Chalmers, 1996; Kindler, 1994; Katter, 1995; Lovano-Kerr, 1990; Hoffman & Chalmers 1997) by incorporating the arts of ethnic minorities while others have advocated for social reconstruction through artistic practices (Stuhr, 1994; Chalmers, 2002; Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001). Billings (1995) discussed thematic and issued-oriented approaches and their different aims and emphases (diverse cultural traditions vs. political changes) as pedagogical choices in art classrooms. Based on their practices, many art educators have developed practical curriculum guidelines and strategies for implementing multicultural art curricula (Zimmerman, 1990; Stuhr et al., 1992). They have presented their insights and discussed trends and issues that extend beyond multicultural art education from international perspectives (Boughton & Mason, 1999). These practices remain influential and are widely implemented in art classrooms today. To respond to societal and global changes in the 2000s, several art educators emphasized the arts of emerging subcultural groups (Chen, 2007; Manifold, 2009; 2012; Wu, 2016). Recently, many art educators have introduced contemporary methods such as online pedagogy, globalization, postmodern aspects, and writing and dialogue for cultural understanding (Lai & Ball, 2004; Desai, 2005; Millman, 2010). They have also collected new ideas, practical pedagogies, and rich resources in their anthologies (Delacruz et al, 2009; Joo et al., 2011; Manifold et al., 2016; Shin, et al., 2017) to integrate multicultural art into contemporary classrooms.

The concept of multiculturalism has evolved and expanded in art education due to ongoing debates that span decades. Several related notions and terms—such as “community-based,” “global,” and “intercultural art education”—have emerged over the years and served as effective approaches<sup>2</sup> that have been implemented in contemporary art education classrooms (see Chapter 1). Depending on the social, political, and economic conditions of communities, states, and the nation, school curricula are always in a state of flux and are open to changes (Stuhr,

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<sup>1</sup> See the position statements in details in Wasson, Stuhr, & Petrovich-Mwaniki's (1990) article.

<sup>2</sup> Zimmerman provides a framework and guidelines for implementing community-based, global, and intercultural approaches in her chapter in this book.



## INTRODUCTION

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1994). When considering changing needs of students and the community, many art educators take on the challenge of constantly customizing their multicultural art curricula to address these conditions, choose appropriate orientations, approaches, and strategies to maximize student learning, and meet their goals and objectives in practice. However, very few practical guidelines and lesson examples that provide overall considerations for these approaches are available in the art education field, particularly for teaching Chinese arts and culture. Another current challenge that multicultural art educators often face concerns how to teach and learn about others' art and cultures without introducing misrepresentation or cultural misappropriation. Culture defines who we are by influencing our knowledge, beliefs, and values; it also determines how we think, feel, and behave. As points of reference for judgment, our native cultures may prevent us from understanding others' cultures. It is not easy to understand commonalities and differences between others' cultures and ours if we have never lived in, interacted with, or been otherwise exposed to those cultures. In practice, art educators may readily teach the art and culture of a particular cultural group from their own historical, social, cultural, and political contexts—or reinforce stereotypes about a cultural tradition that they perceive through their own cultural lenses. Thus, teaching resources that focus on a specific culture (e.g., Chinese arts and culture) and its essential contexts are needed in contemporary multicultural art education practices.

Our aim in this book is to offer a teaching resource for art educators interested in teaching about Chinese arts and culture. The authors, who include native Chinese and American art educators, share their course content and ways of teaching Chinese arts and culture within various classroom conditions in China, Taiwan, and the United States, and with Chinese, Chinese-American, non-Chinese, and other students. These art educators discuss and analyze art education theories they have implemented and provide examples of curricula, pedagogies, contexts, and student projects on a variety of topics related to ancient and contemporary Chinese arts and culture. This chapter serves as a foundation for these varied theoretical understandings and practices by highlighting the unique features of Chinese arts and culture, describing the organization of the book, and providing a sketch of each chapter within its historical context.

### **Unique Features of Chinese Arts and Culture**

Developed over the course of more than five-thousand years, Chinese arts and culture is rich and fascinating. For K-16 art educators, the huge variety of artifacts and objects provides many great resources for inspiring for K-16 learners. Further, the particular characteristics and inter-disciplinary features of Chinese arts and culture offer K-16 learners other benefits, such as promoting culture appreciation and culture competency. In the following sections, we describe five common aspects of Chinese arts and culture (storytelling and narrative, symbolic meanings, imagination and creativity, interdisciplinary connections, and interrelationships between political and socio-cultural domains) to facilitate the ability of K-16 art educators to incorporate Chinese arts and culture into their visual art teaching practices.

### **Storytelling and Narrative**

Especially before the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), mythological stories and folktales (Fa, 2016) were integral parts of the evolution of ancient Chinese civilization. Tales about the creation of the Chinese dragon and its symbols of nine different tribes, Nuwa's [女媧] creation

of people from mud, and *Chang-er's* [嫦娥] flight to the moon to protect the common people from her unkind husband, were depicted in multiple forms of Chinese art, such as the Han dynasty-era T-shape burial banner, sculptures, and paintings. Stone rubbings from the Han dynasty also showed stories through visual images. Other art forms like cave paintings, inspired by Buddhism and murals of burial tombs, also presented stories and visual narratives of ancient China (Yang & Suchan, 2012).

In addition to such artifacts, performance art, such as opera, classic literature, and hand puppetry (Wang & Wang, 2012; Yang, 2012), embraced a narrative continuity. The stories that art contains, such as the Monkey King accompanying a monk to the West to seek Buddhist Sutras, speak to other Chinese cultural values. In contemporary Chinese arts and culture, the same attraction to storytelling and narrative can be seen in works by ZHANG Xiaogang [張曉剛], ZENG Fanzhi [曾梵志], and Zhi LIN [林志].

### Symbolic Meanings

Symbols related to important threads in Chinese culture are embedded in much Chinese art, from historical artifacts to contemporary conceptual works. Silbergeld and Wang (2016) shared two examples of typical zoomorphic or anthropomorphic metaphors in Chinese arts and culture when they observed, “the first emperor was famously said to have had the heart of a tiger and a wolf” and “the names of foreign tribes were traditionally written with characters that included animal radicals” (p. 3). Fung (2012) observed that symbols on burial objects “generate metaphoric associations for human fantasies” (p. 174). Such Chinese *mingqi* [冥器] (burial objects) express fundamental Chinese values like “security, fortune, prosperity, longevity” (p. 174). Traditional Chinese arts and culture, then, can be a source by which students can learn to analyze (Miller, 2012) and decode symbolic meanings, both generally and in specific relation to China.

Contemporary Chinese art has inherited this approach to delivering symbolic meanings about Chinese culture in ways that are traditional, inventive, or revolutionary. Wang (2012) noted, for example, that the works of contemporary Chinese artist CAI<sup>3</sup> Guo-Qiang<sup>4</sup> [蔡國強] “are based on traditional Chinese philosophies, historical events, symbols, and allegories, which involve a very comprehensive way of looking at things and considering different aspects of life” (p. 209). The tools and techniques used in creating Chinese arts and culture have symbolic meanings. Brushes and ways of using them, for instance, have particular significance. In describing the brush techniques used to paint the textures of landscape elements such as mountains, trees, rocks, and rivers, Fong and Watt (1996) observed,

[brushwork and texture patterns] are symbolic concepts and represent cultural values. Round brush, for example, suggests spiritual harmony; it is strong and restrained, and

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<sup>3</sup> Some contemporary Chinese artists like XU Bing [徐冰] choose to list their last name first and their first name last. In this case, Xu is the artist's last name and Bing is the first name, the traditional Chinese order. Hence, to respect the artist's choice and avoid confusion for readers, we put the last name of all Chinese names in all capital letters in this book.

<sup>4</sup> Artist CAI's website can be accessed at <https://caiguoqiang.com>

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conceals its own brilliance. Pointed brushwork indicates precision and assiduity. Sparseness suggests frugality, and economy of means. (p. 31)

### Imagination and Creativity

The narrative and symbolic qualities of Chinese art are manifested through the creativity of the artist and experienced through the imagination of the viewer (Miller, 2012). In the Chinese literati painting of the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644 AD), artists expressed their inner self by attending to inner harmony and seeking to create a unification of self, nature, and others. Using incense, tea, and meditation, these artists opened their imaginations to different possibilities and then spontaneously created art. According to Yang (2015), such openness to the present moment reflects “the capacity and flexibility to deal with complexity and heterogeneity, as well as the ability to reconcile tensions in creating something new” (p. 280).

In contemporary Chinese arts and culture, artists simultaneously seek inspiration from the past and infuse their work with new thinking, thus breaking traditional canons grounded in the past and inventing artistic innovations. Among such artists are AI Wei Wei [艾未未] (see Chapter 16), QIAO Xiaoguang [喬曉光], Xin SONG [宋昕], XU Bing [徐冰] (see Chapter 14), and ZENG Fanzhi [曾梵志] (see Chapter 16). Their works reflect how contemporary Chinese artists have re-examined traditional art forms with new and socio-cultural aspects. Hence, centuries of Chinese arts and culture as well as contemporary interpretations can provide K-16 learners with abundant resources for expressing their imagination and creativity through their art.

### Interdisciplinary Connections

The aesthetics of Chinese art express a complex set of social, economic, and value systems that span centuries. As such, the study of Chinese arts and culture gives art educators the opportunity to help students make interdisciplinary connections between artworks and belief systems (Li, 2021), relationships with nature (Hsieh, 2009), technological inventions, and features of daily life, such as household items or furniture (Handler, 2001). From the end of the Shang to the start of the Zhou dynasty<sup>5</sup> (1300 – 771 BC), for example, bronze casting methods and lost-wax casting techniques allowed Chinese bronze workers to produce high-quality daily ritual vessels with multiple shapes and detailed relief motifs (Fung, 2012). During the Qin dynasty (221 – 210 BCE), the factory-like assembly line used to generate life-size terracotta<sup>6</sup> figures reflects exceptional quality control and detailed observation of human facial expressions. On the other hand, the international style characteristic of the Tang dynasty (618 – 907 AD) conveyed a celebratory and inviting tone, most likely resulting from the expansion of trade routes, frequent diplomatic missions, numerous conquests, and tributes. With the rise of individualists (or freelance scholars) who immersed themselves in artistic cultivations to escape the political turmoil of the Yuan dynasty (1272 – 1368 AD), the paintings of that era show the artists’ emotional expressions and symbolic criticism of political unrest.

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<sup>5</sup> Square Gui food container with Ya Chou emblem, bronze, late Shang to early Western Zhou period, 1300 - 771 BC: <https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04001040&lang=2>

<sup>6</sup> Emperor Qinshihuang’s Mausoleum site museum: <http://www.bmy.com.cn/2015new/bmyweb/show.html>



In the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644 AD), furniture and garden design focused on the human body and spiritual needs of individuals (Handler, 2001). The arts and crafts of the earlier Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912 AD) were more intricate; their complexity makes evident the artists' profound ability to blend aesthetics, functionality, and creativity. A typical example is a Qing-era treasure box, which<sup>7</sup> uses structural engineering and a complex mechanism designed to hide collectible treasures inside a box. Another form of aesthetic expression is the realism evident in late Qing decorative arts, two famous examples of which are the Jadeite Cabbages<sup>8</sup> [翠玉白菜] and the Meat-Shaped Stone<sup>9</sup> [肉形石]. Artists of the time used the materials on hand to accentuate visual representations of common objects and demonstrate their artistic skills, cleverness, and humor. Today, such objects can be a valuable resource for art educators who wish to guide learners to engage in design thinking, problem solving, and connection-making with other disciplines.

### Interrelationships with Political and Socio-Cultural Climates

Often, traditional Chinese landscape paintings did not merely depict real outdoor scenes. Artists, in many cases, used planned arrangements of landscape elements as political metaphors (Northern Song dynasty, 960 – 1127 AD) or criticism of imperial systems (Southern Song dynasty, 1127 – 1279 AD). When analyzing “Early Spring,” for instance, a work of one of the greatest Northern Song dynasty imperial painters, GUO Xi [郭熙],<sup>10</sup> viewers can easily see the arrangement of a central mountain in heavy dark ink flanked by several small mountains in light ink. As Hsieh (2009) pointed out, the “current explanation [of this composition and the values of the ink] is politically-oriented or imperial-related” (p. 59). In other words, the painting is a symbol of the Song court order and etiquette, specifically the injunction against secondary individuals (imperial officials) superseding the primary individual (the emperor). Further, traditional Chinese landscape paintings were intended to be looked into and not looked at. Their painters rejected the single-point perspective and instead adopted multiple perspectives, inviting viewers to travel among the arranged landscape elements and enjoy the mist and the sound of the waterfall. In order to fully appreciate Chinese landscape paintings, then, viewers would do well to use such contextual perspectives (Hsieh, 2009).

Many U.S. cultural institutions with significant Chinese art collections provide digital teaching resources. The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, for example, as well as the National Museum of Asian Art in Washington, DC, the Asian Art Museum in San Francisco, and the Asian Art Museum in Seattle, all provide various downloadable lesson plans and high definition 2D and 3D virtual image files for classroom use. In the same spirit, we hope this book gives readers a window into the diverse and creative pedagogies used by other art educators who incorporate Chinese arts and culture into their teaching practices. We recognize the challenge involved in covering almost 5,000 years of Chinese arts and culture in a single book.

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<sup>7</sup> Square Sandalwood Curio Case (containing 32 curios), Qianlong reign (1736-1795 AD), Qing dynasty: <https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04001112&lang=2>

<sup>8</sup> <https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04001080>

<sup>9</sup> <https://theme.npm.edu.tw/exh106/NorthandSouth-4/en/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> GUO Xi (KUO Hsi), Early Spring, hanging scroll, Northern Song dynasty, <https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000960&lang=2>



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Nevertheless, the 28 authors of the 19 chapters in this book present valuable insights and recommendations that reflect a variety of resources—Chinese historical artifacts, cultural heritage, and contemporary artworks by Chinese artists—that have not been fully developed for art curricula. We hope that the selected works and pedagogies described by these contributors stimulate new ways of teaching Chinese arts and culture in art classrooms outside of China. We encourage readers to adapt and modify these pedagogies to better meet the unique needs of their students and school curriculum requirements.

### **The Structure and Organization of the Chapters**

The 19 chapters of this book are organized into two sections: Teaching Chinese Arts and Culture with Multimodalities (Section I) and Teaching Chinese Arts and Culture with a Historical Context (Section II). Section I contains four chapters that describe various pedagogies, approaches, and modalities for teaching Chinese arts and culture in K-16 classrooms. The remaining 15 chapters of Section II are organized into 6 sub-sections that cover Chinese arts and culture through historical eras ranging from pre-1912 to post-1980.

### **Section One: Teaching Chinese Arts and Culture with Multiple Modalities**

Learning by imitation seems to be the norm throughout the history of Chinese art, with ink the predominant medium and copying from the masters the most effective method. In fact, two of the editors of this book (Hsieh and Cooper) used this method to learn calligraphy. As students they sought to master the basic strokes by copying various text styles of famous Chinese calligraphers. Most Chinese students begin to learn ink painting by following strict progressive methods for rendering brushstrokes that have been set by their instructors. Yet, new strategies and teaching concepts introduced by the West, which center on active student engagement and cultural responsibility, have challenged such traditional rote and authoritarian teaching methods.

The field of Chinese art and art history in the United States has become more dynamic over the past decades. This shift emerged from documentation and a connoisseurship-driven approach. In the 1990s, in addition to analyzing style, scholars began to explore the socioeconomic contexts of artworks and artists. In this same vein, art historians Fong and Watt (1996) emphasized “an interpretive rather than a positivistic approach to the study of cultural meaning” (p. 27). Art educators can use this approach to help K-16 learners who are not familiar with Chinese arts and culture to see how artifacts are analyzed within socio-cultural contexts, that is, by paying attention to the who, what, and how of their interpretation. Fong and Watt noted that the “interpretation [of Chinese art] also embraces the Chinese perception of the signifying practice of the image and its relation to the artist’s physical and psychic energy...to stimulate a response in the viewers” (p. 28). The image itself is seen as containing history, such that it often portends meanings and significance beyond what can be explained via documents, known interpretations, or re-interpretations. Hence, learning about what was known is just as important as what will be interpreted by historians, educators, or learners. Because there are various ways to guide learners to learn about Chinese arts and culture, we use the term “multimodality” to encourage art educators to use various pedagogies when teaching Chinese arts and culture. In Section I, the authors share some contemporary teaching approaches that can

be used to guide learners in understanding, exploring, describing, reinterpreting, and constructing knowledge of Chinese arts and culture.

In Chapter 1, Lilly LU and Enid Zimmerman propose a practical framework with four approaches for art educators who wish to teach Chinese arts and culture. They recommend how, regardless of the educational setting, it is important for art educators to think in intercultural ways. They stress the importance of communicating and working effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds and the need to use a variety of instructional methods when teaching about Chinese arts and culture. In Chapter 2, Mei-Lan LO provides a semester-long curriculum on Chinese art centered on web-based learning and particularly geared for college art majors. In Chapter 3, Ryan Shin and Victoria Cook describe pedagogies like visual research journals and autoethnographic art, and their usefulness in helping university students engage with Chinese arts and culture. They share that such methods help their students appreciate the value and ubiquity of Asian culture in the community, gain an understanding of deeply symbolic and cultural meanings and messages, and develop positive attitudes and relationships with Chinese arts and culture. In Chapter 4, Yuchih WU, Jingwen HUANG, and Chihting ZHAN challenge the traditional ink painting curriculum for 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> graders through the use of play. They integrate ink painting and visual expression into an early childhood art curriculum that enhances the physical, perceptual, and emotional development of three- and four-year-old learners.

## **Section Two: Teaching Chinese Arts and Culture with an Historical Context**

To provide readers with a better orientation to the complex Chinese dynasty system, we provide a table of contents as a brief timeline corresponding to the chapter content associated with that particular dynasty. We hope readers can easily reference the time period in which the artifacts of that dynasty are discussed. We chronologically organized the 15 chapters of the book into 6 sub-sections: a) Chinese Arts and Culture during Imperial Times (pre-1912), b) Looking West: The Era of Political Turbulence in the Late Qing Dynasty (mid-19<sup>th</sup> century to 1912), c) Facing East: Taiwan under Japanese rule (1895 – 1945), d) Art in Mainland China (1912 – 1979), e) Art in Taiwan (post-1945), and f) Contemporary Era (1980 – 2020s).

Although we use the year 1912 to signify the end of the Chinese imperial system, we acknowledge the influence of other political circumstances on the development of Chinese arts and cultural education prior to that time. Beginning in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, external challenges (such as colonialism) and internal conflicts (such as the 1927 – 1949 Chinese civil war) contributed to a complicated and diverse art and cultural aesthetic across mainland China, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. For this reason, we address the influence of significant historical events and policies both before and after 1912 on Chinese arts and culture.

### ***Chinese Arts and Culture during Imperial Times (pre-1912)***

From the Bronze Age to the last Chinese dynasty ending in 1912, Chinese history may be thought of in three eras: the Ancient Era (ca. 2100 – 206 BC), the Medieval Era (206 BC – 907 AD), and the Early Modern Era (907 – 1912 AD) (Fong & Watt, 1996). The Ancient Era mainly comprises the first three dynasties: Xia (ca. 2100 – 1600 BC), Shang (ca. 1600 – 1100 BC), and

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Zhou (ca. 1100 – 256 BC). In this era, dynasties used major artifacts of jade and bronze for ritual state ceremonies and sacrificial offerings to ancestors.

In Chapter 5, on Sacred Monsters and Mythical Animals, Yen-Ju LIN explores the animal forms and patterns on ritual bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties. She shows how educators may engage in conversations about ancient Chinese ritual bronzes through interpretive observation, reflective dialogue, and creative art making. In implementing the feudal system, the Zhou dynasty paved the way for China’s unification during the rule of the Qin dynasty (221 – 206 BC) and the imperial state of the Han dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), the latter of which embraced Confucian philosophy. Emperor Qin’s unification of six states into a centralized government allowed the ruler of this short-lived dynasty to construct what would later be one of the greatest archaeological finds, the terracotta tomb, discovered by local farmers near Xi’an [西安] City in 1974. In Chapter 6, Elizabeth Eder, Yongying DONG, and Tess Porter present a set of educational materials on China’s Terracotta Army. Including authoritative information and adaptable digital activities, these materials are designed to help educators explore the Terracotta Army and lead learners to understand how art reflects people’s lives in different times, places, and cultures.

After Qin’s fall and the rise of the Han dynasty, Chinese history entered its Medieval Era, a designation applied by Fong and Watt (1996). While the Roman Empire gained hegemonic power in the West, the Han dynasty established its bureaucratic rule through a feudal system in the East. Confucian statesmen and thinkers of the Han dynasty established “canons of morality and an all-embracing cosmology as immutable guidelines for human behavior, and the focus of Chinese art shifted from ritual paraphernalia to monumental palace and funerary complexes” (Fong & Watt, 1996, p. 29). Because of international trade via the Silk Road, Han dynasty artifacts also reflect international styles, such as decorative flower patterns on bronze mirrors influenced by Mediterranean regions. Other international styles—such as three-color glazed pottery or Sancai [三彩] and the Western Asian style of drinking cup (Thorp & Vinograd, 2001)—were commonly used by artisans and the general public until the late Tang dynasty (618 – 907 AD). From the late Han to the Tang dynasty, Chinese arts and culture also experienced a dynamic phase of growth in terms of central Asian cultural influences, including Buddhism, Christianity, and Islam. As Thorp and Vinograd (2001) noted,

The Tang capital Chang-an (modern day Xi’an [西安]) attracted visitors from throughout East, South, and Central Asia. Literary testimony to such visitors includes the travel journals of Arab, Japanese, and Chinese travelers, and such inscriptions...recorded a small Christian community during the eighth century. (p. 221)

According to Fong and Watt (1996), this multi-faceted influence on Chinese arts and culture meant that “as great Buddhist temple projects flourished, an international style burgeoned in architecture, sculpture, and painting, as well as in the decorative arts of metalwork and ceramics” (p. 29).

The period between the fall of the Tang dynasty and Chinese reunification under the Northern Song dynasty (960 – 1127 AD) was accompanied by more political fragmentation in the form of the Five Dynasties (907-960 AD). Early art historians called the period from the

Northern Song era until the end of the Qing dynasty in 1912 China's Early Modern Era (907 – 1912 AD). This period of almost 1,000 years included the Northern Song (960 – 1127 AD) and Southern Song dynasties (1127 – 1279 AD), the Yuan dynasty (1272 – 1368 AD), the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644 AD), and the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912 AD). Confucian ideas embedded in imperial rulings, the rise of a scholar class, and “an interest in reform and revival led [Northern Song] to a great cultural and artistic efflorescence” (Fong & Watt, 1996, p. 29), as well as the establishment of imperial court art (Thorp & Vinograd, 2001). After the Northern Song ended, scholars from the Southern Song dynasty were “either discouraged by the conditions of public service or deprived of the opportunity to serve” and “turned to the arts for self-cultivation and financial reward” (Fong & Watt, 1996, p. 29). These trends gave birth to literati art forms, such as literati paintings or the scholar-official paintings of the Yuan and Ming dynasties, which rejected mimetic realism in favor of calligraphic self-expression (Fong, 2014).

In Chapter 7, Ting Fang (Claire) CHIEN describes facilitating a tea-tasting event to help in-service teachers sample Chinese history, experience sensations that the Ming literati might have felt when they created literati paintings, and share their resulting art creations with their peers. In Chapter 8, Yinghua (Sarah) WANG recounts collaborating with a language arts teacher to create an interdisciplinary summer camp curriculum for elementary learners. She introduced the literati painting style to young learners and guided them in exploring its poetic and artistic nature through art creation accompanied by a classic poem. Students also learned how literati painters of the Ming and Qing dynasties adopted seals as an expressive signature and personalized marker of identity, incorporating various types of inventive calligraphic script, pseudonyms, and meaningful poetic verses into their seal designs. In Chapter 9, Mackenzie Pell shares a collagraph printmaking lesson she created for secondary learners, one inspired by such Chinese seal carving.

The age of exploration between 1400 and 1800 brought economic gains to Europe from beyond the Mediterranean Sea. At that time, the Yuan and Ming dynasties were the dominant political power in Asia, and many neighboring countries paid monetary tributes in exchange for their trade. Europeans travelled to Chinese coastal ports, though not without the development of a turbulent and uneasy power dynamic (Beck, 2008). Nevertheless, Chinese goods such as porcelain and silk remained highly sought after, and encounters with Westerners inevitably influenced the development of art and culture in China.

***Looking West: The Era of Political Turbulence in the Late Qing Dynasty (Mid-19<sup>th</sup> Century to 1912)***

The first wave of Western influence on Chinese arts and culture began in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century. To many Chinese officials and elites, the West represented something new and modern, something foreign and exciting. Among the Western foreign nationals, European Jesuits, who were Roman Catholic missionaries, gained support from the Qing dynasty court because of their knowledge of mathematics and the sciences. Some Jesuits even held significant court positions based on their expertise in the arts, science, and antiquities. For example, Giuseppe Castiglione, also known as LANG Shihning [郎世寧] (1688 – 1766), was a painter trained in Milan, Italy who consecutively served three emperors (Kangxi [康熙], Yongzheng [雍正], and Qianlong [乾隆]) as a court artist and instructor. With his awareness of aesthetic and culturally significant



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themes and symbolic connotations, Castiglione successfully fused Western Baroque art techniques and Chinese artistic traditions. He worked with ink and mineral colors on silk but applied his training in realism to create detailed pictorial drawings.

In general, Chinese paintings emphasize how brushstrokes and ink evoke aesthetic responses, how nature is inherent in the depictions of subjects, and how human virtues are may be projected to pursue suitable ways of life and a harmonious universe (Thorp & Vinograd, 2001). In contrast, the long tradition of Baroque art centers on linear perspectives, rules of proportions, and a chiaroscuro approach that evokes emotions using dramatic contrasts of light and shadows. LANG was aware that in Chinese culture shadows carry negative connotations, such as ominous superstitions about death and dangers. Therefore, the reduction of a dramatic chiaroscuro emphasis in LANG's realistic approach signified how he strived to reflect a cultural and social context that was more acceptable in Chinese culture. His approach undoubtedly showed how Western influences instilled perspectives, realism, and interactive elements in the depiction of horses, hunting scenes, and still lifes. LANG became so successful that he took part in the design of Emperor Qian-long's expansion of Yuanming Yuan [圓明園] (Garden of Perfect Charity). The garden is known for its combination of Eastern and Baroque styles in the interior spaces of the palaces and in the décor of outdoor spaces such as the courtyard and garden (Fong, 1996). His designs reflect the desire of the Qing dynasty to move forward with new (i.e., Western) knowledge and aesthetics.

By the 19th century, Western countries such as Britain and France had made it a priority to expand colonial footholds in Chinese territories. With its losses in two Opium Wars, the Qing dynasty was forced to sign a series of treaties that revealed the dynasty's inability to reverse the intrusion of the West. Following the first Opium War (1839 – 1842 AD), Qing ceded Hong Kong to the British government in 1842 with the Treaty of Nanking. During the second Opium War (1856 – 1860 AD), British and French troops looted and burned the complex of palaces and gardens known as Yuanming Yuan, completely crushing the Qing dynasty's romanticizing of its foreign relations. The mounting humiliation and defeats of the imperial forces effectively granted foreign entities open-ports access and rights to govern China.

At the same time, these occupation zones along the Chinese coastlines inevitably helped accelerate and shape a significant foundation for China's modernization by stimulating the growth of industries that facilitated trade distribution throughout the economy (Bracken, 2018; Wolfgang et al., 2013) and expanded the application and appreciation of the arts in everyday life (Hartnett et al., 2017). For example, the Pearl River Delta in Guangzhou became the site of cultural hubs and centers for producing and exporting fine china, paintings, and lacquerware to satisfy European's popular demand for exotic objects from the East (陳瑞林, 2017). In architecture, the Neoclassical style with its spiral stairways was introduced. (Such still exists in many colonial cities, such as the Bund in Shanghai.) Likewise, Chinese aesthetics and philosophies deepened and broadened the romanticization of Orientalism in 19<sup>th</sup>-century European arts (Chang, 2010). In general, one can say that the colonial zones in China planted seeds for the development of a more democratic republican state that would overthrow the hierarchical and corrupt system in politics. This development foreshadowed Dr. SUN Yat-sen's 1911 Chinese Revolution (i.e., the Xinhai Revolution), which ended the Qing dynasty and established the Republic of China in 1912.

The Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912 AD) was the last imperial dynasty in Chinese history and a multiethnic empire, stretching from Manchuria through Mongolia all the way to Tibet. In Chapter 10, Grace HU describes a cultural appreciation and interdisciplinary unit that guides learners to explore and decode the symbols on Qing's imperial garments. In this way, students can begin to see how the Qing court inherited Chinese (Han) culture while simultaneously integrating the Manchu and Mongol traditions.

***Facing East: Taiwan Under Japanese Rule (1895 – 1945)***

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, in addition to Westerners being eager to obtain power over Qing's coastal territories, Japan also inched forward to expand its imperial footprints in Asia and Southeast Asia. In 1895, the Treaty of Shimonoseki (also known as the Treaty of Maguan) advanced Imperial Japan's dream of establishing itself as a Pan Asian power. The treaty forced the Qing dynasty to yield its northern ports to Japan, sever its ties with Korea, and make Taiwan and its nearby Penghu islands Japanese territory.

Fukuzawa Yukichi, one of the founders of modern Japan, advised that Taiwan, as the first colonial territory, should be assimilated to serve the whole nation. Thus, the primary objective of Japanese officials became shaping Taiwan into a model Japanese colonial state, in part to create a greater sense of political stability there. As in Japan, all public schools in Taiwan were to provide art education as of 1898, with a curriculum that would include creating an outdoor (plein air) sketch, a portrait, and a still life (Chan & Shih, 2008). Thus, Taiwan's progress in the arts followed the development of the same in Japan. The Taiwan Art Exhibition of 1927, for example, largely replicated the annual Japanese Imperial Exhibition. These juried exhibitions boosted the economy of their respective countries by creating numerous private art studios and frame shops. In both Japan and Taiwan, artists were well respected for their irreplaceable skills.

Using Taiwanese artist KUO Hsueh-hu's [郭雪湖] journey in art as a backdrop, Yichien Cooper and Kevin HSIEH, retrace an era in Taiwan when art served as a force of resistance (see Chapter 11). KUO navigated between two distinct identities—the descendants of Chinese and Taiwanese under Japanese rule—with the result that two artistic approaches developed. One was grounded in the inherited traditional Chinese ink painting techniques, and the other was adapted to Japan's Nihonga aesthetics, where Western art, such as Impressionism, was blended with traditional ink painting. Hence, Taiwanese artists, who were able to study abroad in Qing China, France, and Japan, were recognized and valued in the art world. KUO Hsueh-hu won a national art competition and studied art in Japan, and both Taiwanese artists YAN Shei-long [顏水龍] (1903 – 1997) and YANG San-lang [楊三郎] (1907 – 1995) studied in Japan and France. Yet, despite the opportunities artists gained during these colonial times (1895 – 1945), many Taiwanese artists faced alienation and discrimination from their Japanese peers due to Taiwan's colonial status. To resist being treated like second-class citizens, many Taiwanese artists vowed and established a singularly Taiwanese exhibition in order to promote their native culture and aesthetics (謝里法, 2009). Gradually, many grassroots art societies began to provide opportunities for Taiwanese artists to gather, exchange ideas, and exhibit, making the Taiwanese art scene diverse and vibrant in the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

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After the collapse of the Qing imperial monarchy in 1912, the development of art in China was influenced by political, social, cultural, philosophical, and ideological movements, as well as struggles that concerned national identity. Central to this debate was a conflict between maintaining cultural tradition and embracing new ideas, mainly from the West.

#### *Art in Mainland China Between 1912 and the 1979*

After the fall of the Qing dynasty, westernization occurred at full speed in China. The new government called for a systematic and coherent art curriculum to cultivate professional artists. In 1912, it established the first art institute, the Shanghai Painting Institute (now Shanghai University of Fine Arts). As part of the broad adoption of European systems by China, the institute offered Western drawing and painting courses and even a ground-breaking—and controversial—live drawing class. Further, with more and more fine art institutes opening for Western art enthusiasts, styles such as Impressionism and Realism began to take hold, while the predominant literati ink traditions progressed only slowly. The boom in art institutes expanded to most major cities in China (蕭瓊瑞, n.d.). In 1918, for example, the Central Academy of Fine Arts (CAFA)<sup>11</sup> was established in Beijing by CAI Yuan-Pei [蔡元培]. Facilitated by enthusiastic young art professionals who had obtained their fine arts degree overseas, soaring enrollment in public art schools continued to accelerate the development of various Western art forms. In addition to painting, printmaking, cartoons (Edwards, 2013; Taylor, 2015) and other facets of popular culture became essential media in bringing hope and unity to Chinese seeking to resist the Japanese imperial powers (Hung, 1994). Influenced by German Expressionism, Japanese *ukiyo-e*, and Soviet-influenced Realism, the Chinese woodcut movement of the 1930s became the avant-garde in Chinese modern art (Tang, 2008).

Between the Marco Polo Bridge Incident [蘆溝橋事變]<sup>12</sup> in 1937 and 1949, the social and political landscape of China underwent turmoil resulting from several devastating events: the Japanese invasion, World War II, and the Chinese civil war between the Communist Party and the Chinese Nationalist Party Kuomintang (KMT). In 1949, the Republic of China split in two, with the People's Liberation Army (PLA) led by Mao Ze-Dong's [毛澤東] Communist Party taking over the mainland and driving out CHIANG Kai-shek's [蔣介石] KMT government, which retreated to Taiwan. This shifting of the political climate greatly impacted the content, purpose, and direction of the arts in Chinese society.

In Chapter 12, Jaehan Bae describes his work with undergraduate education majors at the University of Wisconsin on the Forgotten History Hexagon, a project designed to help pre-service teachers learn how to navigate violent historical episodes through art. The project introduces one artwork by Chinese-American artist Li HU [胡漂] and one by Taiwanese artist HUANG Rong-can [黃榮燦] to represent two historical atrocities, China's Nanking Massacre (1937 – 1938 AD) and Taiwan's 228 Incident (1947). The former involved mass murder and rape by Imperial Japanese troops, while the latter involved the violent suppression of an anti-government uprising by the ruling KMT party. Through this project, Bae illustrated how art can

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<sup>11</sup> As of today, CAFA still is the leading public art institute in China.

<sup>12</sup> Marco Polo Bridge Incident, occurred on July 7<sup>th</sup>, 1937, conventionally marked the beginning of the Japanese invasion.

be effective in helping learners challenge and reinterpret U.S. historical events from a non-Western perspective.

After 1949, Chinese art development diverged in terms of content, function, and purpose. In Mainland China, art was used mainly to advocate for the communist ideology, highlighting the labor and rural classes in a style influenced by Soviet socialist realism (Lin, 2007). No longer focused on literati themes, traditional ink painting turned to a so-called “new cultural formula” that combined realism with romanticism. During the country’s 10-year Cultural Revolution, from 1966 to 1976, traditional art forms were disregarded. In their place, only cartoons, drawings, and woodcut prints in an authentic wartime revolution style were approved by various Chinese governments (Andrews, 2010). Thus, during Cultural Revolution, Mainland China experienced a multitude of social, political, and economic climates and ideologies that are reflected in the wide range of concepts present in Chinese art. With the end of the Cultural Revolution and DENG Xiao-ping’s [鄧小平] ensuing economic and political reforms since 1979, artists in China eagerly began to explore a variety of styles and seek more non-traditional ways to create art.

### *Art in Taiwan after 1945*

Art in Taiwan, when under Japanese control, reflected its artists’ introspection about national identity. The art of China and Taiwan have developed separately to reach unique characteristics and styles. After China’s economic reforms (1978 – 1992) and the withdrawal of the Japanese from Taiwan in 1945, the unsettled political climate aggressively limited the field of art. Individual expression was suppressed and a strictly nationalist point of view aligned with government values was encouraged. While so-called mainstream art was filled with the prevailing political ideology after 1945 in Taiwan, many forms of folk art or religious practices were very common in regular Taiwanese people’s daily lives.

In Chapter 13, Yiwen WEI shares her experience teaching one such popular folk art, puppetry, in her K-12 classes. After introducing students to the context and development of glove puppetry in Taiwan, WEI explores its implications for art classes. She encourages art teachers to employ cross-cultural pedagogies, draw examples from their local context, and use Taiwanese puppetry as an example of a culture’s collective effort to cherish and reinventing a its own cultural tradition and heritage.

After 1945, post-colonial debates over representation, authenticity, and the right to shape a national art form overshadowed the once blooming and diverse art forms that had existed in Taiwan under Japanese rule (see Chapter 11 by Cooper & HSIEH). Traditional Chinese ink painting—with birds and flowers, landscapes, and other uniquely Chinese literati themes—was widely viewed as an authentic, uniquely Chinese style. Beginning May 20<sup>th</sup>, 1947, however, extreme regulation of the visual arts and literary art took effect with CHIANG Kai-shek’s Martial Law. With acceptable art limited to propaganda and creative freedom severely limited, many Chinese artists chose to study abroad and even live in exile.

In early 1980s’ Taiwan, as economic strength grew, the climate around art relaxed. The 1983 establishment of the Taipei Museum of Fine Art signified a new beginning and many Taiwanese artists who had lived overseas returned and brought new ideas to the art world. From



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painting, sculpture, printmaking, and textiles to installation, mixed media, and activist art, the forms of art created by artists in Taiwan became increasingly diverse. The topics embedded in the artworks also expanded. Rather than simply expressing the artist's pursuit of individual growth, they expanded to an awareness of social, cultural, and economical issues. With a focus on global art connections, many highly successful exhibitions facilitated the flourishing of the art world of Taiwan. It was around this time that Dr. Ann KUO [郭禎祥], a graduate of the University of Urbana-Champaign, began to promote art education pedagogies and theoretical frameworks, such as including Discipline-Based Art Education (DBAE), multiculturalism, holistic education, and social justice. This dynamic development in art and art education helped build a solid foundation for museum education and community-based art education in Taiwan.

#### *Contemporary Era (1980 – 2020s)*

The authors of the six chapters in this subsection guide readers in re-examining traditional art forms and re-contextualizing them within current art education practice. The emphasis in these chapters is on thinking about the modern relevance of historical Chinese art forms, events, and ideologies to today's art classroom. The authors invite readers to view contemporary Chinese and Taiwanese art with an eye to its vibrant evolution.

In Chapter 14, Eunjung Chang shares two lessons that have proved effective in her efforts to integrate Chinese culture and tradition into her contemporary classrooms with American college students. She introduced various Chinese artists who, in the early 1990s, began to seek opportunities to visit or study abroad in Europe or the United States, where they planted seeds of Chinese conceptual and contemporary art. Among these artists were XU Bing (Lin, 2004) and contemporary papercutting artists QIAO Xiaoguang [喬曉光] and Xin SONG [宋昕], who create artworks on social justice. In Chapter 15, Alice LAI and Koon-Hwee KAN propose a transnational feminist pedagogy for undergraduates, one designed to facilitate inquiry into visual representations of Chinese women in transnational visual culture and art. To illuminate Chinese female agency and subjectivities in a transnational context they use the portrayals of the legendary Chinese woman Mulan and the art of Hung LIU [劉虹] as examples.

In Chapter 16, Ahran Koo introduces the unique visual narratives of three prominent and active contemporary artists in China, ZHANG Xiaogang [張曉剛], ZENG Fanzhi [曾梵志], and AI Weiwei [艾未未]. She describes how art educators can use these narratives as instructional material in the classroom. In Chapter 17: Lilly LU and Hung-Ming CHANG explain how, in a graduate course, they incorporated rhizomatic pedagogy and three contemporary Chinese inter/transmedia artworks by Taiwanese artistic teams in order to trigger audience memories, along with relevant themes. In addition, they discuss how audiences/students create personal meanings and knowledge through the intersection of sounds and visuals. In Chapter 18, Li-Hsuan HSU recounts how she developed a lesson with arts-based and interactive activities designed to help pre-service teachers learn about diverse aspects of culture and then advocate for cultures other than just their own. In Chapter 19, Maria Lim, Borim Song, and Eunjung Chang provide a glimpse of how six different contemporary artists in China are constantly defining and redefining culture and heritage in accord with the notions of deconstruction and reconstruction. Finally, Chapter 19 features six contemporary Chinese artists and their artworks, all of whom

offer relevant lesson ideas and paradigms for art educators who want to expand their strategies for teaching non-Western art, especially Chinese art and artists.

### **A Few Reflections Before Looking Ahead**

#### **Integrating Contemporary Chinese Art in K-16 Art Curricula**

As student populations in the United States become increasingly diverse, art educators need to incorporate the notion of culture in their curriculums in order to achieve culturally responsive teaching. One notable approach is to view arts and culture as continuously transforming entities. Thus, teaching Chinese arts and culture can't be static, because Chinese arts and culture are always evolving. Teaching is an active and developing endeavor, and as such, a curriculum that draws on the accumulative wisdom of both the past and present invites learners to gain a deeper comprehension and appreciation for the complexities of their world. While traditional art forms are gateways to understanding customs, values, and aesthetics, educators must be mindful to explore beyond traditional conventions or stereotypes and include contemporary perspectives. In fact, a third of the chapters in this book incorporate the work of contemporary Chinese artists, a conscious decision we made to help educators inspire and engage learners across the curriculum.

The benefits of integrating contemporary Chinese art are numerous. First, the visual elements and creative expression used by contemporary Chinese artists are often highly relatable and approachable for learners. Second, contemporary Chinese art often addresses regional and community-based socio-cultural issues that encourage learners to observe, examine, contextualize, question, and respond to their ever-changing surroundings. Third, learners' exposure to the work of contemporary Chinese artists can raise their awareness of the multifaceted nature of culture. Finally, the inclusion of contemporary Chinese art in a curriculum can elicit meaningful dialogue between all classroom participants, a process that creates a more diverse, equitable, and inclusive learning environment.

#### **The Advantages of Bringing Traditional Chinese Arts and Culture into Art Classrooms**

Humans are influenced and shaped by their past experiences and history. As Nielsen et al., (2020) observed,

Experiences in the past influence who we are, and when we create ourselves anew we make new interpretations of who we were, who we are and who we wish to become...arts are also languages of communication that can translate between cultures, diverse learners and disciplines, and that can be used pedagogically to give learners multiple entry points into a particular content. (p. 4)

Over the last 5000 years, the vast number of ancient Chinese artifacts, objects, archeological sites, and traditional folk art that was created can provide inspiration for art educators who wish to teach about the long history of Chinese arts and culture. Due to the limited instructional resources on Chinese arts and culture that exist in English, however, this rich may not reach non-Chinese-speaking audiences. As we reviewed the articles that were submitted for this book

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Following an open call for submissions, we noticed the space that remains available for incorporating ancient and traditional Chinese artifacts, objects, and cultural relics in art education lessons. Many significant Chinese arts are absent from or superficially covered in this book, including pre-historical pottery, jade, burial sites, Buddhist art, snuff bottles, treasure boxes, murals, wood prints, propaganda posters, furniture, architecture, porcelain, and others. We encourage educators to continue the quest to incorporate Chinese arts and culture in their curriculums, develop instructional resources in these areas, and provide opportunities to make bridges between ancient artifacts, contemporary art, and daily life. Learners who are able to examine Chinese artworks within their historical and cultural contexts, and reflect on the ideology of that time and their own, will gain perspectives that can help them better respond to the current social-cultural climates of their lives.

### **Including Trans-Cultural Voices from Chinese Immigrant Artists**

Chinese immigration to the United States has a long history, but it is mostly hidden or forgotten in U.S. history textbooks. As our classrooms become more culturally diverse, it is important to include representative stories, voices, and narratives in the curriculum. Based on our work with the authors in this book, we feel more optimistic that art education pedagogies are moving away from medium-based lessons in the direction of more meaningful learning and learner empowerment. Further, by creating opportunities to study artworks by and about Chinese immigrants, educators create opportunities for learners to understand, explore, and experience how these newcomers bring and adapt their cultural heritage to their life in a new land. Equally important is embracing the stories of Chinese artists with a multi-ethnic or mixed-race identity. Their unique in-between cultural experiences encourage both educators and learners to reflect on and negotiate their prior perceptions, recognize commonalities, reconstruct their own cultural identities, and become more culturally sensitive and responsive individuals.

### **Contribution of This Book**

The inclusion of multiculturalism in contemporary art classroom practice is an ongoing quest. It requires careful planning to develop a culturally sensitive curriculum (Danker, 2020) that meets the diverse needs and cultural backgrounds of all learners (Nielsen et al., 2020). Our hope is that the content knowledge, pedagogies, and context information in this book on teaching Chinese arts and culture will be of interest to art educators, K-16 teachers, and their K-16 students in a variety of educational settings. We hope that this rich and practical resource provides approaches and strategies that K-16 art teachers can benefit from and implement. The variety of perspectives presented should allow art educators to adapt the book to create their own curriculum and develop pedagogies and strategies uniquely geared to their students' needs and school's requirements. Accordingly, we thank all the chapter authors who contributed their expertise and experience to this book.

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**Section I**



**Teaching Chinese Arts & Culture  
with Multiple Modalities**





CHAPTER 1

**Expanding Notions of Multicultural Art Education Programs:  
Teaching about Chinese Art and Culture from Different Cultural Lenses**

Lilly Lu  
University of Nebraska Omaha

Enid Zimmerman  
Indiana University

**Abstract**

Equitable, diverse, and inclusion in the field of art education, sometimes referenced as multicultural practice, can be much more complicated than appears on the surface. In this chapter, Zimmerman presents a review of her expanding notions of *multicultural* art education programs in the United States since 1970s and proposes a practical framework with four approaches for art educators. Then, the authors describe features of this framework and addresses their pedagogical applications for art educators. Next, Lu analyzes the chapters in this eBook about Chinese art and culture using Zimmerman's framework and then she further develops its relevance for considering teaching about Chinese art and culture. Such an expanded framework can help art educators effectively identify multicultural, community-based, global, and intercultural art education methods and strategies that are relevant-to the educational situations and conditions in which they teach and their students learn. In conclusion, the authors recommend how in different cultural settings it is important to think in intercultural ways and communicate and work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds when teaching about Chinese art and culture using a variety of methods of instruction.

*Keywords:* Chinese art, multicultural, community-based, global, intercultural, art education

## Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Equitable, diverse, and inclusion in the field of art education, sometimes referenced as multicultural practice (Ballengee-Morris & Stuhr, 2001), can be much more complicated than appears on the surface. For example, teaching about Chinese art and culture in a Chinese country or in a non-Chinese country or region may focus on totally different curricula and pedagogy considerations in respect to content and development of students' skills, values, beliefs, and cultural identities. When teaching about Chinese art and culture, educators in a native Chinese country/region/community often instruct students with traditional approaches whereas those in a non-Chinese country/region/community often teach their non-Chinese students with one or more diverse approaches.

This chapter originated with an intergenerational conversation between the two authors when they investigated teaching and learning about Chinese art and culture from the perspective of different cultural lenses. Enid Zimmerman has taught and published many articles about cultural influences in art education beginning in the 1970s when she began by teaching and conducting research about multicultural education through contemporary times. Lilly Lu is an immigrant art educator originally from Taiwan who is interested in multicultural art education and how its related research and practice had changed over the years. Lu contacted Zimmerman to inquire about how her notions of multicultural art education have developed over time and how teaching about Chinese art and culture is now viewed from a variety of cultural perspectives. In this chapter, Zimmerman presents a review of her expanding notions of *multicultural* art education programs in the United States since 1970s and here she proposes a practical framework with four approaches for art educators to concentrate on different ways culture can be integrated into art education research and practice. Then, the authors describe features of this framework and addresses their pedagogical applications for art educators. Next, Lu analyzes the chapters in this eBk about Chinese art and culture using Zimmerman's framework and then she further develops its relevance for considering teaching about Chinese art and culture. Such an expanded framework can help art educators effectively identify methods and strategies that are relevant and meet cultural profiles in their classroom situations and conditions in which they teach and their students learn. In conclusion, the authors discuss their observations and make recommendations for future art education practices about teaching Chinese art and culture using a variety of methods of instruction.

### Expanding Notions of Culturally Relevant Art Education Programs (Zimmerman)

Recently, Lilly Lu, a colleague and one of my former doctoral students, asked me about a book she was co-editing, *Teaching Chinese Arts and Culture: Content, Context, and Pedagogy*, to be published as an e-book by the International Society of Education through Art (InSEA). The book focuses on context, content, and instructional pedagogy practices and is organized according to historical time periods, concentrating on artworks created during specific periods of time and how art concepts can be interpreted for contemporary art students. Lu's question to me was how early conceptions of multicultural education, that she remembered I had continued to research and practice over the years, had changed and expanded to understanding and responding in an ever-changing educational environment. Coincidentally, I was invited and had written a chapter for a book about my being a non-Asian art educator who had lived in six Asian countries where I taught,

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<sup>1</sup> Both authors contributed equally to this chapter. Their names are listed alphabetically.



researched, conducted workshops, and had spoken at conferences (Zimmerman, in press). Based on my research and practice and evolving notions of art education and on my teaching and living in Asian countries and authoring chapters in books and articles about my experiences, I thought I had a background to work collaboratively with Lilly Lu on this chapter about teaching Chinese art and culture (see Figure 1 for a summary of the following concepts).

### ***Multicultural Art Education***

In the middle 1970s, I taught a course in a multicultural education program at Indiana University termed *The Arts in a Multicultural Society Project*. Multicultural art education then was explained as how the United States' society consisted of many cultural groups based on such characteristics as ethnicity, race, religion, nationality, language, and income. This teacher education program was established on inclusiveness of all peoples, both minority and majority, that had been ignored in favor of a monocultural, ethnocentric system of values (Lovano-Kerr & Zimmerman, 1976). Art then was viewed as an effective means for learning about society, developing skills to express what was the function of art in society, and the contributions of individual groups to an entire society. During the civil rights movement in the 1960s and 1970s in the United States, racism and schooling were emphasized and reforms in education, such as multicultural education, began to be emphasized. Many of the research and practice programs in the field of art education highlighted a variety of cultures within a country rather than global attributes of art works from many cultures across national boundaries.

In 1990, I wrote about the distinctions between appreciating a work of art from its origins and the context in which it was created including values rooted in colonial and neocolonial contexts. There was then, and there is today, a dynamic tension between concepts of universalism and relativism in which the commonality of human experience is contrasted with differences in experience in respect to the specific context and culture in which artworks were and are created. Cultural pluralism emphasized valuing the uniqueness and contribution that each group had to offer including how mores in a culture influence art, functions of subcultures in a society including dehumanizing effects, knowledge of those who create art, how status quo and change take place, interactions of art with environmental needs and resources, and financial and support for the arts within a culture. Other approaches included personal, political, spiritual, and social functions of art such as art for healing, celebration, social protest, personal transformation, meditation, and play. In the 1980s and 1990s, there also was an interest in the sociocultural role art played, in addition to studio art, art history, art criticism, and aesthetics, in students learning about crafts, folk and non-Western art, and popular, electronic, and mass media arts.

There were several other terms that were developed in the late 1980s and 1990s (Sletter & Grant, 1987) that are relevant to teaching about Chinese art and culture. Single group studies that focus on a particular cultural group, such as Chinese art and artists, often are considered without attempts to demonstrate differences and similarities among sub-cultural groups and a 'core' culture including issues related to racial oppression, social stratification, or social action. In multicultural education, cultural values often become the main emphasis and racism, social class, and gender issues often were not considered. Questions I asked in 1990 (Zimmerman, 1990a, 1990b), from a



social reconstructionism point of view, resonate today, especially how students could discuss issues of racism, sexism, and inequity and use art as a means of social action and protest.<sup>2</sup>

### ***Community-Based Art Education***

When reconsidering multicultural art education, it is important to celebrate equity, diversity, and inclusiveness, otherwise there is a possibility of perpetuating separateness and prejudice and reinforcing stereotypical thinking. Questions need to be included in curricula about cultural continuity and change, similarities and differences among cultures within local settings, and interdependence and power issues embedded in these different cultures. In many schools, museums, community centers, and other art education settings, it may be difficult or not acceptable to create or discuss political, race, class, and gender issues. It is important, however, that students learn to be reflective decision makers, beginning with considering their local communities and relationships to a greater international art community, where their ideas and values can freely be discussed (Zimmerman, 1999a). There is a need for community involvement for teaching art where teachers, parents, and other community members are involved actively in developing art programs that include local resources and histories. Therefore, in addition to teaching from multicultural emphasis, a community-based emphasis also should be included and art programs planned that are culturally relevant and responsive to the needs of local students, families, and other community members (Clark & Zimmerman, 2000; Zimmerman, 2003).

### ***Global Art Education***

From 1990 to 1998, Gilbert Clark, Editor of ERIC ART (an Adjunct Clearing House for Art Education), and I as co-director encouraged writing about pluralistic art education research and practice. For ERIC, in 1992, we wrote a bulletin *Teaching Art from a Multicultural Point of View* and in 1990 I wrote a bulletin, *Teaching Art from a Global Perspective*. The notion of multicultural education was expanded in these bulletins. Taken into consideration was teaching from a mono-cultural context to a multicultural context, from a school bound context to a community involving context, and from a mono-national context to a multinational context (Anderson, 1979). In teaching from a global context, students were expected to take an active role in their own learning, have concrete educational experiences, and examine their own cultural experiences and beliefs. Then, as today, there were many questions about global art education programs such as: The art of which cultures should be studied? Who decides what is appropriate content in a global education focused program? How should instruction about Western or Eastern cultures be balanced with learning about students' own cultural identities? Issues debated were not only finding answers to these questions but acknowledging bias in responding to many of these concerns. Sletter and Grant (1987, 1988) provided some answers to these queries. They posited goals for an expanded notion of multicultural education to include helping students from different and/or similar cultural backgrounds build strong self-concepts through study of contributions of many dissimilar groups of people and promoted social action positions where racism, sexism, and equity are highlighted as much as teaching cultural values. Multicultural art education programs

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<sup>2</sup> In 2004, I was editor of the *Journal of Cultural Studies in Art Education*, formally *the Journal of Multicultural Studies in Art Education*. This name change indicates a shift from a focus on multicultural education to one that encompasses a more expansive notion of art education that includes global, community, and intercultural art education.

evolved to emphasize what art is, why it is made, differences in human experiences, and the contexts in which art is created from a community-based to a global context.

### ***Intercultural Art Education***

For those who seek to teach about art in a social context, interculturalism can serve as a bridge among these three popular conceptions of multicultural, community-based, and global art education (Zimmerman, 1999b). Interculturalism addresses issues and concerns in each student's own culture (or cultures) as one of many cultures around the world and addresses interactions among cultures (Davenport & Zimmerman, 2003; Zimmerman, 2003). It is a stance that encourages students to perceive and respond to events both within and beyond their classrooms, their community histories, traditions, visual artifacts, and methods through which their cultural identity is developed. Interculturalism focuses on unity, equity, and diversity, but is expanded to include challenging social inequities related to racism, sexism, and stereotyping locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally around the world. It also attends to concerns about natural resources, climate change, economics of cross-cultural contact, and directions of change in the contemporary world when peoples in traditional cultures encounter those from other cultures.

An equitable introduction for developing culturally sensitive curricula is to emphasize commonalities by developing units of instruction that address tolerance, caring, lack of prejudice, and empathy; creative integrative arts experiences; human rights education; study of ritual, storytelling, and traditional arts; aesthetic perception; systems of power and social responsibility; and interdependence in a global world (Zimmerman, 2016). On the other hand, focusing on contrasts emphasizes differences between beliefs and expressions, among groups of people and their practices. Attending to contrasts in tandem with commonalities allows students to be guided to recognize that people often understand or respond to similar experiences in different ways (Zimmerman, 2016). Art educators of students at all levels can address issues of commonalities and contrast when they challenge students to consider how artworks often represent different cultural interpretations of common experiences. Curricula based on commonalities and contrasts offer students opportunities to interpret artwork from within a cultural group that created them and consider how similarities and differences with other cultures and their own experiences can help them expand their understandings about themselves and the world around them.

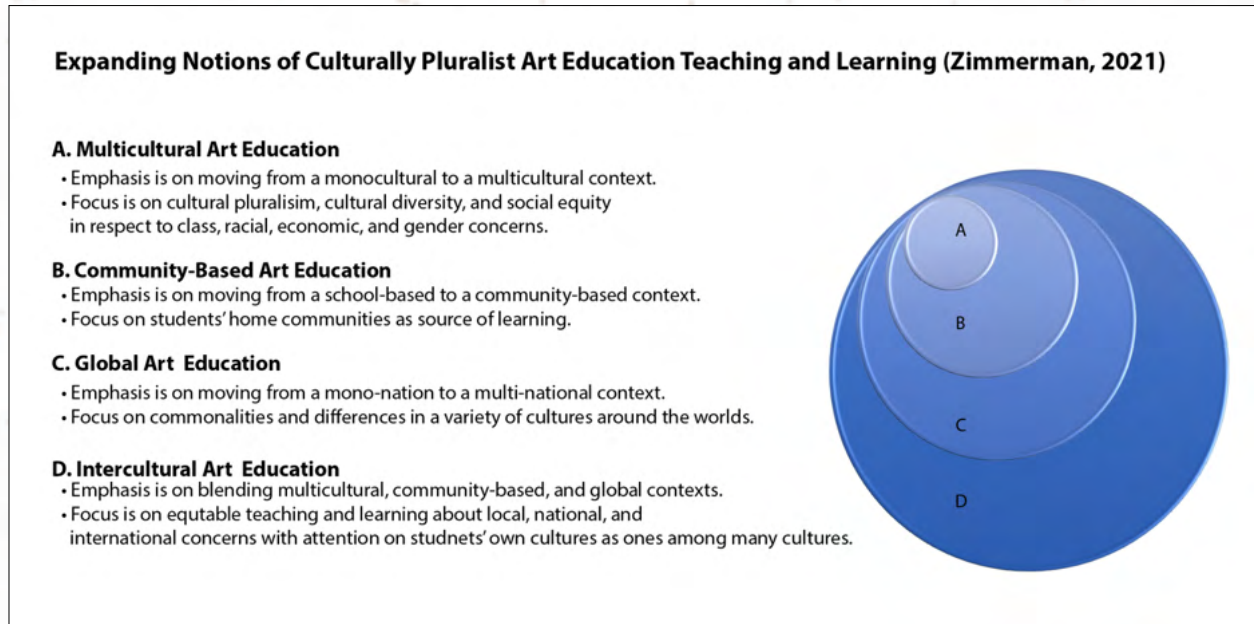
Art education teaching and learning, therefore, should be viewed as a continuously evolving process in which cultural awareness is addressed; conflict is accepted for its educational potential; learning about and having experiences and acknowledging students' own and others' cultures is at the forefront; and understanding that commonalities and differences are shared with others in interdependent communities and nations around the world (Manifold et al., 2016; Zimmerman, 1993). This means moving art teaching and learning from mono-cultural contexts to multicultural contexts, from school bound to community contexts, from mono-national to multinational contexts, and from separated to blended intercultural perspectives. In Figure 1, *Expanding Notions of Art Education Teaching and Learning from Different Cultural Lenses*, notions are mapped as moving across these four aspects of art education becoming more and more expansive and then moving back to the first notions of culturally relevant art education when appropriate. For example, it might be appropriate to focus on community-based art education in one instance and on global art education at another depending on which aspects are being emphasized and to what ends.



Ultimately, it would be ideal if intercultural aspects of art education could be achieved across art education curriculum planning over a sustained period of time.

**Figure 1**

*Expanding Notions of Art Education Teaching and Learning from Different Cultural Lenses (Zimmerman, 2021)*



**Concluding Thoughts**

In fall 2005, I spent a semester teaching in Taiwan at National Chaiyi University. I co-taught an undergraduate art appreciation class with Gilbert Clark and a graduate class focusing on gender issues in art education. In the art appreciation class, intercultural approaches were emphasized with a focus on diversity of peoples and their beliefs and values in a global context. Students examined their own cultural identities and used technologies and educational experiences that helped them overcome geographic, language, and traditional boundaries. Students were encouraged to express their own opinions through collaborative group discussions and were empowered to connect their reactions to their own lived experiences. In the gender issues class, students studied contributions of artists from many different backgrounds in a global context and then created artworks based on their inquiries and personal involvements. In both classes, students were empowered to find their own voices, build their collaborative voices, and assert their public voices as risktakers in a collaborative community. At National Chaiyi University I learned to teach in an intercultural context and leave my comfort zone and participate as both a learner and a teacher (Zimmerman, 2009). Looking back, I realize there is still a great amount of work to be done so that concepts of diversity, equity, and inclusion are incorporated and embraced by the field of art education. Next Lilly Lu will explain features and application of the framework and then she will incorporate my conceptions and impressions about art education teaching and learning and how they are connected to chapters in this e-book about teaching Chinese arts and culture.

## **Features and Application of the Framework (Lu)**

In the previous section, Zimmerman detailed the evolution of multicultural art education theory and practice since the 1970s and presents her current view of expanding notions of multicultural art education programs in a conceptual mapping she created that can be implemented in contemporary art classrooms (see Figure 1). For beginning, intermediate, or veteran art educators who intend to teach culturally responsive art education, Zimmerman's current view can serve as a conceptual framework or road map to indicate where art teachers are in their current thinking and application and where they can set their next goals. They can consider their teaching needs and experiences and then choose their next challenge or approach to undertake in their teaching journey. Her framework has two features that I will term: (1) accretive and (2) expandable and contractible. In respect to the accretive feature, the four overlapping circles in Figure 1 represent four teaching approaches according to different teaching measures. They are accretive (build upon each other) and have one core circle (a) multicultural art education with its emphasis and focus as a foundation. Each outer circle includes a minimum of one inner circle; each inner circle is the key required component for the outer circle(s). For example, (a) multicultural art education is a core concept and approach included within (b) community-based art education. (a) & (b) are core concepts and approaches included within (c) global art education. (a), (b), & (c) are core concepts and approaches included within (d) intercultural art education. The framework is also expandable and contractible as art educators can start with (a) and then can proceed (b), (c), and (d) accordingly but do not have to follow this preferred sequence. Depending on the needs of parents, students, and the community, art educators can focus on current approaches and stay, start, and restart any approach at any time if needed as they continue to be relevant in their classrooms, museums, community centers, and other relevant contexts for teaching and learning. Therefore, the starting circle can be either expandable or contractible over time.

It is expected that art teachers will constantly change and adjust their approaches backward and forward among the four approaches of multicultural, community-based, global, and eventually effectively address intercultural art education. For example, art educators who are new to teaching intercultural art education may start by choosing any of these approaches depending on community needs. Art teachers might expand to work with (c) and then contract back to (b). Other art educators might make informed decisions about which approach is the best for their curriculum and instruction at certain points in time by considering many factors and conditions such as an educator's readiness and interests, community needs, student body, and administrator support.

Teaching with the intercultural art education approach that blends (a)(b)(c) is an important goal because we are living in an intercultural world. Despite this, it is still challenging for many art educators, particularly beginners, to directly practice (d) intercultural art education without experiencing practices of (a)(b)(c). Generally, it takes time for art educators to discover what is feasible in their communities and then try different approaches individually or together at various points in their teaching practices.

## **Context and Conditions for Teaching Chinese Art & Culture (Lu)**

Every education setting is unique. We both acknowledge that instructors in the chapters in this book may be in different stages of their art practices; they may have different understandings



and implementation of multiculturalism depending on their curricula decisions (i.e., goals, objectives, content, curriculum design, and teaching methods) concerning their situations (i.e., community needs, educational settings, and course types (i.e., art education/general education), and conditions (i.e., student and instructor cultural backgrounds and the nature of the student body). Although chapter authors in this e-book have explicated their curricula decisions (curricula content and pedagogy) in their chapters, not all provide the context of their situations and conditions or indicate attributes of their culturally responsive approaches (i.e., either one culture study, or a community-based, global, or intercultural context).

Considerations of the context and applied approaches they use may greatly impact their curricula decisions and student learning outcomes. To obtain this information, I sent the chapter authors a short survey/email asking them about the ethnicities of instructors and students in the curriculum or lessons they described in their chapters. I then analyzed the chapters focusing on both the situations and conditions and the instructors' approaches identified with Zimmerman's framework. By analyzing these chapters including missing curricula factors, I hoped my results and observations not only reflect what and how Chinese art and culture are currently taught in classrooms, but also shed light on culturally informed art practices for the future. Next, I present my analysis, discuss results, and make recommendations for the future of teaching about art education from a variety of cultural lenses.

### *Embedded Factors and Identified Multicultural Approaches*

When I started analyzing the different aspects of teaching Chinese art and culture, I found that it is very complicated because this topic contains many factors to consider. I identified instructors' approaches in each chapter (blue text) with Zimmerman's framework and analyzed embedded factors such as teaching situations and conditions (orange text) in each chapter (see Figure 2).

**Figure 2**  
*Analysis of Chapters in the Chinese Art and Culture Book*

Chapter	One Culture Study	Multiculture	Community	Global	Intercultural	Grade Level	ArtE/Ed/GE	Student Body	Teacher Background
2	x					college	ArtE	Chinese	Chinese
3		x	x	x	x	college	GE	Mixed*and Chinese	Non-Chinese (Korean & White)
4	x					kindergarten	ArtE	Chinese	Chinese
5		x	x	x		all	ArtE	Mixed	Chinese
6		x	x	x		all	all	Mixed	Non-Chinese (White)
7		x	x*	x		Inservice	ArtE	Non-Chinese & Non-Chinese American	Chinese
8	x					all	Ed/Camp	Chinese American	Chinese
9		x	x*	x		secondary	ArtE	Non-Chinese & Non-Chinese American	Non-Chinese (White)
10		x	x*	x		middle	ArtE	Mixed	Chinese
11	x					elementary	ArtE	Chinese	Chinese
12	x					elementary &	ArtE	Chinese	Chinese
13		x	x	x		college	GE	Mixed	Non-Chinese (Korean)
14		x	x*	x		secondary	ArtE	Mixed	Non-Chinese (Korean)
15		x	x*	x		college	GE	Mixed	Chinese & Non-Chinese (Korean)
16		x	x*	x		secondary	ArtE	Mixed	Non-Chinese (Korean)
17	x					college	ArtE	Chinese	Chinese
18	x					college	GE	Non-Chinese & Non-Chinese American	Chinese
19		x	x*	x		college	ArtE/GE	Non-Chinese & Non-Chinese American	Non-Chinese (Korean)
			* Explore self-identity only						Mix - white, Latino, Afrcan, Asian/Chinese Americans...(No Chinese)

This book has a rich curriculum collection and pedagogical resources in the context of teaching about Chinese art and culture. In addition, it shows that instructors taught Chinese art and

culture with the different multicultural art approaches (multicultural, community, global, and/or intercultural) found in Zimmerman's framework. The authors made these kinds of concepts relevant to their contemporary practices. Before customizing their own multicultural art curricula or lessons and teaching methods with references in these chapters, art educators and readers of this book are encouraged to consider additional factors explained below.

This book includes 18 chapters providing curricula and pedagogy regarding teaching Chinese art and culture. In this book there are 7 chapters that focus on one culture study without mention of another culture. The target students in the 5 out of 7 chapters are native Chinese students in Taiwan and China, whereas students in two chapters are located in the United States. In the remaining 11 chapters, there is one intercultural and 10 global approaches. As mentioned before, Zimmerman's framework is accretive, intercultural art education includes global art education and global art education includes community-based factors. All the three approaches share a core of multicultural art education practices. Instructors in one chapter could successfully implement their intercultural art education curriculum and pedagogy practices while at the same time including the other three approaches.

An expansive global art education approach would be to relate Chinese art and culture to the students' own self-cultural identity and their own community culture first and then move beyond to other non-Chinese art and cultures around the world. However, I found in 10 chapters most instructors identified with a global art education approach related Chinese art and culture to the students' own culture only rather than referencing non-Chinese culture groups around the world. Perhaps the reason for this is that the main theme of this book is about Chinese art and culture. However, it is important and relevant within their curricula for global art educators to consider using examples that demonstrate different cultures, in addition to Chinese cultures or students' native cultures.

Another observation for the global art education is that instructors often skip exploration of community resources where students develop to form their self-identities. It is a big jump from self-identity in the community-based approaches to a global one and rich community resources may be overlooked in the process. In fact, community-based art education approaches may evidence how a community is involved in helping form local curricula. Within a community, there are maybe subcultures or indigenous cultures that are included in curricula for art educators and students to explore as local resources. In a global context, students may explore not only their local community, but maybe other Chinese communities that are not always alike or similar to their own.

I tabulated conditional factors such as students' grade levels and student and instructor ethnicities for each chapter (see Figure 3) and found vast differences among the descriptions among the different chapters in this e-book. When considering ethnicities of students and instructors in course situations, I found Chinese Educators (CE) in the chapters, depending on their location, teach native Chinese Students (CS) in a Chinese country or non-Chinese student groups in the United States. Both Chinese Educators (CE) and Non-Chinese Educators (Non-CE) teach non-Chinese students (Non-CS) in three kinds of student bodies (Chinese American (CA) only, a mixed student group including CA, and a mixed student group not including CA. Two Non-Chinese Educators teach a mixed student group including Chinese.

**Figure 3**  
*Background information about student body and instructors*

Students\Teacher Cultural Background (identified by ethnicity)		Chinese Teacher (CT) [12 Chinese]	Non-Chinese Teacher (Non-CT) [15 non-Chinese]
Chinese Student (CS)		Ch2, Ch4, Ch11, Ch12, Ch12, Ch17	
Non-Chinese Students (Non-CS)	Chinese American (CA)	Ch8	
	Mix (including CA)	Ch5, Ch10, Ch15	Ch6x3, Ch14x2 (White)* Ch13, Ch14, Ch15, Ch16 (Korean)
	Mix (Excluding CA)	Ch7, Ch18	Ch9 (White) Ch19x3 (Korean)
Chinese and non-Chinese Students (CS and Non-CS)			Ch3x2 (White & Korean)

Post-College (Inservice Art Teachers): Ch7  
 College: Ch2, Ch3, Ch13, Ch15, Ch17, Ch18, Ch19  
 Secondary: Ch9, Ch12, Ch14, Ch16  
 Middle School: Ch10  
 Elementary: Ch11, Ch12  
 Kindergarten: Ch4  
 All: Ch5, Ch6, Ch8  
 Total: 18 curriculum & lessons and 27 authors

\*The ethnicity category is based on the government's resources at <https://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/notice-files/not-od-15-089.html>.

I noticed that most chapter authors do not mention students' and instructors' own cultural backgrounds in their proposed curriculum or lesson design. This may indicate that they may not consider the cultural backgrounds of students and instructors as curricula factors that can contribute to the multicultural art education practice. As Stuhr (1992) asserts in her practical guidelines to form multicultural art curricula, both teachers and students bring their prior learning experiences as well as their own cultures and develop broader perspectives to collaboratively form a cultural-responsive art classroom. The cultural background of students and instructors has potential to be a considerable factor and a valuable asset and resource when designing curricula and instruction for successfully expanded multicultural art practices as viewed for a variety of cultural lenses.

### Recommendations and Conclusions (Lu and Zimmerman)

This book sheds light on insights how Chinese art and culture are being taught and what students are learning in their classrooms and other educational contexts. We offer some recommendations for readers who are interested in further teaching Chinese art and culture in a multicultural, community, global, and intercultural art education contexts. First, we think it is important to consider students' and instructors' cultural backgrounds as valuable assets and how instructors can blend or apply them to maximize and enrich culturally responsive art education. Second, it is critical to connect Chinese art and culture to students' native culture, the local community, the global, and eventually to intercultural contexts. We suggest helping students explore their native culture identity and community resources first and then compare commonalities and differences of art and culture among Chinese cultures, then students' home and community culture, and eventually other cultures around the world. Global and intercultural art education approaches in the context teaching Chinese art and culture may be innovative ideas to



many educators who have written about Chinese art and culture. As racial prejudice and biases against Chinese, Chinese Americans, and many other cultural and racial groups are reported today, we invite all art educators, when relevant, to develop curricula that include a focus on global and intercultural art education. Last, we encourage art educators to look back and see what they can learn from conversations of multicultural art educators in the past, consider and apply their insights into practice in the present, and move forward to the future by establishing results about teaching from a variety of cultural lenses.

Equity, diversity, and inclusion practices in art education can provide students with knowledge about the history, cultures, and contributions of many different groups and understanding that society is diverse and we are living in an intercultural world. Art educators have a responsibility to provide culturally responsive art education when bringing the world and multi-cultures into their art teaching environments. Through the arts, educators can begin by helping students recognize their cultural identities, explore their local heritages and cultures, and identify similarities and differences between themselves and others. With different cultural lenses and art education approaches, students can be educated to understand, honor, and appreciate that people from different backgrounds and heritages have different ways of seeing the world and they can be different but still share many similarities. Through arts and culturally responsive art education practices, students can cultivate and enhance their intercultural competencies that enable them to function productively in different cultural settings, to think and act appropriately in intercultural ways, and to communicate and work effectively with people from different cultural backgrounds (Leung et al., 2014) with diversity and harmony in a global and intercultural world.



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CHAPTER 2

**Nourishing Our Mind Through the Practice of Yangxin Painting:  
Strategies in Chinese Art for the Digital Generation**

Mei-Lan Lo  
Professor, Department of Arts and Creative Industries  
National Dong Hua University, Taiwan

**Abstract**

In this chapter, I describe one of my projects of teaching. I named it “Yangxin Painting” [養心畫]. Yang [養] means to cultivate and to nourish. Xin [心] means heart and mind. Yangxin Painting means painting with a nourishing mind for the digital generation in this course project. Yangxin Painting has a Chinese cultural heritage and can move actively from historical tradition to contemporary innovation. There are two purposes of this project: to provoke students’ creativity and critical thinking, and to cultivate students’ minds. Integrating both theory and practice, I have developed 10 creative teaching/learning strategies for teaching Chinese art with a special focus on Yangxin Painting. The process of my “Yangxin Painting” project started with the learners’ visual experiences, then moved to cultivation of their minds. Ten approaches for the course project include: (1) ink painting games, (2) creative writing, (3) web-based search, (4) advanced medium skills and forms, (5) art appreciation, (6) storytelling through filmmaking, (7) contemporary issues and critical study, (8) creating and researching special topics, (9) exhibition and presentation, and (10) digital art portfolio.

*Keywords:* Yangxin Painting, Chinese art, nourishing mind, innovation, visual art education

## Introduction

Chinese painting and calligraphy are Asian heritage which has important values - culturally, aesthetically, educationally, and historically. Chinese painting and calligraphy have made a unique contribution to the development of world civilization. In 2009, Chinese calligraphy was designated by the United Nations as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity. However, Chinese painting and calligraphy education are on the wane today in Taiwan.

Chinese art includes Chinese painting and calligraphy. In this chapter, I will describe a course project that I created as an example for developing artistic companionship and self-reflection on my teaching practices. I call this project “Yangxin Painting: Painting with a Nourishing Mind.” Yang [養] means to cultivate and to nourish. Xin [心] means heart and mind. Mind, in the Western context means an individual’s thoughts with a harmonious state while in the Asian context it means inner tranquility. I believe that painting techniques that are centered around cultivating our mind not only reflects Chinese cultural heritage but also serves as an innovative approach to move from traditional ways of learning Chinese art.

## Project Description and Course Design

The teaching of Yangxin Painting emphasizes immersing learners in experiential learning and uses multiple approaches and methods to achieve three goals: (1) to provoke student’s creativity and critical thinking, (2) to cultivate students’ minds, and (3) to advance my own teaching through Chinese painting and calligraphy.

### Yangxin Painting: Painting with a Nourishing Mind

What is Yangxin Painting? This is an original idea that I have developed and specialized for this course project. There are three main characteristics of Yangxin Painting. First, is to nurture the learner’s mind through meaningful art and aesthetic engagements. Facing the fast-paced and challenging social and political climate, I find it important to obtain a sense of harmony with a balanced mental status. Yangxin Painting is an approach that connects our body and mind with meditation, centering our energy for positive thinking, and redirecting negative or conflicting emotions. Similar to enjoying a spiritual spa that refreshes and regenerates our energy, Yangxin Painting helps learners look at the world with a positive attitude, treat people kindly, and seek spiritual relief. Second, teaching and learning about Yangxin Painting requires foremost attention to cultivation of the mind rather than visual representations. To do so, I orchestrated a series of dynamics to focus on immersive experiential learning activities with various strategies. Third, Yangxin Painting is student-centered. The process encourages learners to identify methods which are meaningful and suitable to their learning needs. Based on each individual’s needs and learning progress, I adjust and customize the content and procedure to develop individual or collaborative practices.

### Course Design

The teaching and learning of Yangxin Painting first started with visual experiences and then moved into mind cultivation. The design of this course was based on my own teaching experiences



with consideration of my students' learning interests. I then customized the course content in order to meet the needs of the learners who are the so-called digital generation. Course objectives are to: (1) guide university students to experience the heritage and innovation of Chinese arts, (2) provoke students' creativity and critical thinking through art-making and research, and (3) cultivate the mind of the digital generation by exercising a series of meaningful artistic expressions.

The course project is formulated to meet three hours a week for 18 weeks. It is equivalent to one semester in Taiwan. The course content includes both artistic expression and appreciation. Course delivery is divided into three modules (or stages) (see Table 1): (1) Stage I: basic, (2) Stage II: advanced, (3) Stage III: topic research and presentation. Teaching methods should be diversified and promote the students' creative expression. The learning process should be continuous, consistent, and sequential. Therefore, ten approaches/methods were developed and enumerated for teaching/learning: (1) ink painting games: play with ink, (2) creative writing, (3) web-based search, (4) advancing skills and forms using diverse art mediums, (5) art appreciation: learning from traditional and contemporary masterpieces, (6) storytelling through film making: creating a three-minute video and sharing it with an embedded QR code, (7) contemporary issues and critical study in Chinese art, (8) creating and researching special topics, (9) exhibition and presentation, and (10) creating a digital art portfolio as an eBook.

**Table 1**  
*Analysis of teaching/learning strategies*

Modules	Approaches/Methods	Content Outline (strategies/activities)	Key Concept
Stage I	1. Ink painting games	1-1 Experimental learning about the value of ink	Experimental learning
		1-2 Brush characteristics and the beauty of ink gradation	Practice
		1-3 Exploration of Yangxin Painting	Creative making
	2. Creative writing	2-1 Finding symmetrical Chinese characters	Aesthetic form: Symmetry
		2-2 Heritage and tradition in Chinese calligraphy	Calligraphy
		2-3 Word art creation	Art Word
	3. Web-based search	3-1 Keywords search on Chinese art	Art terminology
		3-2 Museum online open resources	Online learning
		3-3 Virtual Art Expo	



Stage II	4. Advanced skills, art medium, and form	4-1 Traditional Chinese art styles and skills 4-2 Creative expressions in contemporary Chinese art 4-3 Experiment and innovation	Art style  Creative expression Innovation
	5. Art appreciation	Learning from masterpieces including traditional and contemporary Chinese arts	Traditional and contemporary Chinese art
	6. Storytelling	Shooting a three-minute video and sharing it with an embedded QR code	Mid-term assessment Storytelling QR code
	7. Contemporary issue and critical study	Concept development of “Yangxin Painting” 7-1 Brainstorming 7-2 Q & A 7-3 Further Thinking about Yangxin Painting	Yangxin Painting  Brainstorming  Critical study
Stage III	8. Creating and researching special topics	Creating “Yangxin Painting” through (1) Meditation (2) Define & select methods (3) Studio practice	Research on Yangxin Painting  Making a Yangxin Painting
	9. Exhibition and presentation	Not only exhibition but also presentation in public	Final assessment
	10. Digital art portfolio as an eBook	10-1: Individual: Art portfolio 10-2: Whole class: making a digital book together	verbal & visual presentation Art portfolio
Evaluation: multiple methods, including creating, observation, informal interviews, document analysis (students’ work, worksheet, etc.); considering both formative and summative assessments.			

### Teaching/Learning Strategies

Teaching and learning are two sides of a coin. Since I divided the course into three modules (or stages), each stage has its own objectives, required skills, and teaching methods. In the following sections, I will briefly describe each content stage with teaching/learning strategies.

#### *Stage I: Basic Level*

In the Basic Level, students focused on exploration and experiential learning where they learn by doing and reflecting on their learning progress.

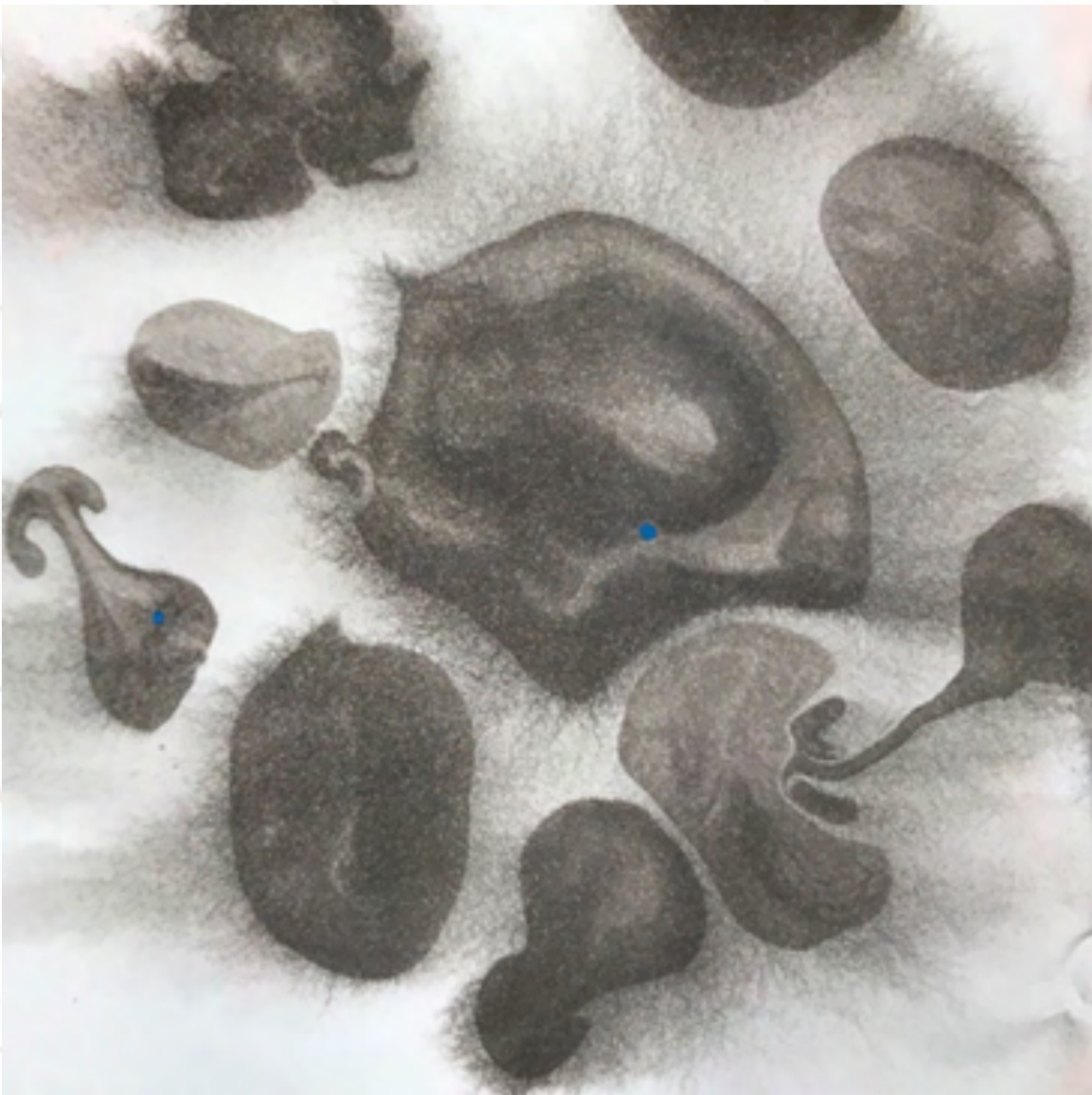
### 1. Ink Painting Game

#### *1-1 Experimental learning about the value of ink*

Explore and experiment with different values of ink through ink games. Except for free exploration by students themselves, I also provide my sample works for students to observe and practice, such as the dripping method (see Figure 1), and wet-on-wet method (see Figure 2).

#### **Figure 1**

*Dripping method, by Mei-Lan LO*



**Figure 2**  
*Wet-on-wet method, by Mei-Lan LO*



***1-2 Characteristics of brushstrokes and the beauty of ink gradation***

Gradient technique: First, moisten the whole brush, then add lighter ink onto the main body of the brush, and add darker ink onto the tip of the brush.



**Figure 3**

*Learning about characteristics of the brushstrokes and practicing the value of ink gradation*



by Mei-Lan LO



by Christine Flint Sato

### ***1-3 Exploration of Yangxin Painting***

To explore the Yangxin Painting freely with inner body energy or “Qi” [氣], students used and moved the ink brush to draw lines and shapes on rice paper. The following examples are students’ works from an ink workshop, led by a friend of mine, Christine Flint Sato. Sato is a contemporary artist. During her ink workshops (see Figure 4), she employed lines, simple shapes, and Chinese characters to demonstrate how to do mindful painting to nourish the mind with her students (Sato, 2014).



**Figure 4**

*A contemporary artist demonstrated painting with a nourishing mind to her students. Examples of Students' Work (Sato, 2014, p. 111 and p. 115)*



I Provide more practice with different ways of expression. For example, line dancing, free-will painting, calligraphic painting, dot-line-flat pattern, ink and brush games. I also develop ways of meditation to cultivate mindfulness [靜心], nourish Qi [養氣], and have vigorous hands [活手] to help the experiential practice of Yangxin Painting.

**2. Creative Writing**

Creative writing combines calligraphy and art. Learning content includes finding Chinese characters that reflect aesthetic elements such as symmetry. Practice calligraphy, signature, and artistic rendering of characters.

**2-1 Finding Symmetrical Chinese Characters**

I used a worksheet with Chinese characters that reflect different symmetrical structures, such as bilateral symmetry, top-bottom symmetry, and symmetry in all four directions (see Table 2). Brainstorming in groups was used to intrigue/encourage students to find more symmetrical Chinese characters.

**Table 2**  
*Three types of symmetrical Chinese characters*

Type of symmetry	Chinese character examples
Bilateral symmetry	昌、華、品、圓
Top-bottom symmetry	臣、炎、卡
Symmetrical in all four directions	中、田、米、亞、車

### 2-2 Heritage and Tradition in Chinese Calligraphy

Calligraphy is a form of writing in Chinese society, and it is also considered a form of visual art. The objectives of this session are to (1) enhance the students' knowledge of traditional Chinese Calligraphy, and (2) inherit and create a variety of Chinese calligraphy styles.

**Figure 5**  
*Examples of evolution and style of Chinese calligraphy (Lee et al., 2020, p. 5)*

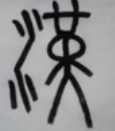



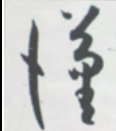
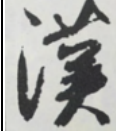

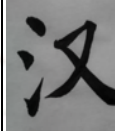




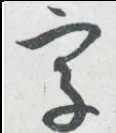
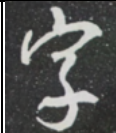





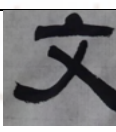
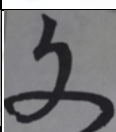


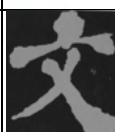
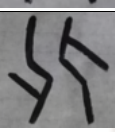
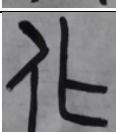

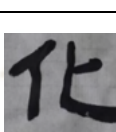
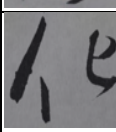
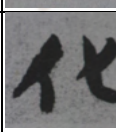
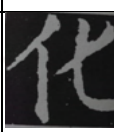
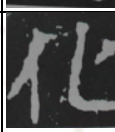
Evolution and Style of Chinese Calligraphy							
甲骨文	金文	小篆	隸書	草書	行書	楷書(繁)	楷書(簡)
Oracle bone script	Bronze script	Small seal script	Clerical script	Cursive script	Running script	Regular script in traditional format	Regular script in simplified format
Jiǎgǔwén	Jīnwén	Xiǎozhuàn	Lìshū	Cǎoshū	Xíngshū	Kǎishū Traditional	Kǎishū Simplified
							
							
							
							



Figure 5 reveals examples of different styles of Chinese calligraphy. Traditional Chinese calligraphy requires the correct stroke order, the structure of the character, balance of the shape, and rhythm of the writing speed. With more than 2000 years of development, different types of Chinese calligraphy were also developed at different times (Lee et al., 2020). Yu (2011) defined calligraphy as “a kind of line and space art, with the use of a conical brush as the main tool in writing Chinese characters” (p. 237). Sato (1999) noted that “the black line and the white space are the two formal elements in calligraphic art” (p. 1). Mediaville (1996) argued that contemporary calligraphic practice can be defined as “the art of giving form to signs in an expressive, harmonious, and skillful manner” (p. 18).

I showed several “Learning Calligraphy in Three Minutes” YouTube tutorials to my students. I provided QR code samples for them to practice with different types of calligraphy. Because my students have accesses to the Internet anytime and anywhere to watch these videos of six different writing demonstrations, including Dàzhuàn [大篆] (Big Seal Script), Xiǎozhuàn [小篆] (Small seal script), Lìshū [隸書] (clerical script), Kǎishū [楷書] (regular script), Xíngshū [行書] (running script), and cǎoshū [草書] (cursive script), I allowed them to choose their favorite type of calligraphy to observe and learn. This is important because it allows my students to decide what they want to learn, as well as feel motivated to learn.

### Figure 6

*On-line learning materials for calligraphy demonstration by Min-Xuan Wu, Youtube, Learning Calligraphy in Three Minutes (Lee et al., 2020, p. 21)*



### 2-3 Word Art Creation: Artistic Rendering of Characters

I encouraged my students to create new styles and designs of Chinese calligraphy characters after learning traditional calligraphy. Multiple applications of Chinese calligraphy in this project have been developed, such as (1) finding different ways of using calligraphy on movie posters, (2) artistic rendering of characters, and (3) personal signature design.

### 3. Web-based Search

Web-based search is especially suitable for the digital generation to encourage and facilitate students' autonomous learning. To ensure cyber safety and efficiency, I explained four different ways of utilizing Google search: keywords search, museum online open source, art message, and the virtual Art Expo. I also encouraged my students to use Apps to explore more resources on Chinese art and calligraphy.

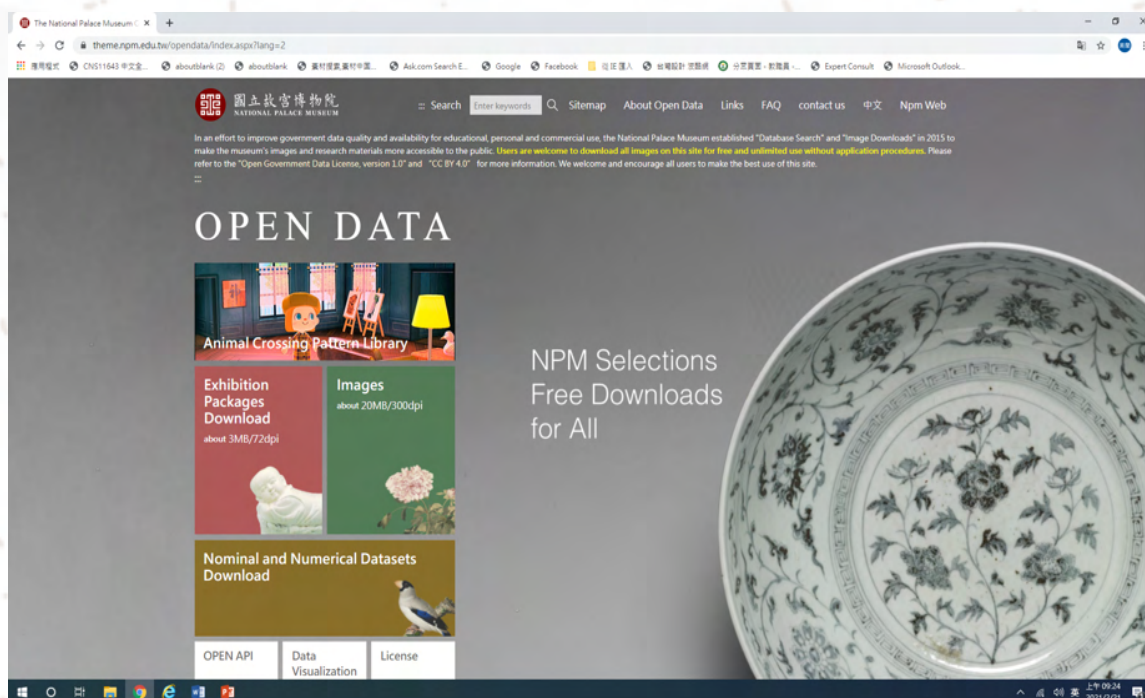
#### 3-1 Keyword Search on Chinese Art

- (1) Concept learning: Use Google to search keywords, such as calligraphy, ink painting, ancient theory of “six methods” [六法], “three distances” [三遠], “Literati painting” [文人畫], and others. The main idea is to help students dive deeper into learning and to collect data for further study, such as the concept, history, and knowledge of Chinese art.
- (2) Style comparison: Use Google/Images to search and observe various ink paintings. Decide on a theme from the search result, such as “traditional vs. contemporary”, a comparative analysis of traditional and contemporary expression, or different styles of calligraphy pieces. I also introduced important art vocabularies, terms, and styles.

#### 3-2 Museum Online Open Source

I encouraged my students to try their best and use online open sources, such as Open Data from the National Palace Museum (NPM) (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7**  
*Example of using an Open Source from the National Palace Museum, n.d-a*





NPM's online images database includes 2,366 paintings and 838 calligraphy works (National Palace Museum, n.d.a). It is a rich and helpful resource for Chinese arts learning. According to the National Palace Museum website:

*The National Palace Museum established “Database Search” and “Image Downloads” in 2015 to make the museum’s images and research materials more accessible to the public. Users are welcome to download all images on this site for free and unlimited use without application procedures.* (National Palace Museum, n.d.-a)

The museum's online open database can be a great resource for teaching and learning about Chinese arts and culture. I suggested three other online open sources to my students for their learning, such as “The Digital Museum Project”, “Painting and Calligraphy of the Northern Song” [大觀書畫], and “NPM Selections” [典藏精選] from the National Palace Museum website (National Palace Museum, n.d.-b). Students are also encouraged to explore other museums or galleries through online open resources.

### ***3-3 Virtual Art Expo***

I divided my students into different groups, and they worked as a team to showcase a “Virtual Art Expo” for the whole class. The Art Expo could be a website, webpages, or an APP. As this is the digital generation, my students feel confident to search open data online. They can easily find many kinds of resources, such as art galleries and museums, artists' studios, creative and cultural shops, and multiple styles of art expression for their Art Expo. This strategy is mutually beneficial to both my students and myself in terms of learning and teaching.

## ***Stage II. Advanced***

In the Advanced Stage, the content emphasizes both art-making and art criticism. Varied materials and methods are developed in this stage to provoke the student's deeper learning.

### **4. Advanced Skills, Art Medium, and Form**

The advanced level emphasizes techniques, art medium, and form. My teaching method combined both traditional techniques and contemporary experimentation with new materials.

#### ***4-1 Traditional Chinese Art Styles and Skills***

There are two main techniques in Chinese paintings, Gongbi [工筆] (fine and meticulous brushwork) and Xieyi [寫意] (expressive brushwork). I introduced both techniques to my students and had them practice both.

In “Yangxin Painting,” I have further developed some brushwork concepts and techniques, which I also showed to my students. My teaching method is “from art appreciation to creation” to enhance the students' understanding of different art styles, as well as to advance their skills, art medium, and different forms of Chinese arts.

#### ***4-2 Modern Chinese Arts and Creative Expression***

The Yangxin Painting approach builds upon Chinese cultural heritage and open opportunities for contemporary perspectives. I introduced an influential artist, Liu Kuo-Sung [劉國松] (1932-), to inspire my students' creative expression and to generate further discussions on Chinese paintings. Students were encouraged to find additional contemporary art ideas and experiment with a variety of tools, techniques, processes, and forms. My students' creative expressions were inspired by learning various masterpieces, artworks found online, and their peers' works.

#### ***4-3 Experiment and Innovation: Experiential Learning and Innovative Approach in Making Chinese Arts***

There are different ways to create a “Yangxin Painting - painting with a nourishing mind.” One example is to ask the students to reflect on “what is meaningful to me/you? and why?” to encourage them to think deeply why and how they want to utilize and recreate certain styles in their own works. I expected my students to be autonomous and reflective learners. Therefore, I encouraged them to freely but mindfully select needed materials and carefully employ skills to facilitate their experiment with new ideas and different techniques. Practicing and creating with an open mind, my students' works are filled with unexpected, amazing, and beautiful visual elements. These diverse but unique artworks confirm my belief that the Yangxing Painting process that highlights individual creativity and critical discussions deepens cultivation of the mind from mere visual experiences through imitation.

### **5. Art Appreciation: Learning from Masterpieces**

The objective of art appreciation is to enhance students' content knowledge and their understanding of Chinese arts with masterpieces. To achieve this, the selection of masterpieces is very important. After referring to some books (Hsiao, 2013; Lee, 2021; Lion Art Editorial Board, 1997; Sullivan & Vainker, 2018) and museum collections in Taiwan, I selected 10 masterpieces (see Table 2) for the art appreciation segment of my course. To me, the challenge is how to connect art learning with students' minds. So, these masterpieces not only contain cultural heritage but broaden the definition and aesthetics of Chinese arts. Students learned contextual, historical, and cultural significance, allowing personal interpretations and imaginations. Through observations and discussions, they traveled in the landscapes with an understanding of metaphors, while taking in the breath of spring. They observed attentively, appreciating aesthetic experiences of three wonders (poetry, calligraphy and painting). They understand what is literati painting, and can identify art styles, etc. I also added the strategy of “storytelling” to give students the chance to make choices by themselves.

The process of art appreciation engages students in looking at and talking about masterpieces. I used pre-selected masterpieces to form discussions. I started with initial questions such as what do you see? what do you know? and how do you feel? to entice students' interests. Then I gradually encouraged them to use their own words to describe, analyze, interpret, and evaluate these masterpieces (Feldman, 1982). To advanced students' learning, I also offered art vocabularies, related concepts, and art history content knowledge during discussions.

**Table 3**  
*10 Masterpieces for art appreciation segment*

1	Fan Kuan (c.960-c.1030) Travelers Among Mountains and Streams (Song Dynasty)	范寬（約 960 年—約 1030 年） 谿山行旅圖 (宋)
<a href="https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000959">https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000959</a>		
2	Kuo Hsi (c.1020-c.1090) Early Spring (1072) (Song Dynasty)	郭熙（活動於西元十一世紀） 早春圖（1072） (宋)
<a href="https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000960">https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000960</a>		
3	Ni Tsan (1301-1374) The Jung-hsi Studio (Yuan Dynasty)	倪瓚（1301-1374） 容膝齋圖 (元)
<a href="https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000992">https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000992</a>		
4	Ts'ui Po Magpies and Hare (Song Dynasty)	崔白 雙喜圖 (宋)
<a href="https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000973">https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000973</a>		
5	Yun Shouping (1633-1690) The Five Purities (Chin Dynasty or Qing Dynasty)	惲壽平（1633-1690） 五清圖 (清)
<a href="https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04009140">https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04009140</a>		
6	Liang K'ai (13 <sup>th</sup> century) Immortal in Splashed Ink (Song Dynasty)	梁楷（活動於十三世紀初期） 潑墨仙人 (宋)
<a href="https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000969">https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000969</a>		
7	Comparison (1) Su Han-chen (1094-1172) Children at Play in an Autumnal Garden (Song Dynasty)  (2) Anonymous Children at Play on a Winter's Day	對照比較 (1) 蘇漢臣（1094-1172） 秋庭戲嬰圖 (宋)  (2) 作者不詳 冬日嬰戲



	Song Dynasty	(宋)
	(1) <a href="https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000963">https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/Article.aspx?sNo=04000963</a> (2) <a href="https://theme.npm.edu.tw/opendata/DigitImageSets.aspx?sNo=04015186&amp;lang=2&amp;Key=Children%20at%20Play%20in%20a%20Winter%20Garden^^11&amp;pageNo=1">https://theme.npm.edu.tw/opendata/DigitImageSets.aspx?sNo=04015186&amp;lang=2&amp;Key=Children%20at%20Play%20in%20a%20Winter%20Garden^^11&amp;pageNo=1</a>	
8	Li Keran(1907-1989) Mi Dian worshipping the stone (Modern)	李可染 (1907-1989) 米顛拜石圖 (現代)
	<a href="https://www.artfoxlive.com/product/3973393.html">https://www.artfoxlive.com/product/3973393.html</a>	
9	Liu Kuo-Sung (1932-) The Transformation of the Month No. 29 (Contemporary)	劉國松 (1932-) 月之蛻變之 29 (當代)
	<a href="https://www.tfam.museum/Collection/Collection.aspx?ddlLang=zh-tw">https://www.tfam.museum/Collection/Collection.aspx?ddlLang=zh-tw</a>	
10	Wang Xizhi (303-361) Lantingji Xu (Orchid Pavilion Preface) (Jin Dynasty)	王羲之 (303-361) 蘭亭集序 (晉)
	<a href="https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%98%AD%E4%BA%AD%E9%9B%86%E5%BA%8F">https://zh.wikipedia.org/wiki/%E8%98%AD%E4%BA%AD%E9%9B%86%E5%BA%8F</a>	

## 6. Storytelling through Film Making

I included Storytelling through Film Making as a student-led project to encourage student voices. Serving as reflective outlets after our art appreciation discussions, students embarked on their own journey to create a three-minute video. They had to turn their videos into QR codes for easy sharing. Storytelling is an effective way for students to take control of their learning as independent thinkers (Akyeampong, 2018). I also used this as a mid-point assessment of my student’s learning. Students could choose their own filming topic as long as they applied what they had learned in this course and highlighted their own ways of creating, understanding, and appreciating Chinese arts. Storytelling as a means of autonomous learning also enhances students’ art capability, creativity, and further cultivates their sense of aesthetics. With this mid-point assessment, students not only visualized what they had learned, but also presented their narratives as a film.

## 7. Contemporary Issues and Critical Study in Contemporary Art and Chinese Art

In this section, the class addressed concepts development of “Yangxin Painting” and its relations with contemporary issues and critical studies in contemporary art and Chinese art. There are three components, namely brainstorming, Q&A and further thinking to advance developing an idea for a “Yangxin Painting”. I prepared teaching materials and guiding questions to stimulate class discussions, highlighting Yangxin Painting’s emphasis on developing students’ creative and critical thinking skills.



### ***7-1 Brainstorming***

I first asked my students to describe the concept of “Yangxin Painting” in one or two words. The words my students came up with were: joy, well-being, fun, free, nature, meditation, mindfulness, concentration, immersive experience, fulfilled, free will, creativity, cordial, lovely, cozy, cheerful, pleasant, delightful, and linking good things, etc. I also noticed that most words were optimistic with positive attitudes.

I then realized that this brainstorming activity linked to previous course experience, such as Stage I: “1-3 Exploration of Yangxin Painting” and Stage II “4-3 Experiment and innovation”. Both are creative activities and emphasize free artistic expression. To connect students’ learning with their voices and mind cultivation, I further designed questions for a critical study in contemporary art and Chinese art to enhance their critical thinking. These discussions became a supplement for their artistic experience.

### ***7-2 Q & A***

The main objective of the Q&A segment is to help students understand, investigate, and think critically about contemporary art and Chinese art (the visual images they encounter). Focusing on issues surrounding the “Yangxin Painting” approach, I developed the following questions to guide my students’ thinking and discussions:

1. What is the subject matter of this work?
2. What do you see? What else do you see?
3. What materials, techniques, and processes did the artist use?
4. What do you care about? Record your observations with citations as evidence.
5. What does it mean? What does it mean to you?
6. How does it relate to its historical and contemporary contexts?
7. What might its influences be?
8. Question for students’ self-reflective contemplation: What else do I want to know about the work?

I found that the internet and peer sharing were helpful for inspiring creative ideas while Q&A discussions with the teacher’s instructions were helpful in enhancing critical thinking. Critical study in contemporary art has raised some issues, such as conflict, change, desire, disaster, diversity, gender, human rights, environmental protection, peace, etc. These involve social, political, economic, and educational issues and enlarge the students’ views. However, Chinese art always enables us to escape chaos and soothes the heart. Students’ views in Chinese art are more caring about spirit and self-cultivation, which is reflected in their landscape and flower-bird paintings. There is a gap between contemporary art issues and Chinese art expression. This is an opportunity for creativity to fill it in and Yangxin Painting conforms to the trends/situation.

### ***7-3 Further Thinking about Yangxin Painting***

In this segment, I encouraged my students to think further about Yangxin Painting. “What is

your definition of Yangxin Painting?” “How do you express your ideas or the key concepts of Yangxin Painting in a creative way?” The concept of “Yangxin Painting” is defined and developed by individuals. So there were different ways of thinking and expression.

To summarize the benefits of my triangular approach to facilitate the learning of Yangxin Painting. Firstly, the brainstorming activity boost the students’ diffused thinking about creativity; secondly, the Q&A section promoted critical thinking; and thirdly, further thinking about Yangxin Painting integrated the students’ creative and critical views. The learning process from masterpieces of art appreciation to experiences of storytelling, and further critical study of Q&A questions had a good link to Yangxin Painting, nourishing the students’ minds. They formed the basis for their next deeper learning in topic research and presentation.

### ***Stage III. Topic Research and Presentation***

At this stage, the students have deepened their learning by integrating it with experience gained from previous course activities. Here, they concluded their independent research on a special topic related to Chinese art as related to their creation for several weeks. They then curated a virtual exhibition with a presentation, sharing their research findings with the class.

#### **8. Create and Research Special Topics**

After completing basic and advanced levels, I asked the students to conduct an independent study focusing on the topic of creation, and research their own definitions of “Yangxin Painting”. This segment focused on painting with a nourishing mind by expanding interesting words that are associated with “Yangxin Painting” during the brainstorming process. I encouraged my students to define and further study their own ideas on Yangxin Painting so that it would be meaningful for them.

My role was to assist and support my students according to their interests and research capabilities to complete their individual study. I reminded them to “Cultivate your own mind: to be yourself.” with the following encouraging statements:

- You will define your own concept of “Yangxin Painting.”
- There are different ways to paint with a nourishing mind. Please select the best ways for yourself.
- Apply your own method to develop your own style.
- Free will: There is no boundary and restriction in creating your work of art. You can try and do your best!

I showed a few examples of Yangxin Painting with different expressive styles to my students (see Figure 8). I pointed out to them that Yangxin Painting welcomes free expression regardless of the size of canvas, form, or media. These examples present various ideas and ways of expression, such as experimental innovation, observation, and imagination; different subject matter, such as nature landscapes or flowers; as well as various skills and techniques, such as Gongbi, Xieyi, rendering, splash, collage, signs, automatic technique, and digital design, etc.

**Figure 8**

*Various methods of creative expression for creating Yangxin Paintings (painting with a nourishing mind)*

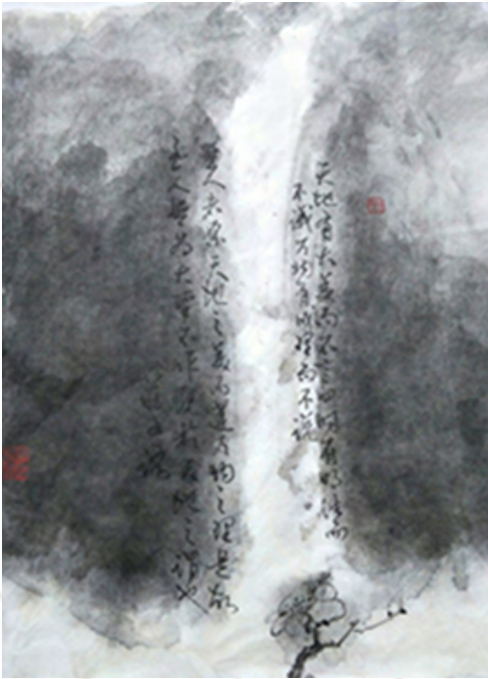


Freewill and Accidental Beauty  
By Mei-Lan LO

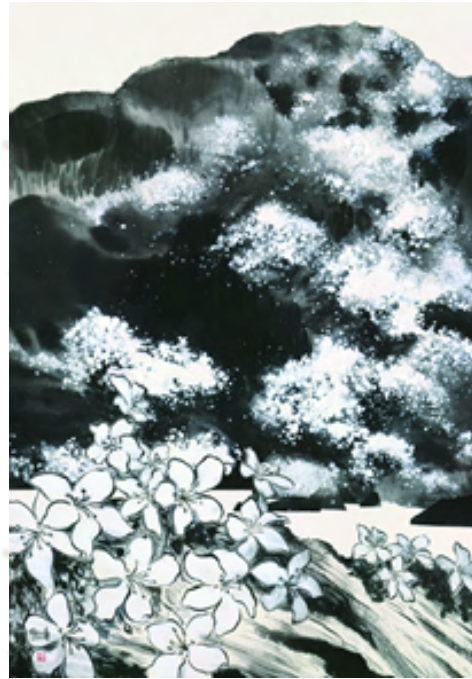


Xieyi Orchid  
By Mei-Lan LO





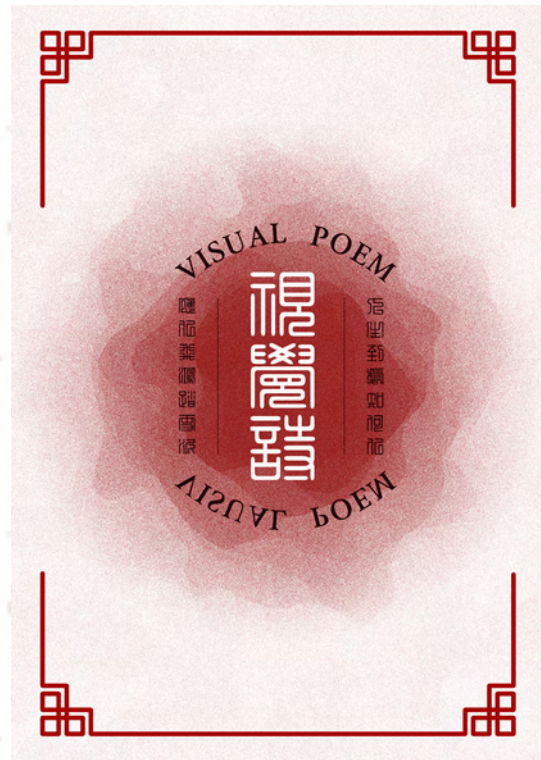
The World Has Great Beauty  
By Shew-Hua Lee



Taiwan Landscape with Tung Blossom  
By Shu-Hua Lai



Green Shade  
By Chia-Hsien Lin



Visual Poem  
By Yu-Ling Su





Flowing Rocks  
By Christine Flint Sato



Sky Rocks  
By Christine Flint Sato

Yangxin Painting can not only be transformed from traditional and modern Chinese art, but can also absorb international ideas. For example, Sato is a British sumi ink artist who has studied Japanese calligraphy and Chinese ink painting for a long time. According to her artist statement of how she created her own Yangxin Painting:

*I am inspired by the natural world: Its patterns, energies, and movements. I combine large forms, which are often composed of graded washes and arbitrary marks, with detailed brushwork. This gives the painting both macro and micro elements of an intuited vision of reality. I work in dialogue with the sumi ink, releasing it onto the paper, allowing it to be itself and then responding to it as I build up an artwork. (C. Sato, personal communication, November 16, 2020)*

To facilitate my students' learning, I developed my teaching content based on their interests and capabilities. The students and I discussed their potential ideas for a theme to conduct research. They were encouraged to choose a research topic that either relates to their artistic creation or art appreciation. For example, some students created their own "Yangxin Painting" with self-selective mediums, such as traditional ink tools, or mixed media with acrylic, even digital media such as photoshop; some developed a database to showcase various examples of "Yangxin Paintings."

I reminded my students to pay special attention to what and how painting with a nourishing mind has been reflected in Yangxin Paintings. I found that there were different styles of expressions used by my students. Some students worked slowly and were detail orientated while some worked intuitively with a carefree mindset. Problem solving was also considered as part of the formative

assessment in this course. I observed the students on how they solved problems when they faced challenges during their creative process.

### **9. Exhibition and Presentation**

At the beginning of the semester, the students were aware of the requirement of curating a virtual exhibition and public presentation. To achieve this, my students used a democratic process by electing a student curator to lead the end-of-the-semester exhibition. Acting as a counselor, I worked with the student curator to organize the exhibition and presentation. The exhibition topic and presentation program were decided by all the students.

Each student had a 15-minute presentation, including (1) a brief introduction to myself, (2) outline of the research, (3) theme, creative ideas, and process, (4) work analysis: content and form, such as sign, meaning, color, composition, special mediums, and techniques, (5) conclusion, and (6) references. To prepare, the students practiced their presentations and shared their ideas with several rehearsals by themselves in free time. By doing so, every student had the opportunity to exhibit his/her artwork and be accustomed to giving an oral presentation to the public.

Although the exhibition and oral presentation caused the students some stress, the results were successful. My students made efforts to display their creative works, highlighting their individual research. In the process of preparing and presenting, they pushed themselves to produce good quality works and performed well for their presentations. This reflected how Yangxin Painting's emphasis on immersive experiential learning is beneficial in fostering the cultivation of the mind of the digital generation. The exhibition and oral presentation also demonstrated the learning processes of "Painting with a nourishing mind" by effectively combining our visual experiences and mindsets.

### **10. Digital Art Portfolio as an eBook**

I considered the art portfolio an effective way for individual students to document how one develops personal style and ideas. The University of the Arts London provided the following definition of a portfolio:

*A portfolio is a window into your world. It is a collection of work that shows off your skills, personality, and creativity. (The University of the Arts London, 2021)*

I used a metacognitive approach to help my students translate their learning experiences into a stylish art portfolio. Metacognition refers to the knowledge and control people have over their thinking and learning activities (Flavell, 1979). Brezin (1980) proposed five steps in metacognitive teaching strategies: planning, attending, encoding, reviewing, and evaluating. To facilitate my students' needs in creating their own e-portfolio, I adapted Brezin's approach and developed a set of easy-to-follow steps as a metacognitive approach for my students: (1) I think, (2) I know, (3) I do, (4) I keep progress through reflection, and (5) integration and sharing with others. The goal is to tailor the process in order to accommodate the students' needs when they want to show their ideas, knowledge, learning process, improvements, and results. At the end of the semester, I assembled the students' e-portfolios into an eBook. The portfolio serves as an evaluation tool for



me to understand each student's performance and learning progress (Lo, 2009).

### **Reflections and Suggestions**

In this chapter, I laid out the strategies I used to teach my students who are predominantly growing up as a digital generation. I focused on Chinese arts with particular reference to my newly developed approach of “Yangxin Painting.”

The Yangxin Painting aims to cultivate a person's well-being and to make the world a better place. It is meaningful for learners to find a way to be themselves. Yangxin Painting is suitable for learners with different learning styles. It also helps train students to be independent, autonomous, and active learners. Villeneuve once said, “Tell me and I forget; show me and I remember; involve me and I understand” (Villeneuve, 2015, p. 2). The Yangxin Painting approach provides a dynamic learning environment with multiple aspects to assess students' progress. Students can be assessed for their creative process, observation, informal interviews, and documents-based course works (students' work, worksheet, and portfolio, etc.). Both my formative assessment and summative assessment considered both the learning process and the results. Besides using the Yangxin Painting approach to assess students' learning, I also find it useful to evaluate my own instruction.

To break from traditional ways of learning Chinese art, which were imitation-driven, didactic, and teacher-led, I began my journey of developing the pedagogy of Yangxin Painting years ago. Although the examples I have described in this chapter were tailored specifically for teaching/learning Chinese art and culture, I am confident that teaching strategies such as: implementing visual experience to cultivate our mind, utilizing multiple and systematic strategies for teaching/learning art, and caring about autonomous and individual young people are impactful in shaping students' perspectives on life.

Although this project was conducted with university students who are considered to be the digital generation, I believe that the Yangxin Painting approach could benefit intergenerational co-learning between old and young. In the future, I will explore ways to connect my college students in visual art departments with elders in the community to create Yangxin Painting together.

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**Figure contributors**

LAI, Shu-Hua 賴淑華/ Retired Art Teacher, Ink Painting Artist

LEE, Shew-Hua 李秀華/ Professor, National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan

LIN, Chia-Hsien 林家賢/ Graduate student, National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan

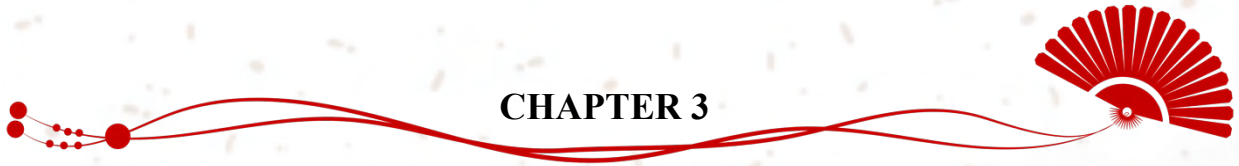
LO, Mei-Lan 羅美蘭/ Professor, National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan

Sato, Christine Flint/ British sumi ink artist in Japan

SU, Yu-Ling 蘇諭吟/ University student, National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan

WU, Min-Xuan 吳旻軒/ Graduate student, National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan





## CHAPTER 3

### **Student Engagement with Chinese Art and Culture Through Autoethnographic Exploration**

Ryan Shin  
Professor  
University of Arizona

Victoria Cook  
Lecturer  
University of Arizona

#### **Abstract**

In this chapter, we discuss our observations and reflections on teaching Chinese art and culture in a large public university in the Southwest. We share not only the pedagogical strategies of teaching Chinese art and culture, but also how our students engaged with Chinese art and culture through two main projects: a visual research journal and autoethnographic art. Considering a range of student cultures of various backgrounds, we share how they expressed their personal and cultural identities, values, and familial or community connections, forming a community of learners around the cultural themes of Chinese art and culture. The three main outcomes of our class included developing a sense of belonging in the classroom, the integration of Chinese and non-Chinese culture, and connection-making through objects and stories. The students participated in autoethnographic writing and art-making as self-reflective learning and inquiry of Chinese art and culture. When student learning was centered on the art and culture of China, we learned that the Chinese students were eager to learn, share and engage with their heritage culture, and the non-Asian students gained an appreciation for and showed great respect for Chinese art and culture. They appreciated the value and ubiquity of Asian culture in their community, gaining an understanding of deeply symbolic and cultural meanings and messages, developing healthy attitudes toward and relationships with Chinese art and culture.

*Keywords:* autoethnographic exploration, pedagogical strategy, visual research journal

## Introduction

This chapter contains our observations and reflections on teaching Chinese art and culture, a general education course at the University of Arizona. We have taught this class as collaborative, individual, and online course instructors. In this chapter, we share not only the pedagogical strategies and benefits of teaching Chinese art and culture, but also report what we learned from teaching the course in terms of what students experience in our class, beyond acquiring historical and cultural facts, knowledge, and information. We also describe how we embrace a range of student cultures of various backgrounds, including Chinese and non-Chinese students, immigrant students, and international students. Finally, we address how we form a community of learners around the themes of Chinese art and culture.

Among the diversity of our course topics and projects, we select and describe two main projects, which highlight the most significant form of student engagement: a visual research journal and autoethnographic art-making. These projects help develop a community of learners respecting the values of other class member's cultures and views. Beyond that, the course focus was Chinese art and culture, so we share our findings and discussions within that context. We also note that both Chinese and Chinese American students contributed actively to the class, sharing their firsthand experiences and cultural knowledge from their family experiences and community connections. Below is our description of our students' responses to the class projects and three main themes associated with their learning.

### Student Engagement with Chinese Art and Culture

In our course, the students were typically divided between two groups: Chinese and other Asian students who attempted to gain further knowledge about their own cultures, and non-Asian students who had little to no experience in the study of non-western culture. Our focus on this class was not merely acquiring Chinese cultural knowledge and information, but we also invited our students to engage in self-reflective learning to explore objects in East Asia as critical and intercultural learners. They were invited to apply what they learned in class to researching art, crafts, objects, and cultural practices in their own community, gaining an understanding that these cultural products carry the essence of art and culture. In doing so, the students were expected to acquire an appreciation for Chinese art and culture as expressions of values, worldviews, and lifestyles in various places of East Asia. In addition, the students also created self-reflective art-making through the process of cultural reflection and learning. This practice allowed them to share their cultural identity by actively integrating the notion of self or identity within culture.

### Visual Research Journal

Throughout the semester, the students were required to keep a visual journal as a blog documenting Chinese and other Asian art, objects, crafts, exhibits, performances, or cultural practices they observed in Tucson and other cities they might visit during the semester. Their entries should include a visual representation, either a photograph, drawing or another created piece of their original art that depicted the image. In some cases, our students provided both a photograph and a created piece of original art to fully articulate their new understanding of the image and its meanings. To find these images and objects for their journal, they were encouraged

to explore their surroundings, such as Chinese markets, restaurants, cultural centers, gift shops and bookstores, Asian-themed botanical gardens, and local cultural events or festivals. If they had visited a Chinese city, they could document and explore any Chinese objects, events, streets, environments, and cultural practices from their experiences. In each entry, the students included their own reflection and analysis of how the viewing of the image, object, or visit impacted their understanding of art and culture. They were encouraged to consider ideas such as: Did this image remind me of something similar from an experience from my own background? How did this image expand my knowledge and understanding of the culture? How can I integrate new, gained knowledge into my current understandings of art and culture? How did my perceptions of the culture change as a result of my viewing this image? The students were also encouraged to respond to their classmates' blogs with short comments, emoticons, and personal reflections on how they related to their own ideas and experiences from their own culture.

### **Autoethnographic Art**

Autoethnographic art serves as a form of self-reflective expression that invites the students to explore their personal experience and connect their autobiographical story to wider cultural and social meanings and understandings. Autoethnography is a study of *Auto* (self) using *Ethnography* (a qualitative research method in which a researcher uses participant observation and interviews to gain a deeper understanding of a group's culture) to locate and investigate the meaning of self within a culture or society (Bochner & Ellis, 2014). In the visual form of autoethnography, autoethnographic art focuses on the student's subjective experience while studying the beliefs, traditions, and practices of others. For the purposes of our course, we defined autoethnographic art-making as a teaching and learning practice that focuses on the creation and critical evaluation of art that explores self and self within culture at the center of the curriculum. As autoethnographies often take the form of self-reflective writing (Cole & Knowles, 2000), this visualization allows students to explore their identity and culture.

Additionally, the students were asked to record their own cultural exploration in their research journal. Each of their journal entries were autoethnographic in nature, meaning they could be written and/or visual representations of their experiences of self within their culture. Discussions on the nature and practice of autoethnographic art preceded class assignments. The reflective element of the assignment is designed to enhance the students' capacity to appreciate and better understand the importance of individual experiences and knowledge within cultures. Autoethnographic exploration allows for students to immerse themselves in a study of themselves within their own culture. For non-Chinese students, it is a way to identify and connect, compare and contrast Chinese culture with their own; and for Chinese students, it often captures their interest in the lives of their ancestors and traditions familiar to them. In many cases, we found that non-Chinese students did not claim identification or connection with any culture. Thus this exercise helped them to generate new understandings of their underlying ties to their own ancestors and cultural beliefs and practices. The reflective art the students produced illustrated an identification of themselves as a part of a larger set of connected values, norms, and traditions. Their created images and shared reflections revealed commonalities about how they define and ground themselves in culture by shared traditions of food, dress, customs, artistic and aesthetic inclinations. Generally speaking, the autoethnographic component encourages students to examine the ways in which their own experiences can serve as a conduit to learning about culture in an



inclusive way (Poulos, 2008).

As a visual form, autoethnographic art allowed the students to view themselves and their own cultural experiences within the framework of others within the class. More specifically, autoethnographic art is added to further individual and collective understandings of self and others within the art classroom. Using imagery and narratives from their recollections and explorations allows the students the opportunity to jog their memories, speak to family members, and ask them new questions about their culture. In these ways, they are invited to explore understandings of a sense of self within their individual cultural beliefs, backgrounds and practices. Additionally, they are encouraged to examine and share the experiences that contribute to the development and understanding of their own worldview.

In both formal and informal settings, we dedicated a considerable amount of class time to discussing and sharing the reflective process of autoethnographic art experiences, encouraging students to open communication, dialogue, and expressions of self within the classroom. Here, it should be noted that, as teachers we also participated in the reflective process of autoethnographic art experiences. As active participants and models for the students in the exploration of self through art, we engaged in the reflective journaling and art making processes to allow for an opportunity for the students to see and understand us beyond our role as their professors. To facilitate class discussions, we all participated in the production and sharing of our reflective notes on the autoethnographic art-making process, conversations with family members, and our finished art pieces. These lively class discussions were informal, open-ended and designed to allow students to gradually make cognitive connections to themselves and others in the class.

### **Creating A Sense of Community through Identity and Cultural Exploration**

In this section, we discuss several themes we observed in the progression of the two projects just described. We include several examples of student narratives along with their artworks as the expression of their personal and cultural identity, values, and familial and community connections.

#### **The Sense of Belonging**

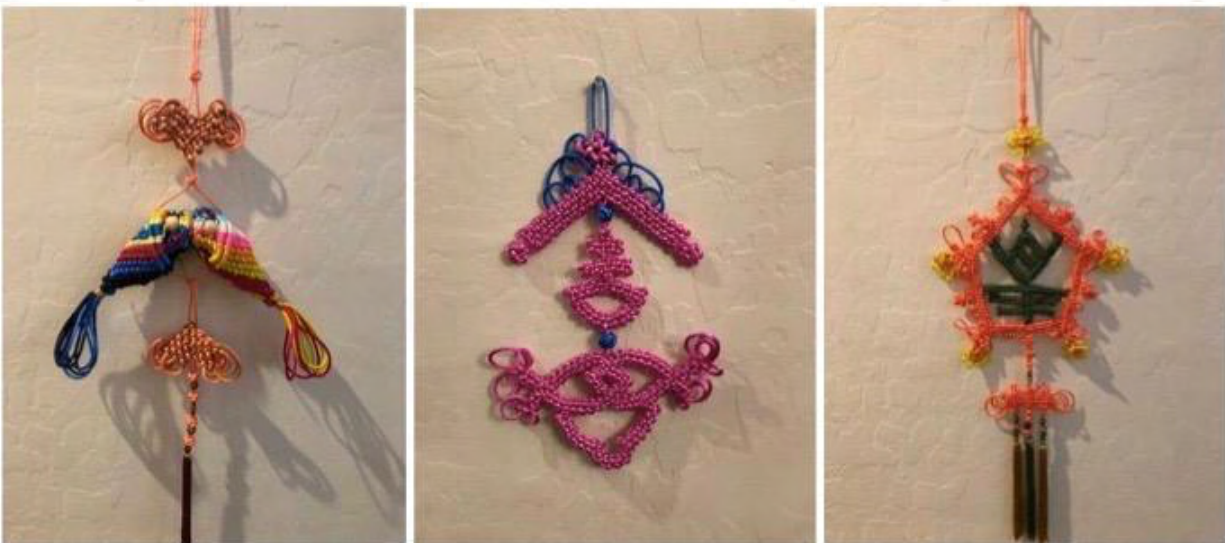
An important aspect of teaching Chinese and non-Chinese students was in developing a sense of belonging, understanding, and consideration among students from diverse backgrounds and experiences. The use of autoethnographic art journals proved an effective teaching method in this setting because it created a shared dynamic process of self-exploration and expression. Over the course of a semester, the exploratory practice of defining self within culture created bonds of recognition and understanding among the students. We have found that while the students came together as a group of individuals, by the end of the semester, a new classroom culture of support and connection among Chinese and non-Chinese students was evident.

At the end of the semester, the final autoethnographic art pieces indicated that the students not only connected to each other on an intellectual level, but also on a more human level. The pieces submitted were unbelievably moving reflections of their views of themselves as individuals and as part of complex, constructed, mutable, conflicted, and crossed cultures. In drawings,

sculpture, poetry, photographs, and essays, the students' art work shared the ways in which they identify themselves as unsteady adults, playful explorers of self, caught in-between cultures, reluctant followers, tentative artists, hesitant romantics, active consumers, and so on. The students' work reflected integrated views of themselves as similar and dissimilar to certain aspects of their cultural norms. For example, a student presented a series of Chinese knotting art pieces created by her and her family (see Figure 1). In her journal entry, she wrote:

In Phoenix where I'm from, there is a craft festival every year at the Chinese Culture Center and one of my favorite activities to get involved in is the Chinese knotting booth. When I was younger, I would get frustrated and bored with the knotting but I always liked that it is something my family does together. It still takes a lot of concentration but I really see the beauty in them now. There are always a lot of intricate designs and meanings to each piece. The final products can take days or months to complete. For each design, there are different symbols and meanings built into the piece. The two fish symbolizes a Chinese saying "nian nian you yu" during Chinese New Year to bring a prosperous year. The second piece is also important during Chinese New Year. On the top is a house, symbolizing everyone coming home for Chinese New Year to celebrate and eat. In the center of the third piece is an upside down character for "spring" for spring to quickly come because in Chinese "chun dao," which means spring has arrived but can also sound like spring is upside down in Chinese. Now, every year, my family and I spend hours, days, and even months working on the Chinese knotting pieces for others and teaching others how to make them. Even though I haven't always loved making the pieces, I see now how great it is that everyone works together to create these pieces. (Helen Lu, personal communication, June 22, 2020)

**Figure 1**  
*Chinese knotting and beading art pieces, by Helen Lu and family*



Throughout the process of students exploring, defining, redefining, and confiding new knowledge about themselves, we found that they began to practice new ways of connecting and collaborating with each other within the teaching and learning processes. The nature and content



of the journal entries changed over the course of the semester as the students began to share more personal experiences. For example, non-Chinese students might integrate concepts introduced by Chinese students' journal entries in an attempt to explain their own ideas of self within their culture. This continuous exchange of cultural information allowed our students the opportunity to interchangeably serve as teachers and learners of each other's culture (Ellis, 2004). By continually creating and sharing art about themselves within their culture, the students slowly created unexpected, strong connections with others in the class. Some specific by-products of the exchanges included lively and engaged group discussions as the semester progressed, showing both more interactions between students before and after class and increased dynamism in the students' comments about each others' journal posts. Comments to each other in their online art journals shifted from short, detached statements like "nice work" to more specific, richer observations like "your collage really captured how it feels to be part of a family" (Alyssa M., personal communication, October 28, 2018). In these subtle yet meaningful exchanges, new ways of learning began to emerge in the sharing of autoethnographic art in a community of invested, engaged contributors.

Another important aspect of creating a sense of community within this class was finding ways to engage in classroom discussions within Eastern and Western cultural contexts. When introducing concepts of dynastic art symbols, we opened the discussion by addressing the meaning behind the symbols. For example, we might present the concept of the supernatural being of a Dragon as symbolizing power, nobleness, honor, luck and success in traditional Chinese culture. We might then discuss how this representation deviates from Western notions of dragons as fearsome creatures of impending chaos and destruction, or Korean interpretations of dragons as bringers of clouds, rain and successful crops. Then, we might invite the class to propose similar symbols of power, strength, and nobleness within the students' own culture. One of our students explained to the class that the elephant signified wisdom, power, and strength in his homeland of Thailand. Another student considered the lion a similar symbol in ancient Indian stories, and a Native American student offered the eagle as an example of nobility in her culture. Other students interjected that the bald eagle is associated with power and freedom in early American lore while still another explained that the eagle was often associated with Jupiter/Jupiter in Greco-Roman mythology. These seemingly contrasting versions of symbolic meanings allowed the students to expand their understandings of how and why meanings are created, perpetuated, and maintained among cultures (Shin & Willis, 2010). As Chalmers (1996) suggested in his approach of "the why of art," in which students compare and contrast symbols and their meanings, students expressed newly discovered acceptance, appreciation, and respect for the beliefs and traditions of others in the class.

A few Native students found similarities in the form and function of ceramic pieces from China and artifacts from their tribal heritage. For example, Savannah A. uncovered a cultural connection between the student's Navajo ethnic art traditions and ancient Chinese ceramics.

I am Native American, I am from the Navajo tribe, my clans are Water Flows Together, Many Hooghans, Salt Clan and the Towering House Clan. These are Chinese tomb burial wine jars with lids. I took this photo of this artifact at the Tucson Art Museum (see Figure 2). These jars are all from China in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, the T'ang Dynasty. While at the museum the artifacts had information on each piece and I learned that ceramics played a key role in



religious rituals and the highest of quality ceramics was used for the most sacred ceremonies. The jars that are seen in the picture are called the “ku” and were used for ritual wine. In my culture, we have the same kind of ceramics and they are used in this way too. I can’t believe that jars from ancient China were used in the same way! (Savannah W. Anderson, personal communication, April 17, 2019)

**Figure 2**

*Chinese tomb burial wine jar, photo by Savannah W. Anderson*



This type of contributive, collaborative discourse created a dynamic exchange between the students that led to impactful learning about each other’s cultural experiences and knowledge. In this way, we helped diminish the gaps between student understanding and generated new pathways toward cooperative and community learning. Taking the practice a step further, we can suggest that the students open their art journal to create one of the symbols mentioned and reflect on their own cultural representations of power and strength. This free-flowing, reflective exercise allowed for students who had not engaged in the discussion to consider, compare, and contrast cultural symbols and to share their ideas with the class. Cultural knowledge was shared and communicated verbally, through art making, and written reflections and comments to each others’ journal posts. Over time, the students in the art classroom began to identify and share discovered connections between themselves and their cultures.

### **Integration of Chinese and Non-Chinese Culture**

Teaching Chinese art and culture to undergraduate students with varying degrees of knowledge on the topic can be a daunting task. The concepts and terms are often identifiable to Asian students in the class but they may not have an advanced level of understanding of historical and cultural circumstances from which they rose. For non-Chinese students, the terms, themes, and techniques are often so unfamiliar to them that they can feel confused, intimidated by, and disconnected from the content. Specifically, non-Chinese students often find Chinese words and phrases intimidating because they are nervous about mispronouncing them. We try to remind the students that everyone in the class is learning together about new words and concepts and the mispronouncing of words outside of their first learned language indicates a progression of knowledge and is to be expected and encouraged. This exchange of cultural knowledge allows Chinese students to help non-Asian students with words, pronunciation, cultural stories, and vice versa. With these disparate dynamics present, a shared language of understanding can be found in the methods of narratives and stories. Chinese art is rich with vivid, powerful narrative elements, and we have found that Chinese and non-Chinese students responded well to the learning opportunities inherent in cultural stories.

From prehistoric to modern periods, Chinese art contains detailed illustrations of the ways in which people lived, worked, played, and carried on traditions from generation to generation. Exploring the stories behind the images is a strategic approach to teaching culturally specific content to undergraduate students. For example, discussion of specific themes like nature, customs, dress, marriages, children, food, music, legends, and the spirituality of Chinese culture and history allows both Chinese and non-Chinese students the ability to connect with the images at a personal and visceral level. Images and artifacts that students can appreciate from within the context of their own lives serve to impact their interest, awareness, and imagination. Importantly, the exchange of these ideas between and among students is the key factor in developing meaningful understandings of culturally specific curriculum.

Searching for stories and symbolic meanings behind their visual representations helps the students to articulate an understanding of themselves and their own cultures (Shin, 2010). One such topic that illustrates this idea is death. Students from every nation, culture, or socio-economic background have experienced death in their lives to some degree. When we introduced Chinese images or visual artifacts on the subject of death such as paintings of funeral processions or tomb markers, most Chinese and non-Chinese students were able to associate their personal, cultural, or traditional connections with the concept. Recalling their own experiences with death facilitated an empathetic appreciation for a story told in an art piece. From this place of understanding and awareness, the students are encouraged to explore the topic further in their art journal.

The journal entries around the topic of death generated fascinating insights into the beliefs and traditions of both Chinese and non-Chinese students. One student identified commonalities in Chinese traditions with those of his own Filipino culture as he described all-night death vigils at which family members talk, eat, sing, and play cards to keep each other awake as a sign of respect for their loved one. Similarly, a journal entry from a student in Mexico commented that her culture views death as a cause for celebration for a life well lived. Their celebration of death includes the

tradition of “Dios De Los Muertos” (Day of the Dead), which commemorates the lives of loved ones with singing, dancing, and eating the deceased's favorite foods at the cemetery beside their grave. Another student drew a large, smiling skull as a visual representation of the tradition and associated it with tomb paintings and artifacts at ancient Chinese grave sites. A student raised in the Appalachian Mountains of Kentucky drew an image of several clocks all set to the same time. In accordance with his ancestors’ cultural tradition, loved ones in the deceased’s family would stop all the clocks in their home to prevent the death of another person in the family. The shared connections on the topic of death between the students’ visual and written expressions of their own traditions helped them recognize and understand their classmates at a deeper and more profound level.

At times, the journal entries revealed internal conflicts in the students’ complicated relationship between parts of their inherited beliefs and traditions and a draw toward different cultural practices and norms. For instance, one student explained she was raised in a strictly Catholic family and felt obligated to make life decisions only dictated through the teachings of the Church. After taking several university classes on China and East Asia, however, she revealed that her interests and beliefs seemed equally aligned with Eastern religion and philosophies such as Buddhism and Taoism. She was drawn to the Taoist belief in “wu-wei” or “non-action” in the face of uncertainty or confusion. These characters constituted the making of her first tattoo [Forbidden tattoo] which she had not yet shared with members of her family or church (see Figure 3). She explains in her visual journal:

I asked the tattoo artist to design the tattoo in a way that also represents nature, so instead of designing the tattoo of the calligraphy like brush strokes, the lines of the calligraphy are vines to represent the saying ‘let nature take its course’ (K. Alazondo, personal communication, December 4, 2017).

**Figure 3**

*Kendra Alazondo, Forbidden tattoo, image used in the reflective visual journal entry*



Another strategy used to bring students of diverse backgrounds together in Chinese art



classrooms is to focus on the uses of materials, developments in technique, and points of technological advancement in artwork. Many of our non-Chinese made the mistake of assuming that innovations in material use and technological advances in art began with the high periods of Western art. It is common for Western students to name the Renaissance as the period in which artists perfected painting, sculpture, bronze works, and map-making, to name a few. In their art journals, we encouraged them to create an entry that more accurately described major developments in art from both Eastern and Western contexts in order to have them gain a better understanding of contributions made to the art world from a historical and global perspective. One journal entry on this topic from a non-Chinese student showed a drawn image of an ancient Chinese bronze wine vessel with a date from the Shang Dynasty (1600 - 1046 B.C.) along with a drawing of a Mycenaean (approx. 1600 - 1100 B.C.) Greek wine vase. This specific entry generated a lively discussion about other materials and technological developments that had emerged in ancient Chinese cultures. Sharing these entries with each other provided our students the opportunity to learn from each other's investigations and to test their often long-standing assumptions about milestones in art.

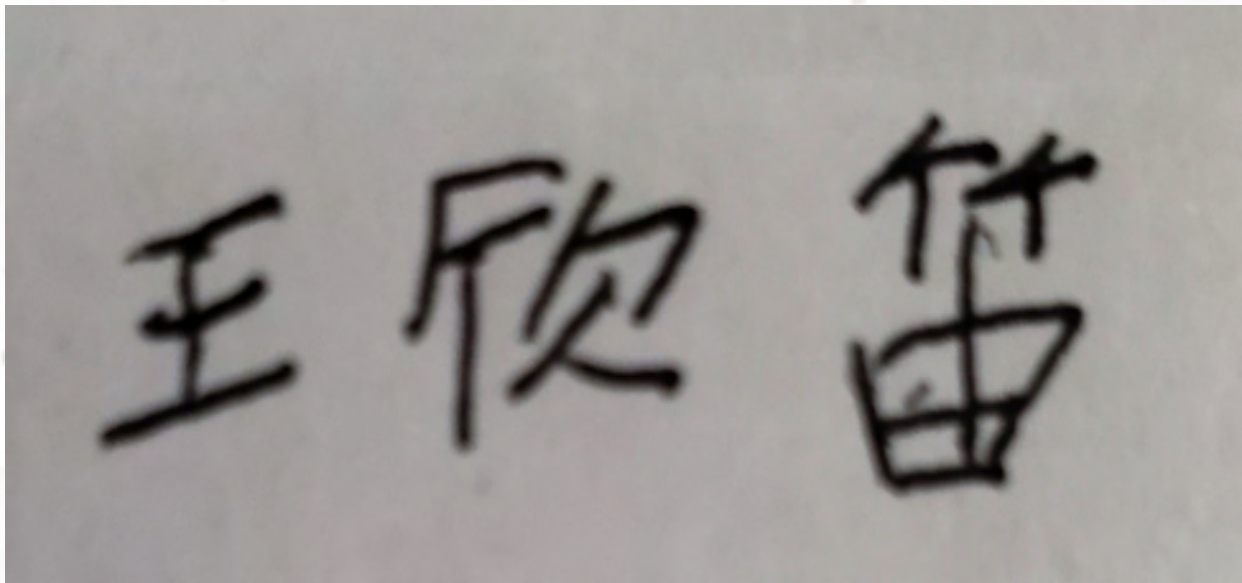
### **Making Connections Through Objects and Stories**

At the beginning of the semester, many students defined and identified cultures outside of their own and expressed difficulty in describing elements in their own culture. In an attempt to include and engage all students in the assignments, we used class time to allow students to draw images of their own traditions, beliefs, and practices, and share them with others. This autoethnographic art exploration quickly revealed some deep and profound connections through their art making and their exploration of their sense of cultural belonging (Cook, 2017). Through their art, the students began to define themselves within their culture along the lines of ethnicity, race, geographic origin, socio-economic standing, political affiliation, sexuality, or family structures. Their reflective art clearly illustrated views of themselves as part of a larger set of connected values, norms, and traditions. Many of their early journal entries described specific cultural influences in family, food, dress, customs, artistic and aesthetic traditions. For example, Cindy shared her story about her Chinese name (see Figure 4), along with her lacking knowledge of the Chinese language and culture.

The picture here is my "Chinese name". Even though I am purely Chinese from blood and my parents are both originally from China, I was given an American name at birth. The Chinese characters above read as Wang (my last name, which is wholly Chinese) XinDi (pronounced sheen-dy), which is just a "phonetic translation" of my English name into Chinese characters. The characters literally mean happy flute. It is interesting to think of the clash of cultures as Chinese and English mix; my name is a good example of what happens when it does occur. This applies to our class because it shows the entwining of cultures and how in the world today, we are slowly becoming more integrated with one another and influence each other's lives much more now than before. Even though by blood I am 100% Chinese, it is noteworthy that I surprisingly do not know much of my own culture nor know much of my language (I had to take Chinese classes in school, too). In Mandarin class we learn a lot about Chinese culture, society, and customs alongside learning new words, vocabulary, and grammar. This ties into our class because it shows how even though our societies influence each other more now than before, with that comes

another trade: a lot of American-born Asians are left with limited knowledge of their parents' cultures and languages and sadly sometimes even learn more about their lineage's culture through textbooks or classes rather than actual experience (C. Wang, personal communication, April 22, 2017).

**Figure 4**  
*Cindy Wang, name in Chinese character format*



Cindy's story was typical among our students' personal identity inquiry. However, as the semester progressed, some of these students discovered previously unknown connections with family and cultural traditions. They excavated their family heirloom, pictures, objects, and furniture through visual blog writing. As Bolin and Blandy (2003) argued in their material culture studies, objects contain stories of immigration and the culture of people who immigrated to the U. S. Apparently, mundane and everyday objects to immigrant ethnic groups are worthy of study for the descendants of the culture. Through visual research in the community, students made ancestral and cultural connections by sharing stories and objects. They recognized and valued their cultural heritage as immigrants or international students (Shin, 2012). For instance, a Korean American student shared a Korean *norigae*, an ornament attached to Korean traditional dress (see Figure 5). She discovered that her late grandmother made it as a hobby as a Korean woman.

I asked my parents if they had anything I could use. My dad whipped this decorative piece out of nowhere. I had never seen it before in my life. When I heard his mother made it, it made me wonder how much it meant to my dad..... The piece is made of a metal plate in the middle and lots of string tied together in intricate knots. Korean knot is a traditional handicraft where the knot looks the same [from the] front and [the] back..... The middle metal piece depicts two cranes flying amongst colorful clouds. These cranes are red-crowned cranes, and they are one of the most rare cranes in the world. The bird symbolizes longevity, purity, and peace. Overall, this piece is really beautiful and full of multiple traditional Korean designs. (V. Shim, personal communication, June 29, 2020)

**Figure 5**  
*Korean traditional ornament, norigae, photo by Helena Kim, 2020*



Cindy's parents had not shared this decorative piece with her until she asked about an artifact for the class project, as it was buried somewhere in her parents' house. She also posted a couple of Korean objects and furniture from their house, through which she valued and identified with her Korean heritage. The class members appreciated being able to view and learn about these objects, which were not accessible to the public. Her inquiry through her visual journal helped her learn the value of her culture and handcrafts and the symbols and meanings of the colors, animals,



and objects in the art pieces. Another student juxtaposed herself as a Chihiro character when presenting her autobiographical art.

I chose to portray Chihiro because I feel that the journey, transformation and characteristics of Chihiro mirror myself in a sense. In the film, Chihiro is originally shown to be a rather selfish and unprepared girl who must deal with many changes occurring in rapid succession in her life. This begins when she and her parents move away from her original home town and head off to a new one and she must cope with leaving behind all her old friends and acquaintances. I felt this was very like my own personal culture as when I left to go to the University of Arizona I had to leave behind all my old high school friends and start fresh with a group of people who I was wholly unfamiliar with. (D. Kang, personal communication, November 2016)

**Figure 6.**

*Daniel Fitzsimmons, "Self-Portrait as Chihiro," painting, 2016*



Another illustration of a student finding a deep connection to the material presented in class was found in the art work of Ting, an international student from China. Ting explained that she recognized certain symbols and motifs as Chinese; however, identified herself as an Asian American as an extension of her identity and autobiographical depiction. Many of her art creations were grounded in her memory and understanding of Chinese art and cultural traditions and yet, she adopted Asian American as her identifier of ethnicity. She explained:

I am Asian American and when I was young I used to watch Samurai Jack, my favorite cartoon. I was really into ninjas and Samurai. I had several fake toy katanas (samurai swords). As a little kid, I drew a lot of samurai pictures. As a young artist, my most popular subject to draw was samurai, and as a result, I can draw a realistic looking (anime style) samurai from memory.... I drew images using ink and water colors. I felt nostalgic while I was drawing it....I am a very traditional person but I am also finding a new culture. I thought there are ways to see traditional culture, one is to feel great about your own culture and another is to transfer the culture to a new identity. (T. Lu, personal communication, December 3, 2016)

**Figure 7**

*Ting Lu, ink and marker, 2016.*



### **Challenges: Reflecting on Teaching Chinese Art and Culture**

Because our art course is a general education class with a large number of students, we often worry that some leave the class without having a deep engagement with Chinese art and culture or completing class projects superficial understanding or lack of respect for objects, symbols, and images in their community. The teaching and learning strategies described in this chapter are an attempt to address this concern. Our goal was to embrace the differences and gaps in cultural knowledge, as well as to engage students in culturally sensitive learning. Therefore, we suggest that any general education class focused on Chinese and other Asian culture should more carefully examine and fully address the students' cultural backgrounds and experiences before designing any activities and projects.

One of the most challenging things for professors teaching Chinese art and culture is the lack of published textbooks on the subject. Most of these textbooks contain art facts and information with all historical periods, which often are too specific and discuss numerous artists and their works. Although these textbooks might work well for art, art history students, or museum

professionals, it is a daunting task for general education students to study, understand, and embrace their content. Rather than asking students to remember art and aesthetic concepts, we believe that a new textbook should be written and focus on thematic threads, tacit cultural knowledge, and diverse viewpoints. We believe that the two projects we described in this chapter can be adopted as main activities in a new textbook.

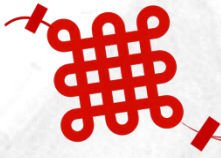
### **Conclusions**

With the use of autoethnographic art in our college classrooms, we found that our students became the learners and teachers for each other when the class became a space for cultural learning, communication, and engagement. Students described their learning and excitement about class topics as they participated in visual journal writing as well as in-class and online discussions. In the process of learning and discovering their personal cultural identity, they posted and shared various objects and images that they previously had not considered culturally or historically significant. During the course of the semester, all students excavated their family heirlooms, travel souvenirs, utensils, recipes, and traditional clothing, and they began to share the stories mediated by objects and ancestral and cultural connections with their family and ethnic groups. We found that non-Chinese students not only uncovered parts of their own cultural traditions but they also developed respect for and a better understanding of Chinese ethnic objects and images. Students with a Chinese heritage found deeper understandings of the meaning and contexts of familiar images, motifs, and artifacts. In our teaching collaboration, we found that some symbols and topics, such as dragons, death, and family, can be explored for cultural comparison and contrast among Chinese and non-Asian students toward developing cultural learning and respect. We also recommend that teaching Chinese art and culture needs to focus on themes, ideas, and conceptual threads, so that students have the opportunity to make creative and thoughtful connections between and among cultures. Finally, we note that students learn the value and ubiquity of Chinese and other Asian objects in the community, as well as their deep symbolic and cultural meanings and messages, developing healthy attitudes and relationships with them.



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## CHAPTER 4

### Experimenting and Integrating Ink Painting with Play in Early Childhood

Yuichih Wu  
Gymchina International Children Academy

Ching-Wen Huang  
Tomato Art School

Chih-Ting Chan  
Tomato Art School

#### Abstract

In the Chinese world, ink painting lessons are usually taught after children reach the fourth grade. In this chapter, we share how we attempted to challenge this notion by teaching it to children between the ages of 3 and 6. We believe that the characteristics of spontaneity and artistic expression in Chinese ink painting can be an entry point for children through play. Learning through play has been recognized as an effective educational strategy for young children because it enhances their physical, conceptual, and emotional development, as well as their artistic skills. In our curriculum, we guided students to understand the characteristics of visual expression in ink painting. We encouraged them to express their feelings and to experience the charms of the ink painting process, and finally to create their own artworks. The spirit of ink painting is related to the connection between the artist's mind and the materials used in ink painting. Through this curriculum design, we concluded that it is beneficial for young children to explore different methods, techniques, and forms of ink paintings earlier than the fourth grade.

*Keywords:* ink painting, functional play, constructive play, early childhood art education, ink art curricula

## Introduction

In recent years, ink painting lessons in school settings have been facing many obstacles. One primary reason is that there are limited learning opportunities for children due to classroom management issues (e.g., using messy materials). The learning age for these art lessons has traditionally been targeted at fourth grade, the learning goals are disorganized, and teaching approaches are unclear. Our analysis of the elementary school art textbooks including the People's Education Press in China, Kang Hsuan [康軒], and Hanlin [翰林] in Taiwan, indicates that there is a large proportion of Western art content and that the lessons on ink painting start in fourth grade. Moreover, ink painting is presented in a single class lesson only, which makes extended learning of it difficult. With this current curriculum design, there is a lack of clear and consistent instructional objectives. For example, the fourth grade lesson on ink painting only covers the concept of line and not the value of ink which is essential in learning ink painting. Or it covers too many concepts in a single class, such as line, ink color, craginess, space, layering, and composition (see Table 1). The lack of specific pedagogical approaches in a single lesson confuses young learners, which may limit their simple appreciation of a piece, followed by just copying without encouraging the use of their imagination and creative expression. These issues can all increase the difficulty for children to learn ink painting.

Despite these challenges, learning some elements of ink painting are beneficial to young children. For example, by using lines and different values of ink, we helped young children as early as the age of 3 experience ink painting. Children do not experience the true spirit of ink painting by repeatedly copying landscape forms or bird and flower shapes over and over. Instead, we believe that through our pedagogy, the spirit of Chinese ink painting retains its deep connection between the painting and the creator's inner self. Thus, we hope to introduce younger school-aged children to finely experience the elements of ink painting, to inspire their ink painting creations, and to help their experiences of ink painting become a single unified whole.

This chapter describes a lesson in ink painting we taught to 100 children aged 3-4 and 100 children aged 5-6 at the Tomato Art School<sup>1</sup> in Shanghai. Our lesson design included the following:

1. Creative concepts and techniques in both traditional and modern ink painting.
2. A discussion of how ink painting is currently taught in schools.
3. Designing pedagogical units for ink painting with children ages 3 to 6.
4. The effectiveness of engaging children ages 3 to 6 in ink painting, the problems faced, and ways to resolve them.

### Creative Concepts and Techniques in both Traditional and Modern Ink Painting

Chinese ink painting is a unique art form with a history that stretches back more than a millennium. Not only does this painting style represent Chinese art and culture, but it also represents unique symbolism and the artist's thoughts. Traditional Chinese ink painting generally

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<sup>1</sup> The Tomato Art School is an after school educational institution with at least 40 different branches in the city of Shanghai; in total, there are 700 branches in China. All students are enrolled in privately-run after school programs.



includes three main schools/types: palace painting, literati painting, and folk painting. The subject matters include people, landscapes, architecture [界畫] (jiehua, also known as boundary painting, which refers to artists using a ruler as a guide to draw fine lines with precision), flowers, birds, four-legged animals, insects, and fish. Techniques and forms of ink painting include gongbi [工筆] (the realistic depiction of objects with a fine brush technique), xieyi [寫意] (the expressive and spontaneous drawing technique), goule [勾勒] (outlining), mogu [墨骨] (the ink splash technique), shese [設色] (applying colors), and ink wash. Ink painting methods such as cragginess or pointillism; dry or wet; dense or light; empty and full contrasting; positive and negative space interpenetrating; and intentionally leaving white space are used to convey the appearance of things and to create composition. In terms of displaying, these paintings may serve as wall hangings, screens, scrolls, bound books, fans, etc. Tools and materials for ink painting include brushes, ink sticks, rice paper, and ink stones (on which the ink sticks are rubbed with water to produce black ink). Ink painting can be influenced by other art forms such as poetry, calligraphy, and seal-carving; however, the emphasis is always on expressing the meaning and conveying the artist's spirit or feelings. Yeh (2013) pointed out that “[the] maximum possible effect of line use is sought, creating a clear artistic characteristic of trying to convey feelings” (p. 5). Through arguments between continuity and innovation, ink painting has evolved in ever-present forms.

With globalization, concepts and methods from Western visual art have influenced Eastern educational systems in many manners of art creation. Revolutionary changes have also occurred in Chinese traditional ink painting. Hsiung (1996) divided the development of modern ink painting into three main categories: a) ink painting forms with an experimental spirit; b) ink painting forms with an expressive spirit; and c) ink painting forms that are abstract in spirit. The modernity in ink painting art must encompass modern life, modern consciousness, modern media, modern artistic forms, and modern concepts. Modern ink painting has produced responses, criticisms, and reflections regarding modern life, society, and the environment. Through various media, such as collage, sculpture, photography, video, and installations, modern ink painting continuously seeks innovation. Art mediums used in creating ink paintings are also diverse, such as strips of cloth, sponges, brushes, bark, and wads of paper. In terms of forms of expression, artists can use a simply-drawn picture to express their personal feelings and thoughts. Other art elements such as dots, lines, shapes, colors, and texture can also express the artist's creative emotions and ideas (Wu, 1996).

In this context, we ask: How do we teach young children the art of ink painting? What types of ink painting curricula are best suited to young children? How should these concepts be integrated into the ink painting curriculum? What kinds of inspiration can ink painting experiences bring to children?

### Teaching Children Ink Painting

Traditional ink painting usually begins with the method of copying; in other words, imitating masters'/teachers' painting techniques is the foundation for learning this art.<sup>2</sup> The copying method

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<sup>2</sup> Manual of the Mustard Seed Garden [芥子園畫傳] (Jieziyuan Huazhuan) is a printed manual of Chinese painting compiled during the early Qing Dynasty (1679 - 1701 AD). Even now, it's still an important manual for students to begin their ink painting.

can be divided into three levels: copying, memorizing, and creating the forms. There are three important characteristics in ink painting approaches: 1) An emphasis on practicing manual operation techniques in order to stably maintain the expression of line. Stable expression here means both stability in consistent lines and stability in variations of line heaviness and thickness. 2) In terms of content, ink painting pedagogy emphasizes copying model symbology from memory. This is true of both landscapes and bird-and-flower paintings. In landscapes, there are fundamental strokes such as fine and precise lines [介] (jie strokes) and various ways of depicting [皴法] (wrinkled-texture) the textures of mountains and rocks. In bird-and-flower paintings, artists use various brush strokes to depict plums, orchids, bamboo, chrysanthemums, larks, and sparrows. Ink painting here means re-creating the classic models; innovation is not the main focus in traditional ink painting. 3) In depicting various colors (value) with black ink, learners have to understand the uses of water and ink to generate different gradient colors, or different values of the black color. With these approaches in mind, the ink painting instruction in China usually begins after children reach 10 years of age. Thus, the lessons on Chinese ink painting developed in both China and Taiwan all start at grade 4 (see Table 1).

**Table 1**  
*Ink painting lessons in Chinese and Taiwanese elementary schools (organized by the author)*

Grade/ Semester	Publisher	Ink Painting Lesson Topic	Pedagogical Focus (Elements of Art)
4th/Fall	Kang Hsuan (Taiwan)	The Delights of Water and Ink	Value of black ink; showing degrees of light (tint) and dark (shade) through ink (Value)
4th/Fall	People's Education Press (China)	The World of Ink and Color	Practice uses of black ink and different colors (Color and Value)
5th/Fall	People's Education Press (China)	Singing Birds and Flowers	Brushstrokes for painting birds and flowers; use of ink and color (Line, Shape, Value, and Color)
5th/Spring	People's Education Press (China)	Freehand and Spontaneous Painting [寫意]: Animals	Using ink and brushwork to paint animals (Shape, Form, and Value)
5th/Spring	People's Education Press (China)	Painting Pine Trees	Brushstrokes; Outlining; Observation of images of pine trees (Shape, Form, Texture, and Line)
5th/Spring	Hanlin (Taiwan)	Paintings and Life	Sketching; Brushstrokes; Adding color (Color, Shape, Form, Value, Texture, Space, and Line)
6th/Fall	Kang Hsuan (Taiwan)	Landscape Painting	Line; Ink; Color; Adding crags and rocks; Space; Layering; Composition (Color, Shape, Form, Value, Texture, Space, and Line)
6th/Fall	People's Education Press (China)	Landscape Painting	Brushstrokes; Composition (Color, Shape, Form, Value, Texture, Space, and Line)
6th/Fall	People's Education Press (China)	Homes in Ink and Color	Outlining; Arranging crags and rocks; Farm; Ink wash; Composition (Color, Shape, Form, Value, Texture, Space, and Line)
6th/Spring	People's Education Press (China)	Hand-Fan Paintings	Outlining; Filling in color; Ink wash; Composition (Color, Shape, Form, Value, Texture, Space, and Line)

Traditionally speaking, ink painting artists have to go through rigorous training. We briefly describe four different major training focuses of Chinese ink painting below and then explain our approaches to how we selected proper techniques suitable for young children and integrate them into our ink painting curricula.

### **Brushstrokes**

Using brushes and ink to draw the outlines of objects, such as trees, crags, and rocks with ink can depict the shapes of the objects. Brush technique refers to manipulating the brush tip with ink on rice paper.

Accordingly there are seven ways to use the tip of a brush: Zhongfeng [中鋒] or a centered tip: the brush is held vertically and the brush tip is always in the middle of the stroke. Cefeng [側鋒] or tip of the brush on the side of the stroke: the brush is held at an angle and the line drawn by using the side of the brush. Shunfeng [懸鋒]: drawing a line in the same direction as the brush hair. Nifeng [逆鋒] (against)/Hueifeng [回鋒] (returning): the brush tip is suddenly turned in the opposite direction of the stroke. Nifeng is usually used at the beginning of making the stroke while Hueifeng is used to create the turn of a stroke such as the angled corner of it. Flying white [飛白] uses less ink and the brush hairs are split apart to create a textured effect showing the color of the rice paper or with the use of a very dry brush. When the brush is removed from the painting surface as soon as it touches it, to create point-shaped strokes, it is called Dianbi [點筆] (dripping dot) (Yuan, 2017).

### **Uses of Ink and Water to Create Different Values of the Ink**

Depending on the ratio of the ink and water inside the brush hair, students can practice producing thick ink, thin ink, dry ink, wet ink, and burnt ink (ink that is both thick and dry). They learn four different techniques of using ink.

First, through the accumulating ink technique, the students gradually build up the value of the ink by adding darker ink to the dry thin ink, layer by layer. In the second technique, broken ink, the students use a brush with thick ink and paint it into a wet thin ink, which creates a wet-on-wet effect with a different ink value. The broken ink technique creates an area where different thicknesses of ink are added before the previous stroke has dried, causing the colors to bleed together. The third technique is splashed ink, which directly splashes ink on the paper, then directly uses the forms created by the splashing as a basis for imagination.

### **Applying Color**

There are three techniques for applying colors to ink painting: 1) ink first, then color (once the black ink is added, then add pigment); 2) color first, then ink (in which the pigments are laid down first, then black ink is added); and 3) ink and color together (where pigment and black ink are used in succession).



## Depiction of the Objects

Depiction of the objects refers to using basic drawing and sketching techniques to vividly create the form, shape, and color of the objects. We suggest starting with objects that are easier to outline with the use of a brush, such as trees and rocks, then gradually moving to other subjects such as four-legged animals, flowers, and birds. Additionally, learning these techniques is built on a foundation of the student's ability to hold the brush. There are three postures that students can use when holding a brush to draw strokes with black ink: a couched wrist (when a stroke is made while the wrist rests on a table or another object); a leaning wrist (when a stroke is made while the elbow is resting on a table), and a hovering wrist (when a stroke is made while the whole arm is unsupported).

These initial techniques and methods for teaching ink painting are not necessarily suited to young children. Thus, we analyzed theories of children's cognitive development in order to decide which pedagogies are appropriate to guide young children to learn ink painting. We drew from these four training focuses, in combination with theories of children's cognitive development, using modern ink painting, to break free from symbols, models, and cultural encoding, and to instead help children under the age of 10 develop intimate subjective connections with ink painting. By doing so, we have developed a curriculum suited to children ages 3 to 6.

**Table 2**  
*Crucial ink painting techniques*

Technique	Type	Description
Brushstrokes	Zhongfeng [中鋒] or centered tip	The brush is held vertically and the brush tip is always in the middle of the stroke.
	Cefeng [側鋒] or tip of the brush on the side of the stroke	The brush is held at an angle and the line drawn by using the side of the brush.
	Shunfeng [懸鋒]	Drawing a line in the same direction as the brush hair.
	Nifeng [逆鋒] (against)	The brush tip is suddenly turned in the opposite direction of the stroke. Nifeng is usually used at the beginning of writing the stroke.
	Hueifeng [回鋒] (returning)	Hueifeng is used to create a turn of a stroke such as the angled corner of a stroke.
Values of the Ink	Thick ink	The brush contains more ink and less water, thus giving a thick black color and presenting a heavy and strong image.
	Thin ink	The brush contains more water and less ink, thus giving a gray color and presenting a light and elegant image.
	Dry ink	The brush contains less water and is dipped in ink for painting, producing a light gray effect and a dry image.
	Wet ink	The brush contains abundant water and is saturated with ink, giving the painting a moist and hearty image.
	Burnt ink	The ink is put in the inkstone and is ground continuously to make it thick and dark black for dotting and giving the painting a light or heavy image.

	Accumulating ink technique	One starts painting with light ink and then adds thick ink to accumulate, giving a thick and heavy image.
	Broken ink technique	The broken ink technique is that when the previous stroke is not yet dry, adding another stroke to make the painting look blended and infiltrative. Adding thickness to lightness means first painting with light ink and water on rice paper and then adding thick ink before the previous stroke becomes dry, thus giving a natural and poetic effect. Adding lightness to thickness means first painting with thick ink on rice paper to render the ink marks difficult to seep and then adding water and light ink to make the originally strong and vigorous thick ink become warm and harmonious.
	Splashed ink technique	First smear a layer of water to wet the paper and then soak the brush with water and ink to paint with a large stroke, thereby presenting a thickness and lightness intermingled and a smudged image and producing an ink dripping effect.
Applying Color	Ink first, then color	Once the black ink is added, then add pigment.
	Color first, then ink	in which the pigments are laid down first, then the black ink added.
	Ink and color together	where pigment and black ink are used in succession.

### **Intersections of Children’s Cognitive Development, Artistic Expression, and Ink Painting Pedagogy**

We have seen how diligently that teaching ink painting in public schools attempts to build children’s skills with these techniques. However, to us, teaching young children about ink painting involves more than teaching these methods, because ink painting has two important concepts: the unity of nature and humanity (Li, 2003) and the harmonization of object and self (Wu, 2010). The fundamental spirit of ink painting is the deep connection between the painting process and the painter’s inner spirit. While current ink painting pedagogy used in public schools emphasizes the repetitious reproduction of symbols and techniques, it overlooks the connection between the creation and the creator’s inner self. Our goal therefore is to enable children of age 6 and under to experience the spirit of ink painting through re-examining the intersection between young children’s cognitive and artistic development theories.

#### **Cognitive Development and Teaching Through Play**

The children we taught are primarily between ages 3 and 6. According to Piaget’s stage of cognition, our students are in the pre-operational stage. During this stage young children use symbols through imitation, play, imagination, art, and language (Piaget, 1956). Moreover, according to Bruner’s theory of learning, students should be allowed to explore, make their own deductions, solve problems, discover truths and principles, enjoy the pleasure of learning, build up their sense of curiosity, and be encouraged to create and explore unknown worlds. What Bruner called “discovery” does not mean passively receiving external stimuli and information. Rather, it requires thinking through steps to resolve an issue while flexibly operating under the restrictions and conditions present in order to reach a more accurate analysis and synthesis (Bruner, 2001). Children are thus active meaning makers rather than passive receptacles of knowledge.

In the definition of psychology, cognition refers to the process of acquiring knowledge through mental activities such as the formation of concepts, perceptions, judgments, or imagination, as well as the psychological function of an individual's ability to process information (Zhang, 2007). Cognitive development in early childhood is closely related to the experience of physical activity and motor development, while the sequence of their mental development from basic perception to higher-level cognitive activities accumulates gradually through physical activity (Hsiao & Wei, 2020). Therefore, learning patterns in early childhood are inspired through their multiple perceptions. In addition, the factor that influences attention is activity. Activity and emotion drive attention. Attention drives learning. Learners thus require good emotional control with attention to achieve their ideal state of learning (Liao, 2010).

These considerations inspired us to focus our curriculum design on the theory of play in order to motivate our students to learn ink painting. Learning motivation is a dynamic intent, which is reflected in learning processes. Intrinsic motivation may be derived from personal interests, while extrinsic motivation may be derived from excellent learning performance or teaching methods that affect students' learning motivation. Further, J. M. Keller's motivation model includes four elements: Attention, Relevance, Confidence, and Satisfaction (ARCS) (Yeh, 2003, p. 313-335). Young children can gain joy through moving physically as part of play. They learn about themselves and the world around them. In addition, they also gain better-developed motor skills. If children have the ability to move as they please, they gain self-confidence and ability, which further influence their social, emotional, and physical development (Bunker, 1991). We then designed games that relate to body movement and offered opportunities for the children to explore ink painting in hopes of helping them build connections between their body movement and their social, emotional, and physical development.

We employed "play" as an instructional approach for the ink painting curricula so that we can teach young children ink painting earlier than before they enter the fourth grade.

### **Children's Artistic Expression: Using the Elements of Line and Ink Color**

Art learning is a unique network of situational relationships (Freeman, 1995). Art is not only the expression of states of mind but a strict intellectual thought process. Art education requires attention to the meanings implicit in pictorialized worlds (Kindler, 2004). Accordingly, changes in line and colors of ink are the elements we selected for the ink-painting course. We hoped to use the children's existing creative development to achieve our lesson goals. In regard to their development and line-based creation, young learners of ages 3-4 are in the scribbling stage (Scribbling, ages 2-5), and line is an important element (Burt, 1922). From the lines they draw in their first years of life, they emerge from the ages of 2-3 onward with the progressive appropriation of geometric figures, starting from circles and ovals initially to triangles achieved around 5-6 years of age. The combination of these elements is at the basis of the evolution of drawing. Anthropologists have disclosed this natural evolution (Mead & Wolfenstein, 1970). This line expression stage has also been called the thinking and imagination stage (Chang, 2002). Children are not interested in representing reality; they do not draw what they know about reality, nor what they see, but instead choose to draw experiences abstractly (Longobardi et al., 2015). Therefore, the exercise of the symbolic function, which is so necessary in this period, is supported, and the formation of neural networks that will be recruited for various subjects and types of learning is



also supported, not only in respect to curriculum content, but also to methods. This expression, such as in drawing straight, curved, sharp, hard, or soft lines, is also related to personality, mood, and experience according to Su (1986). Helping children to have bountiful kinesthetic experiences is the foundation for their line expression.

Children aged 0–2 years typically do not have color preferences. At approximately 3 years, they begin to draw using two or three of their favorite colors. By ages 4–5, they form opinions about colors and make selections depending on their mood. Children generally dislike dark colors, especially black (Wu, 1993). Some studies have shown that preschool children dislike black the most. In terms of color combinations, children normally like yellow and green, yellow and purple, red and orange, and red and green; they often dislike black and white (Song, 2012). Children perceive black as being large, distant, old, and heavy (Chao, 2004). Lu (1998) also mentioned that children prefer to use primary colors to draw and rarely use secondary or tertiary colors. In some cases, children around 4 years old use yellow and brown to indicate happiness and sadness, respectively. Color preferences are connected to children’s emotions, varying depending on children themselves, their environment, and their tendency to imitate others (Lin, 2006).

In this project, we used kinesthetic games to increase the children’s perceptions of line for 3 to 4 year olds; for children from age 5 to 6, we focused on color. In general, our students preferred color combinations over black. To break this norm, we attempted to give them a new perception by encouraging them to observe and explore various combinations of colors mixing with black to create shades. Children also participated in ink-splashing mini-games. Through this approach, we hoped the children could comprehend ‘value’ from the Element of Art.<sup>3</sup> We let the children immerse themselves in the movement of ink splashing on paper. We observed their faces brighten up with awe when they saw the unexpected changes in the blink of an eye; they learned the fact that ink and color are not static. Ink can be layered, interacted, and blended. As time passes, ink and color together are dynamic. From this, children can learn that art is more than expressing one’s feelings; it is also about understanding the concept of time, which creates a subversive influence on ink painting creations.

### **The Design and Practice of a Children’s Ink Art Curriculum**

We planned our art curriculum by using the game-based and play teaching approach. Scholars have investigated the relationship between children’s cognitive development and social behaviors through play, and have divided it into functional play, constructive play, symbolic play, and conventional play (Bergen, 2014; Rubin et al., 1978). Children perceive “play” to have the following crucial characteristics: physical interaction with playful materials and social interaction with others (Keung & Fung, 2021). Other critical indicators of “play” include self-initiation, freedom of choice, influence, control, fun, opportunities for creativity, and being with friends without the presence of adults (Einarsdottir, 2014). For children, games involve learning, engaging in activities, adapting to a way of life, and work (Tang, 2002; Similansky, 1968). Children play games with intrinsic motivation; their participation is voluntary and entails no fixed behavioral pattern. To achieve lesson objectives with the approach of play, we carefully developed the

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<sup>3</sup> Element of Art (EOA): color, shape, form, value, texture, space, and line. Principles of Design (POD): balance, unity, variety, emphasis, movement, pattern, and proportion.

curriculum with understanding the students' prior knowledge and skills (Wang, 2009). We tried to establish a supportive environment for our students and paid attention to their learning during the activities. We modified how activities proceed accordingly to engage our students in experiencing problem-solving processes (Wu, 1993).

We designed two separate lessons for the children, one for ages 3-4 and the other for 5-6, to learn about ink painting. We describe these two lessons with student work examples: "Let's Move the Mountain Together" and "Splashing Landscapes." For the first lesson, we employed activities, videos, and stories to stimulate their curiosity and to inspire their imagination. For the second lesson, our students explored various means of expression in ink painting, and finally they created landscapes.

### **Lesson 1: Let's Move the Mountain Together**

We designed this 80-minute lesson for children ages 3 and 4. The topic of the ink painting course was "Line and Blank (empty space) Concept: Pedagogy as Physical Perception," which starts with a metaphorical activity. At the beginning of the course, we placed a pile of cardboard boxes at the classroom entrance so that the children had to remove them to enter. With this activity, they first had to solve a problem for removing a large obstacle. Then, we told them a traditional Chinese folk tale of the "foolish old man moving the mountain" (in which an old man who resolved to move a mountain that blocked his way was laughed at by people who said he was too old to do so, to which he replied that his descendants could complete the task for him, so it was by no means unattainable).

Through the activity of removing the cardboard boxes to enter the classroom, the children got a sense of the distances and spaces involved in "moving a mountain." Understanding of the abstract concept of movement and negative space is important in ink painting. Through this activity, children experienced a sense of body movement which could extend to their movement of painting with a brush. The concepts of line and empty space in Chinese ink painting could become less abstract to them.

For the studio project component, we demonstrated how to use the side of a brush to paint a mountain with different values of black ink (see Figure 1). We also demonstrated ways to create textures to represent the rocky mountains (see Figure 2). We encouraged the students to express their feelings while painting with ink. During this lesson we asked them the following questions: What are other ways to help the elder move the mountain? How can you help? We provided images of various moving tools to stimulate the children's imagination. After the ink dried, the students used sharpies or permanent markers to draw their moving methods and visually present their stories (see Figures 3 and 4).

Because our students were so engaged in the warm-up activity (of moving boxes), they developed a strong empathy for the "foolish old man" in the story we told. When they drew mountains, the lines were thick, their brush movements were rapid, and their arm postures became stiffer. At the same time, while drawing, they remained highly focused on the solutions in order to "move a mountain." In addition to the line drawing techniques, we also observed the "movement"

and “motion” from the mountain they drew. We hoped his approach broke the traditional instruction on painting static flowers and landscapes.

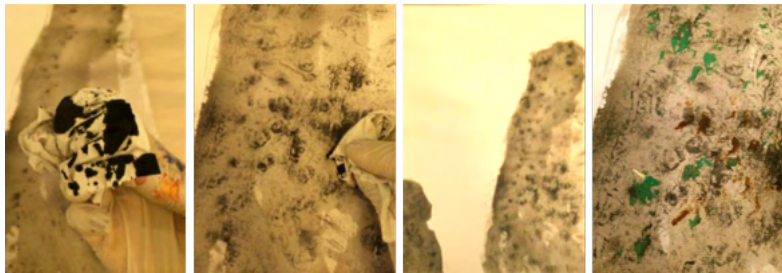
**Figure 1**

*Use different values of the black ink to draw the shape of the mountain. Starting with light ink and gradually adding darker ink, or so called wet on wet technique. ©2019 by the Tomato Art School.*



**Figure 2**

*Creating the texture of a mountain. Use wrinkled paper in a ball shape to print (or press) to create the texture of a mountain on paper. ©2019 by the Tomato Art School.*



**Figure 3**

*Story-telling with a pen (sharpie). ©2019 by the Tomato Art School*





**Figure 4**

*Children shared their stories through their ink paintings. One child showed the details of a mountain, such as stones, rocks, and stairs, etc. (left) and another illustrated how he imagined moving a mountain (right). ©2019 by the Tomato Art School*



**Lesson 2: Splashing Landscape**

The 80-minute Splashing Landscape lesson is designed for children ages 5 and 6. Through experimentation and expression with ink and pigment, they understood value and wet-on-wet technique. The teaching methods included an experimenting operation, observing, and imaging.

First, the children practiced and created five different values of black ink, which helped them understand how to use different ratios of ink and water (see Figure 5). Next, we demonstrated and dripped pigments and inks into milk, then added dish detergent and guided the children to observe the changes of color when all the different liquids combine. This activity stimulated their curiosity about various mediums (see Figure 6). Finally, from different angles and distances, they used wet-on-wet and blowing techniques to make pigments move randomly on the paper, creating a variety of different effects (see Figure 7). In this activity we helped the children discover that color is not a “result,” but rather a flowing process, one that changes. They rotated and tilted the paper which allowed different colors and ink to flow into each other. This flow of time, color, and ink becomes part of the splashed ink paintings.

One feature of the splashed ink technique is that artists use their imagination to create the form or shape. During the process, the ink changed in gradations away from pure black; as the black interacted with other colors, the children were able to use their imaginations according to the emerging forms. This not only enabled the children to use different values to reveal different

layers of their landscapes, but they could use the shapes that formed as inspiration for objects and details (see Figure 8).

**Figure 5**

*Different combinations of ink and water can show a different value of black ink. ©2019 by the Tomato Art School*



**Figure 6**

*Children experimented by adding various pigments to milk and observing the changes of color. ©2019 by the Tomato Art School*





**Figure 7**

*The wet-on-wet and blowing techniques stimulated the children's curiosity. ©2019 Tomato Art School*



**Figure 8**

*Telling stories with drawings and ink. Left: One student used a pen to illustrate what he met on the way up the mountain. Right: Another student used ink splashing and blowing techniques to form the texture of the mountain. ©2019 by the Tomato Art School*





## **Turning an Ink Painting Lesson into a Form of Play**

Play comes naturally for children. Many scholars have emphasized that appropriate play helps children in their learning. Examples include play that helps them build their sense of self (Mead, 2008); individual adaptation (Erikson & Erikson, 2012); creative imagination leading to thought and deduction about the future (Piaget, 1962); and increased problem-solving abilities (Bruner, 1995). It is certain that play is important in children's education (Johnson et al., 2005; Saracho & Spodek, 1998).

At the beginning of the 20th century, in classic theories of play, the emphasis was on understanding its overall goal. In the second half of the century, the emphasis moved to using objective, rational scientific methods to analyze the role of play in children's development. In the following, we discuss the connections of different types of play, the significance of various pedagogies, and our ink painting lesson design.

### ***Functional Play***

In terms of functional play, we turned practice with lines for ink painting into a game which required the children's kinesthetic movement. The purpose of this repetitive muscle exercise is to strengthen their physical abilities. Skills such as stability, locomotion, and manipulation based on functional operations that occur within the parameters of the activity help to develop the children's broader physical skills and physical condition (Gallahue, 1996). Through this process, the children engage in a series of ink painting experiences as they practice holding and controlling the ink brush and then creating a variety of changes on their paper. By their involvement in physical movement, their line expression simultaneously becomes richer than using their hands alone. This engagement is of great help with children's line expression and line development in their artworks.

### ***Constructive Play***

In constructive play, the children use objects and materials to build or construct things. It is a simultaneous opportunity for constructive communication in the ink painting process. The process of construction allows the children to think, express their feelings, and be involved in social development.

In the "Let's Move the Mountain Together" lesson, we used the scenario of moving a mountain in a story to help the children imagine ways to solve a problem. In the "Splashing Landscapes" lesson, they experienced the random flows and textures of ink, which gave them unlimited imagination with which to develop their own stories.

### ***Symbolic Play***

Symbolic play can simulate real life situations and provide subject matters for children to use in their artworks. Allowing children to play the roles encourages them to think freely as well as to develop their linguistic skills. In "Let's Move the Mountain Together," we built a "mountain" with boxes in the classroom and gave the children a chance to solve the problem of "moving" it. We used the story of the "foolish old man moving the mountain" to stir up their imaginations, and

introduced a variety of earth removal methods used today in order to excite their curiosity and imaginations. This approach helped them make connections between their experiences and problem-solving solutions while creating ink paintings.

### ***Regular Play***

Regular play means adding some rules, asking those playing to obey them, and then proceeding with the play activity/competition. In “Let’s Move the Mountain Together,” we guided the children in finding rules for expressing their imaginations with ink on paper. The children gained satisfaction from seeing the aesthetic changes brought on by their successful ink experiments, which gave them intrinsic motivation. Instead of messing up or failing to mix various colors, they learned to accept different results and to try again. This process continuously builds self-identity, self-conceptualization, and positive personal qualities.

We combined play with an ink painting pedagogy, and incorporated story, scenario, and materials to spark the children’s creativity for to engage in experimentation. Our lessons aided their physical, cognitive, and emotional development. We intentionally developed lessons that not only tried to break traditional models but aligned them with the children’s growth in order to create a vision of modern innovation in ink painting.

### **Students’ Feedback**

After implementing the course, we compared the children’s opinions on play through their conversations (Keung & Fung, 2021; Einarsdottir, 2014). Their responses can be classified according to three perspectives: (1) perceptions of and thoughts on ink as a medium to create art; (2) probing questions and self-explanations; and (3) consequential feedback. We share a few students’ statements about their ink lesson below, translated into English:

Cao Mingyu (age 3): The ink is stinky, but when it touches the soft paper, it has fuzzy edges, and that is called a swirling wash. When you press the brush down, you can draw a thick line. But don’t use too much water! Otherwise, the paper will get a big hole in it. Ink painting is so much fun!

Wu Yinghe (age 5): Before I took this class, I thought ink painting was using brushes to draw. After taking the class, I realized there are all different styles of ink painting. My creations turned out different from what I expected. Before I painted, I wanted it to be more blue on the left side. But when I was doing splashes, the ink moved to the left, so the area for the blue wasn’t so much. It became an effect like a twisty, windy little river. I like this (kind of) painting, even though it’s different from what I expected.

Dong Xuran (age 6): When we were doing splashed ink, I was super nervous. I was thinking, it better not splash the wrong way. Before we splashed ink, I had already decided where to put two mountains. And I wanted to use green to make the mountain look thriving with life. The blue was some flowing water. In ink painting, you cannot

only do splashing, you can also blow [which Dong Xuran tried]. You can make up all different ways.

The children's pleasure in creation derived from their understanding of the medium's characteristics (i.e., mastery and understanding of ink and water), spontaneous composition, free choice of color and direction of ink flow, and clear personal experience of control and influence. At the same time, they learned to let the unexpected become an opportunity for creation. The aforementioned rich experiences are difficult to achieve through conventional teaching methods for ink painting, which require students to copy printed painting manuals in a sitting position.

### Conclusions

According to Teng (2008), aesthetic experience is the process of understanding the nature, structure, and characteristics of an object through perception, emotions, and imagination. However, providing such an aesthetic experience as ink painting to children at an earlier age than usual has had its challenges. In particular, the teaching of ink painting in the schools has faced issues such as pedagogy that is oriented toward traditional painting, a surplus of instructional objectives, scattered pedagogy and teaching methods, and delayed age ranges for teaching it. By choosing modern ink painting, and by considering children's cognitive and creative development, we have locked in on the most fundamental creative elements for ink painting: line and ink color become the instructional objectives; and by employing fables and stories, as well as kinetic play, we guide young children to experience a wealth of different line expressions. Through experiential, manipulatory, and observational methods in our curriculum design, we helped the children to grasp, step by step, ways to create ink paintings through changes in ink colors and splashed ink. This study demonstrated the case for introducing ink painting at an earlier age than fourth grade, by engaging children between 3 and 6.

Three to four-year-old children freely presented ink-painting patterns, which were associated with stories and their emotions. Body games were developed through fables and also corresponded to them. The children used twisted and overlapped lines and a back-and-forth method to draw the shape and volume of the mountains and the paths people walk on. These pictures show the contrast between the solid and emptied parts of the mountains through accumulated and scattered lines. Traditional ink painting courses focus on the static depiction of objects or the reproduction of symbols. In contrast, children who play to learn have shown in their works how they would help a foolish old man move mountains. This type of empathy is something that would not be present in traditional ink painting courses. The creative performance of children aged 5 to 6 was the concrete presentation of their learning outcomes. In our courses, the children were not required to use the accumulating ink technique to paint; instead, they could choose the methods of expression they preferred according to their memory of the game-playing processes used in the experiment. Some children chose the accumulating ink technique, and others bravely used the splashed ink or broken ink technique. The ink colors could be thick, light, overlapped, smudged, or dripping, and the patterns were free and abundant. Some children associated dripping patterns with certain images or animals that would not appear in traditional ink paintings. The broken ink and splashed ink techniques were adopted to create free-shaped mountains. Both animal-like images and special mountain shapes provided the children's imagination with an excellent starting point, overcoming the limitations of traditional ink painting.



Ink painting does share some common ground with Western painting. Line and gradations of color are experimented with and used in both Eastern and Western painting. What is special to ink painting, however, is that a single line of black can be full of such boundless possibilities. So long as this kind of experience is given a pedagogical scaffolding, experiencing how the fundamental elements finely change is sufficient for children ages 3 to 6, as we found through our experimental lessons. The spirit of ink painting does not require the creator to copy or memorize models. Rather, it emphasizes bringing them into a unified relationship. As our project has shown, by incorporating play with ink painting, children can be more engaged in their learning. They can be guided to be more innovative by expressing their feelings about their surrounding objects and by showing their personality in their artworks. Through play-based learning, the traditional elements of ink painting can evoke children's emotions as it encourages them to express their inner thoughts and feelings, rather than memorize and copy things as artwork. Children also come to understand that ink paintings exhibit a process of change, and can bring with them surprises.

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## Section II



## Teaching Chinese Arts & Culture with an Historical Context





## CHAPTER 5

### **Sacred Monsters and Mythical Animals: Forms and Patterns on Ritual Bronzes from the Shang and Zhou Dynasties**

Yen-Ju Lin  
Independent Scholar

#### **Abstract**

This chapter explores the animal forms and patterns on ritual bronzes from the Shang (ca. 1600 – 1100 BC) and Zhou (ca. 1100 – 256 BC) dynasties and presents a lesson for current K-12 classrooms. The first part of the chapter introduces the historical background of ritual bronzes and discusses how close observation of these ancient bronzes can help modern learners to appreciate early Chinese culture. The second part of the chapter explores examples of elaborate animal designs on ritual bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties, specifically their common forms and patterns and their reflection of cultural beliefs and life experiences in ancient China. The third part of the chapter offers a pedagogical example of how educators may engage students in conversations about ancient Chinese ritual bronzes through interpretive observation, reflective dialogues, and creative art-making.

*Keywords:* ritual bronze, animal mask, symbol, mythology

## Introduction

Ritual bronzes from the Shang (ca. 1600 – 1100 BC) and Zhou (ca. 1100 – 256 BC) dynasties were created to celebrate the living or to respect the past. The now-rusted bronze objects were originally golden, demonstrating their importance through the rare material and their grand style. Some of the ritual bronzes functioned as objects that ancient Chinese people used to communicate with their ancestors and the deities; others were designed as symbolic representations of the elite’s power and wealth. On the surface of these ancient bronzes are decorative patterns and inscriptions. Among the most common patterns are animal masks and mythical creatures, which often appear in pairs symmetrically. While some of the animal designs closely resemble real-world animals, many possess features of multiple creatures accompanied by abstract patterns that emulate natural phenomena such as floating clouds and flourishing plants. Exploring these sophisticated designs of sacred monsters and mythical animals on ancient bronzes allows modern learners to imagine how ancient Chinese people perceived the relationships between humans and nature. Values and perceptions vary among cultural groups. While ancient Chinese bronzes, which date back thousands of years, may seem remote and perplexing, they create critical distance for young learners to recognize how people’s beliefs may differ considerably.

Drawing from ideas of multicultural art pedagogy, this chapter introduces the forms and patterns of ancient Chinese bronzes in order to encourage learners to initiate artistic inquiry by reflecting on their own sociocultural and ethnic complexities. Art education scholars (Acuff, 2014; Kraehe, 2010; Manifold et al., 2016; Stuhr et al., 1992) argued that an effective multicultural art curriculum should examine how and why different cultural groups present their worldviews in their artistic creations, and it should integrate students’ sociocultural values and beliefs into their learning processes. In addition to fostering awareness of and respect for cultural artifacts deeply rooted in historical timelines and cultural contexts, a multicultural art curriculum also aims to inspire critical inquiry that encourages interdisciplinary connections. It is important to guide students to reflect on their preconceived notions of ancient Chinese bronzes, while promoting critical thinking and individual growth through artistic experience. This is particularly important for students who may have limited knowledge and experience with ancient bronzes from various sociocultural environments.

Adopting Stuhr’s et al. (1992) steps for developing culturally responsive curricula in order to “develop democratic principles for the equal distribution of power and resources” (p. 22), this chapter focuses on the animal forms and patterns on ancient Chinese bronzes, specifically examples that can help learners appreciate the cultures of the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The chapter first introduces the sociocultural background of early Chinese ritual bronzes and explores how close observation of them can help modern learners appreciate early Chinese culture. The second part of the chapter discusses examples of elaborate animal designs on ritual bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties, specifically their common features, how they reflect the cultures and life experiences of people in the Shang and Zhou dynasties, and their influence on modern Chinese culture. The third part of the chapter provides a pedagogical example of how educators may engage students in conversations about ancient Chinese ritual bronzes through interpretive observation, reflective dialogues, and creative art-making.



## Ritual Bronzes from the Shang and Zhou Dynasties

Bronze is an alloy of copper and tin that many ancient civilizations found to be a sturdy material for containers, tools, and weapons. The excavation of copper and tin was especially labor-intensive, as were the processes of molding and casting bronzes during ancient eras. Not only the rarity of the materials but also the need for specialized craftsmanship made bronze accessible only to privileged social groups. The casting technology and aesthetics of bronzes flourished in China during the Shang and Zhou dynasties (Loehr, 1953; Lopes, 2014; Shih, 1972). In ancient China, the ruling class considered worship and warfare as the most essential ways to both establish and maintain their governance. Therefore, in addition to making weaponry, they cast bronze into various sizes and shapes to be used as cookware or serving bowls such as *ding* [鼎], *li* [鬲], and *gui* [簋]; drink containers such as *tsun* [尊], *jue* [爵], *gu* [觚], *lei* [罍], and *pou* [甗]; and water vessels such as *yu* [盂] and *pan* [盤] to be used in ritual contexts. Ritual bronzes are called *ji-jin* [吉金], meaning “auspicious metal,” in Chinese classic texts both because of their preciousness and their shiny golden appearance when they were cast and displayed by their owners (Hsieh et al., 2013). Only after the weathering effect did they become rusty in appearance. These ritual bronzes from the Shang and Zhou dynasties, many decorated with exquisite engravings, were used in religious and ceremonial rites to show the deities and ancestors’ aspirations.

As casting technology advanced in the late Shang dynasty, the decoration on ancient Chinese bronzes underwent stylistic changes, from thin relief lines to more-elaborate motifs and complex patterns covering most of the vessels (Gao, 1987; Loehr, 1953; Lopes, 2014). These complex designs then evolved into a rather simplified style of geometric patterns in the Zhou dynasty, with more inscriptions detailing the purposes of the vessels. In addition to the technical advancement, changes in the social and cultural contexts regarding the placement of these ritual bronzes also contributed to the evolution of their ornamental designs. Whereas the Shang people invested their artistic sophistication in ancestor worship, people in the Zhou dynasty used their resources to demonstrate their political power and military achievements (Lopes, 2014). Many ritual bronzes from the Zhou dynasty come with inscriptions that record important historical events or recognize momentous accomplishments. While the meanings may change from one generation to another, the forms and patterns on ancient Chinese ritual bronzes are visual representations of the life experiences and beliefs embraced by people of the Shang and Zhou dynasties.

### Mythical Animal Masks

Ancient Chinese ritual bronzes often come with exquisite reliefs of mythical creatures. While some resemble amphibious animals with wing-like apparatus, others seem to be mammals the size of a silkworm. What do these animal patterns mean? Are these monsters that hound people? Are they totems designed to scare away enemies or unfriendly spirits? Do they represent sacrificial animals used in ritual activities? Or did rulers of the Shang and Zhou dynasties use them simply to show their sovereign power?

Examine this *liding* [鬲鼎] (see Figure 1), a common form of cookware with legs, used for braising in ancient China, decorated with ferocious animal masks on its exterior. This type of vessel was used both as a cooking utensil and for serving ritual offerings. Each animal mask has a gaping mouth showing fangs, a protruding nose as the central axis that aligns with a pair of bulging

eyes, and other features such as the ears, eyebrows, cheeks, and horns. The space between these features is filled with a spiral pattern. Is it a mask showing two profiles of the same creature facing each other? Or is it a mask of an animal that is being split in half? The visual effect is stunning, forcing viewers to look at this bronze vessel “in the eyes.”

**Figure 1**

*Lobed Tripod Cauldron. Shang dynasty (c. 1600–1046 BC), late Anyang period. Dimensions: H. 21.3 cm; W. (max.) 17.9 cm. Source: Accession Number 1985.214.3, Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, <https://www.metmuseum.org>*



Scholars disagree about the meanings of the forms and patterns on ritual bronzes, primarily because of limited written evidence from the Shang and Zhou dynasties that would clearly identify their iconographic significance. Most scholars consider these forms and patterns, which are also found on many Neolithic jade and ceramic objects from ancient China, as representations of political power or of agents used to communicate with ancestral spirits (Allan, 2007; Chang, 1981; Hung, 2016; Kesner, 1991; Lopes, 2014). However, another group of scholars maintains that the forms and patterns on these objects are purely designs created from the imaginations of their makers and bear no symbolic meanings (e.g., Bagley, 1987; Loehr, 1953). Yet, archeological discovery indicates that the creation and use of these ancient bronzes related to religious or ceremonial events. These ancient bronzes, presented in such precise symmetry, create an imposing effect even in their now-rusted appearance. In the following section, I discuss the features of the animal designs on the Shang and Zhou ritual bronzes.

**Zoomorphic Images of Many Creatures**

Most of the animal designs on ancient Chinese bronzes are not portrayed in a naturalistic fashion. While some of the animal designs have identifiable characteristics of creatures such as buffalo, sheep, tigers, boars, and turtles, many do not seem to represent any real-world animals. For example, which real animals are recognizable on this *Tsu-i Tsun* [祖乙尊] (see Figure 2)?

**Figure 2**

*Tsu-i Tsun* [祖乙尊]. Early Western Zhou dynasty (1046 – 771 BC) Dimensions: Height: 34.5 cm, rim diameter: 25.6 cm, base diameter: 16.9 cm, body circumference: 54.4 cm, depth of belly: 25.6 cm. Source: Image Number: K1A002390N000000000PAB, National Palace Museum, Taiwan, <https://www.npm.edu.tw/>



This *tsun*, a wide-mouth vase-shaped vessel, was believed to have been used as a wine container for ceremonial events. The center of the body is decorated with an animal mask of bulging eyes, a wide nose like that of a tiger, and horns and ears like those of a buffalo, which protrude from the surface. The upper side of the body is decorated with a pair of one-legged dragon-like creatures that stand on top of another pair of curled-tail dragon patterns. The high foot base of the *tsun* is embellished with a second animal mask with curving horns. Reinforced with flanges on its four sides, this wine vessel conveys a solemn impression.

Scholars describe animal designs on ancient artifacts as either anthropomorphic images, zoomorphic images, or theriomorphic forms. Whereas anthropomorphic images reflect human characteristics, zoomorphic images are visual representations with animal forms and features (Zakia, 2013). Theriomorphic forms refer to animal designs that emphasize beastly traits (Kesner, 1991; Shih, 1972). Hung (2016) referred to animal designs with features of multiple creatures as zoomorphic images that “demonstrate a sustained interest in the manipulation of natural forms into an endless variety of manufactured images, ranging from relatively naturalistic representations to highly abstract or composite design” (p. 142). In this chapter, I refer to the animal designs on ancient Chinese bronzes as zoomorphic images, to emphasize how they are connected to nature and to human life.

While we may not find them in real life, these zoomorphic images are connected with mythical animals in many ancient texts. The animal masks in Figures 1 and 2 are frontal animal designs commonly found on ancient artifacts made of bronze, ceramic, and jade. The earliest description of this prevalent type of animal mask appears in *Spring and Autumn Annals* (*Lushi Chunqiu*) [呂氏春秋], a Chinese classic text from the Warring States Period (475 – 221BC), which identifies the animal mask as taotie [饕餮]—an insatiable, bodiless monster that was slain before



it could swallow human prey, exemplifying how bad deeds come back to hound people (Chang, 1981; Gao, 1987). Other Chinese classics such as *The Classic of Mountains and Seas (Shan Hai Jin)* [山海經] also vividly portray this mythical monster as having the body of a goat, a face like a human being, a pair of eyes under its armpit, and the pointed teeth of a tiger.

Researchers currently suggest that the animal masks on ritual bronzes represent either sacred protectors of the people or vicious monsters who fought enemies in the religious or ceremonial contexts in which they were presented (Chang, 1981; Gao, 1987; Liu, 1995; Paper, 1978; Yuan, 1974). Scholars also argue that the zoomorphic designs on ancient bronzes are manifestations of how political power is reinforced within a belief system (Kesner, 1991; Lopes, 2014). Such belief systems were supported through vicious animal designs used to engender feelings of mystery toward the unknown or to create fear of ruling groups. Framing the imagery of *taotie* as representations of greed, or suggesting *taotie* as one of the four notorious figures (or clans) along with *Hundun* [混沌], *Qiongqi* [窮奇], and *Taowu* [檮杌], many references in Chinese classics such as *Zuo chuan* [左傳]<sup>1</sup> and *Shi ji* [史記]<sup>2</sup> bear moral doctrines that the political regimes wished to enforce (Lopes, 2014). These vicious animal designs, as Kesner (1991) maintained, “intensified the message of ritual artifacts, structure, and actions—statements of social hierarchy and political dominance” (p. 47). Accomplished with unparalleled techniques and resources in their time, the animal designs on ancient Chinese bronzes are visual reminders of their powerful owners.

### Symbols of the Relationship Between Humans and Nature

In early agricultural societies, the acquisition of natural resources from farming, hunting, and animal husbandry was the foundation of social groups’ steady growth. Rites served as part of the Shang and Zhou people’s actions to secure natural resources. Observation of cyclical natural phenomena, as well as unpredictable natural disasters such as floods and drought, gave rise to the fabrication of a mythological system that translated reverence for nature into visual imagery (Lopes, 2014). The forms and patterns on ritual bronzes mirror the Shang and Zhou peoples’ efforts to observe and understand natural phenomena that were vital to their society’s prosperity. The decorations on ritual bronzes represent both elements of nature and the realization of human vulnerability to natural forces. For example, the four one-legged dragon-like creatures on *Tsu-i Tsun* are called *kueis* [夔]. *Kuei* is a creature in ancient Chinese mythology with a head like a yak but without horns, a glowing body like a snake, and only one leg, who makes thunderous sounds quite similar to thunder and lightning. Legend has it that wherever *kueis* appear, a storm rages. Depicted as a mysterious monster beyond human control, *kuei* signifies weather disturbances that may bring devastating impacts on human life. The *kuei* motif usually appears as a supporting pattern next to animal masks or as an embellishment around the band. Given their thundering roar and glowing bodies, it seems logical that *kueis* were devised as guardians or followers of the animals on the masks.

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<sup>1</sup> *Zuo chuan* [左傳] is a Chinese narrative history that is believed to have been composed by Zuo Qiuming [左丘明] during the Warring States Period. It provides rich accounts of the history and culture of the Spring and Autumn period (771 – 476 BC).

<sup>2</sup> *Shi ji* [史記] is one of the most influential historical records and was written by Sima Qian [司馬遷] in the Han dynasty.

Embodying elements of nature, the animal designs on ritual bronzes also represent ancient Chinese people's attempt to connect with the mystical and sometimes erratic natural worlds—the unreachable heaven and the mundane earth. *Long* [龍], or dragon, is another common mythical creature on bronze motifs that symbolizes the connection between heaven and earth. A good example is *Pan with Coiling Dragon Pattern* [蟠龍紋盤] (see Figure 3), a water basin decorated with a coiled dragon at the center. In ancient Chinese mythology, *long* is a mythical creature that lives in the ocean and can summon rain, which mattered most in the agricultural society of ancient China. *Long* is commonly depicted with a head like an alligator, a pair of deer antlers, feelers like shrimp that extend from the gills, a flexible body like a serpent covered with scales, and four legs with sharp claws. *Long* embodies multiple powers, from storms to fire, that could be either lifesaving or catastrophic. Throughout Chinese history, *long* is often used as an auspicious symbol of the power that secures the harmony between heaven and earth (Chang, 1981; Lopes, 2014). Surrounding the *long* are *kueis*, birds and other fish motifs, which join in harmony through the compelling but balanced power of the *long*.

**Figure 3**

*Pan Water Vessel with Coiling Dragon Pattern. Late Shang dynasty (1600 – 1046 BC). Dimensions: Height: 16.3 cm, diameter: 43 cm, depth of belly: 7.5 cm, height of foot: 8.2 cm, weight: 5240 g. Source: Image Number: C1A001513N000000000PAT, National Palace Museum, Taiwan. <https://www.npm.gov.tw/>*



**Animal Designs as Visual Representation or Remembrance of Social Groups**

Throughout Chinese history, many influential rulers and thinkers have asserted that attending to ancestors' funerary rites and tracing origins to remember the past are personal virtues; they are important gestures that strengthen family and are a foundation for upholding a nation. The designs and motifs on ancient bronzes vividly represent these beliefs. Legend has it that the Shang



people descended from a mythical bird, *xuan niao* [玄鳥]. In this story, Jain Di [簡狄], the mother of the Shang dynasty's founder, Xie [契], became pregnant with Xie after she swallowed an egg of *xuan niao*. Scholars believe that craftspeople in the Shang dynasty used bird images to show respect to the pioneers of their realm and to remember their mythical past (Gao, 1987; Hung, 2016). As a result, avian creatures such as birds and phoenixes are another group of mythical animals that commonly appear in bronze decorations.

In contrast to the *long* as a symbol of muscular power and dominance, the phoenix is often considered a representation of feminine guardianship and motherly wisdom. In ancient Chinese mythology, birds and phoenixes were also considered agents of heaven with the ability to bridge the distance between divine heaven and mundane earth (Lopes, 2014; Paper, 1978). For example, *Ya-chou Square Gui* [亞醜方簋] (see Figure 4) features handles shaped like two standing birds. A *gui* is a kind of bowl-shaped food container with two handles for serving cooked meals. The two birds in profile, with exaggerated crests, looking outward, appear as guardians flanking the *gui*. When seen from the side of the *gui*, the bird appears to come out of the animal mask behind. The name *Ya-chou* was derived from the inscriptions at the bottom of the vessel, displaying two Chinese characters “ya [亞]” and “chou [醜],” the name of a clan that thrived in the late Shang dynasty and was later wiped out in the early Zhou dynasty (National Palace Museum, n.d.). The body of the *gui* is divided symmetrically by the center flange as the animal mask's nose protrudes from the middle. Along the center flange are a pair of *kuais* facing each other above the animal mask and a pair of bird motifs joined at the footing. Decorated with ferocious animal masks accompanied by their powerful avian guardians, this *gui* exemplifies the beauty and complexity of ancient Chinese bronze.

**Figure 4**

*Ya-ch'ou Square Kuei. Late Shang dynasty to early Western Zhou period. (1300 – 771 BC)*  
*Dimensions: Height: 18.5 cm, depth of belly: 11.72 cm*



*Note:* Source: Image Number: K1A002379N000000000PAC (left) and K1A002379N000000000PAJ (right), National Palace Museum, Taiwan, <https://www.npm.edu.tw/>



### Animal Masks, Dragons, and Phoenixes in Modern Chinese Culture

Over the centuries, Chinese emperors used various forms of animal totems and designs in contexts such as ritual practices, ancestor worship, and military campaigns to demonstrate their political and social power. The mythical animal masks, omnipotent dragons, and glorious phoenixes continue to be prevalent images in modern Chinese culture. Representing prosperity and harmonious balance in all aspects of life, animal designs and totems such as the *longs* (dragons) and phoenixes are commonly found in temples of Chinese folk religion (see Figure 5). For example, at Hsing Tian Kong, pairs of *longs* and phoenixes on rooftops appear to soar skyward to heaven, reflecting believers' quest for their prayers to be heard. The sculpted pillars at the temple's facade with *long* carvings also serve as a solemn reminder of the building's sacredness.

#### Figure 5

*The long and phoenix decorations of Hsing Tian Kong, a popular temple in Taiwan of Chinese folk religion that integrates Taoist rituals and practices, Buddhist teachings, and Confucian philosophy*



From major life events to celebrations of traditional holidays such as Chinese New Year's Eve and the Dragon Boat Festival, these animal designs continue to convey cultural significance in religious beliefs and ritual practices. For instance, in one of the traditions for a child's first birthday in Chinese culture, young children wear a costume that features a *tiger hat* with a raised nose, a pair of bulging eyes, and extravagant eyebrows, to protect them from evil spirits and wish them good fortune (see Figure 6). Considered the most ferocious carnivorous creature in China, the tiger is often the foundation for the design of many animal masks symbolizing power, independence, and bravery.

**Figure 6**  
*Child wearing a tiger hat in celebration of the first birthday*



Regardless of the roles they embody—as agents of the deities or as protectors of the people—the animal designs on ancient Chinese bronzes represent a prevailing idea that has been passed down for generations: that the prosperity of the family, the people, and the whole nation depends on balancing human efforts with natural forces. The designs remind beholders to respect while also fearing the nature that provides valuable livelihoods to humanity. Perhaps the true meaning of these puzzling animal designs involves more of the daunting unknown and the endless possibilities in nature that have yet to be discovered.

### **Encounter with Animal Designs on Ancient Chinese Bronzes**

In this section, I propose an encounter with ancient Chinese bronzes to show how a culturally responsive curriculum can help learners appreciate the life experiences and beliefs of people from the Shang and Zhou dynasties and consider how artistic creations reflect power, values, and sociocultural messages (Manifold et al., 2016; Stuhr et al., 1992). A culturally meaningful encounter with ancient Chinese bronzes begins with students observing, discussing, and experiencing these ancient artifacts to develop knowledge of and appreciation for similarities and differences between ancient Chinese culture and their own. Given that visual forms and styles bear various social and cultural values, it is important to present many interpretations regarding the meanings of artistic expressions and how they align with or contrast one another. There is no



single interpretation that applies to all the animal designs or the totems. The meanings change when the observer adopts a different perspective. The meanings also evolve when social, cultural, or political circumstances change. This curricular example aims to foster students' capacity to imagine and envision visual narratives that are personally meaningful and culturally relevant. I recommend this for 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

### **Visual Art Standards Alignment (National Core Arts Standards)**

- **Responding: VA: Re.7.1.8a.** Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others.
- **Connecting: VA: Cn11.1.8a.** Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity.
- **Creating: VA: Cr2.3.8a.** Select, organize, and design images and words to make visually clear and compelling presentations.

### **Activity One: Exploring the Animal Designs on Ancient Chinese Bronzes**

#### ***Guiding questions:***

- What are the features of the animal designs on the Shang and Zhou ritual bronzes?
- Which real or mythical animals can you recognize in these designs?
- The animal designs on the Shang and Zhou bronzes were part of rites to remember the lives and deeds of the departed. In what ways are people's lives and qualities memorialized in your community?

#### ***Learning goals:***

- Through observation and discussion, students develop an understanding of the cultural and social environments in which the ancient Chinese bronzes were created.
- Drawing upon everyday experience, students identify and analyze the forms and patterns on ancient Chinese bronzes.

#### ***Instruction:***

In the first activity, teachers will guide students to research the characteristics and symbolic meanings of the animal designs on ancient Chinese bronzes. Teachers should begin with what students are familiar with, such as the animal features and nature patterns, to connect them with a remote era that may initially seem intimidating or distant.

- Provide various examples for observation and discussion. Images and resources are available on many educational websites (see Appendix A).
- Ask students to identify features and fragments of images to which they can relate.
- Guide students to closely observe the forms and patterns on ancient Chinese bronzes through activities such as creating line drawings that replicate the original design (see Figure 7).
- Discuss what students have observed in these forms and patterns.



**Figure 7**

*The process of creating line drawings by following forms and patterns engages learners in closely observing and analyzing the visual elements of the zoomorphic images on ancient Chinese bronzes*



### **Activity Two: Creating a Personal (or Team) Animal Design**

#### ***Guiding questions:***

- What do the forms and patterns on ritual bronzes tell you about people's lives and experiences in the Shang and Zhou dynasties? What are the visual messages behind these animal designs? Who or what do they represent?

- Which animal(s), real, imagined, or both, represent you? What deeds and activities have you done that this animal could represent (e.g., helping others, facing challenges, being a team player)? In what way do these animals reflect your own characteristics and beliefs?

***Learning goals:***

- Through discussion and self-reflection, students identify and describe real or imagined animal(s) that represent their personal beliefs and behavioral characteristics.
- Through collage, drawing, and painting, students create an animal design, using real, imagined, or both types of animal(s) that reflect their own characteristics and beliefs.
- Students articulate the concept and symbolic meanings of their animal designs.

***Instruction:***

Some of the animal designs on ritual bronzes are totems or emblems of ancient tribes and clans that represent their group spirituality, similar to some modern sports team logos and badges designed to make emotional connections, to convey important messages to fellow members, or to represent group qualities such as strength, excellence, and resilience. After students explore the animal designs on the Shang and Zhou ritual bronzes, a second activity is for them to create a personal or team animal design that represents their beliefs and characteristics. Students will research animals of their choice: their physical appearances, habitats, and behavioral characteristics, as well as cultural connotations commonly associated with these characteristics. Students will then compare themselves (or the team) to these characteristics. Finally, students will develop a unique animal design based on their discoveries. This activity aims to stimulate students' self-discovery of personal beliefs and behavioral characteristics within their own cultures, through creative art-making. Figure 8 shows a teacher's example of a personal animal design that uses the features of the Taiwan barbet, a five-colored bird native to Taiwan, as the basis of the creation.

**Figure 8**

*A teacher's example of personal animal design. Painted on a rock, the design highlights the features of the Taiwanese barbet, a five-colored bird native to Taiwan*



### **Conclusions**

This chapter explored common animal designs on ancient Chinese bronzes, many of which display multiple zoomorphic creatures that ancient Chinese people used to symbolize the relationship between humans and nature or to represent certain social groups in the Shang and Zhou dynasties. The curricular suggestions just presented offer strategies for initiating conversations about Chinese cultural dynamics, social complexities, and identity construction. The chapter has emphasized not only the beauty of the forms and patterns on ancient Chinese bronzes but also how they were intended either to memorialize cultural prosperity or to serve as a tool of social control. The ancient Chinese bronzes demonstrate how visual designs embody cultural beliefs and life experiences to be passed down from generation to generation, and that they continue to serve as powerful reminders of their time.



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### Appendix: Online Resources

- **NPM Selections: Bronzes, National Palace Museum, Taiwan**  
<https://theme.npm.edu.tw/selection/index.aspx?lang=2>  
**NPM Open Data:** <https://theme.npm.edu.tw/opendata/index.aspx?lang=2>  
The Bronzes section features a series of ancient Chinese bronzes in the museum collection and provides a range of the museum's images and research materials of ancient Chinese bronze available for educational purposes.
- **The MET Collection, The Metropolitan Museum of Art**  
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection>:  
Provides a range of the museum's images and research materials on the bronze collections for personal and educational purposes.
- **Asia for Educators, Columbia University** <http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/>:  
Provides resources on Asian arts and culture including a searchable database to explore Asian arts across different museums by art subject area, time period, and region.
- **Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art** <https://asia.si.edu/>  
Host collections of Asian art with more than 40,000 objects dating from the Neolithic period to today and originating from the ancient Near East to China, Japan, Korea, South and Southeast Asia, and the Islamic world, including a section designated to ancient Chinese bronzes available at <https://asia.si.edu/learn/ancient-chinese-bronzes/>



## CHAPTER 6

### **Digital Exploration of China's Terracotta Army: Resources and Pedagogy**

Elizabeth K. Eder  
The Freer Gallery of Art and the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution

Yongying Dong  
School of Foreign Languages, Xidian University  
Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum

Tess Porter  
Smithsonian Office of Educational Technology, Smithsonian Institution

#### **Abstract**

In this chapter, we present a suite of educational materials designed to help educators explore China's Terracotta Army, one of the greatest archaeological finds of the 20th century, with their students. Created for the elaborate tomb complex of China's first emperor, Emperor Qin Shihuang (259 – 210 BC), this group of more than 7,000 life-size figures provides rich opportunities for students to analyze and understand how art reflects people's lives in different times, places, and cultures. These educational materials include authoritative information, high-resolution images, art analysis techniques, and adaptable digital activities—all designed to develop students' understanding of the artworks while supporting the growth of their visual, critical, and global thinking skills.

*Keywords:* Terracotta Army, China, Qin dynasty, museum, digital



## Introduction

When students and educators think of ancient China, the Terracotta Army (see Figure 1) might come to mind as one of the world's oldest and most astounding artistic expressions. Discovered by chance in 1974, this group of more than 7,000 life-size terracotta warriors and horses forms only part of the elaborate tomb complex of the first emperor of China, Emperor Qin Shihuang (259 – 210 BC). Objects found here comprise most of the known surviving works from the Qin dynasty (221 – 206 BC) and are some of the most important evidence researchers have for understanding the artistic practices, spiritual beliefs, and political, military, and technological achievements of this significant period in Chinese history.

### Figure 1

*Pit No. 1, Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum*



*Note:* An interactive image may be found at: <http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/foYs5djswgUuNz5V#r/294060>. From Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, n.d.

These objects also provide remarkable opportunities for art instruction,<sup>1</sup> informed by their cultural and historical context, which can help develop students' abilities to analyze and

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<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that while objects from ancient China are often referred to as "art" in our present day context, that does not mean they were originally made to be fine art. Scholars believe that many objects from ancient China were originally used for ritual or practical purposes, accruing value for their aesthetic qualities with the passage of time (Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, 2003). This is the case for the Terracotta Army and other objects found in Emperor Qin Shihuang's tomb complex.

understand how art reflects people's lives in different places, times, and cultures.<sup>2</sup> To help educators bring the Terracotta Army into the classroom, we present digital educational materials developed collaboratively by the Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum and Xidian University in Xi'an, China, the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, the Smithsonian's National Museum of Asian Art, and the Smithsonian Office of Educational Technology in Washington, DC. These materials make available for the first time authoritative, newly translated information<sup>3</sup> and more than fifty high-resolution images of Emperor Qin Shihuang's tomb complex via the Smithsonian Learning Lab ([learninglab.si.edu](http://learninglab.si.edu)), an interactive web platform designed to empower teachers and students to discover digital museum resources, adapt and create interactive learning experiences, and share their creations with others. Digital museum resources on the Learning Lab include: images of artifacts, artwork, and specimens; primary source documents, scanned books, blog posts, and *Smithsonian Magazine* articles; audio and video recordings; and educational materials such as lesson plans, websites, and games.

Available at [s.si.edu/TerracottaArmy](http://s.si.edu/TerracottaArmy), these educational materials comprise six interactive and adaptable digital activities – two designed specifically for the visual arts classroom and four for the social studies classroom – alongside an additional set of resources for educators that provides supplementary information on the tomb complex and its historical and cultural background. To support educators in using the Terracotta Army in ways that deepen student thinking, we include in each activity research-based techniques for using artwork at the center of layered discussions between educators and students, such as Project Zero Thinking Routines developed by the Harvard Graduate School of Education. These strategies guide student-educator discussions that encourage active processing and “integrate the development of students' thinking with content learning across subject matters” (Project Zero, n.d.).

This chapter takes a close look at one of the visual arts activities, [China's Terracotta Army: Exploring Artistic Practices](#), and summarizes the historical and cultural background that informs all of the educational materials developed: information about ancient China and the Emperor Qin Shihuang, an overview of the Terracotta Army and why the works might have been created, and the techniques used for making the Terracotta Army figures.

### Historical Background<sup>4</sup>

According to tradition, the cradle of Chinese civilization originated in the Yellow River Valley during the Shang dynasty (ca. 1600 – 1050 BC).<sup>5</sup> This dynasty was overthrown by the Zhou people and at the beginning of the Zhou dynasty (ca. 1050 – 221 BC) its rulers held power over most of central China. When the capital moved eastward (ca. 770 BC), the power of the Zhou kingdom weakened and decentralized, and its territory was divided into small independent states

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<sup>2</sup> The College Board recognizes the Terracotta Army as one of the 250 works of art that represent significant examples of global artistic practice in the Advanced Placement Art History course.

<sup>3</sup> Although there are numerous English language sources describing the Terracotta Army, this chapter relies on recently translated information from the Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum.

<sup>4</sup> For an interactive, illustrated timeline of the art and archaeology of ancient China, please visit: <http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/iUyemx2gq7CyjvJ>.

<sup>5</sup> Recent archeological evidence shows that several distinct cultures lived in China prior to the Shang dynasty during the Neolithic Period (ca. 7000- 2000 BC).

that continually struggled for land and political dominance.<sup>6</sup> One of these states, Qin, eventually prevailed and provided China with its First Emperor (He, 2015).

Qin Shihuang (259 – 210 BC) was born Ying Zheng to the King of the Qin state. He took the Qin throne at the age of thirteen (246 BC) after the death of his father. In 230 BCE, he began a series of military campaigns to conquer the Qin's rival states and, over the course of nine years (230 – 221 BCE), succeeded. At the age of thirty-eight, he brought them all under the rule of Qin, beginning a new Qin dynasty (221 – 206 BC) and creating for the first time in China a unified Chinese empire. Wishing the throne to continue in his line, he called himself Shihuang, translated today as "First Emperor." After the Qin dynasty ended, "Qin" was added as a prefix to his title – "First Emperor of Qin."<sup>7</sup>

Emperor Qin Shihuang governed his new empire with strict organization and discipline. To enforce unity, he standardized the systems of measures, weights, currency, and written language across the empire (He, 2015). To help maintain control, the Emperor divided much of the conquered territories into separate counties administered by an appointed official (Sun et al., 2017). This step towards centralized governance significantly reduced the power of landholding aristocrats. He established new road networks and ordered existing northern defense walls to be linked together to create a single defensive system – the first section of what would become known as The Great Wall. As his economic and military power grew, Emperor Qin Shihuang continued to oversee the Qin's military advances.

Emperor Qin Shihuang's hopes of founding a long-lasting dynasty were not realized, however. He died unexpectedly at the age of 50 (210 BC) while on an inspection tour of his empire and, only fifteen years after its foundation, the Qin dynasty collapsed (206 BC).<sup>8</sup> However, the political, military, and cultural innovations established during his reign were crucial to the formation of China as we know it today; many set the stage for systems still in place.

### **Emperor Qin Shihuang's Tomb Complex**

The ancient Chinese believed that when a person's life ended, their soul and spirit lived on in the afterlife. The construction of Emperor Qin Shihuang's tomb began when he became King of Qin (247 BC) and, originally, was built according to the traditions and smaller scale set by the tombs of previous Qin kings. However, it wasn't until he began his military campaign to conquer rival states (230 BC) that he began to expand the construction of his tomb to include the many elaborate and unique features that make it so well known today. The soon-to-be emperor was not satisfied with only ruling over China in this world; he wanted to remain emperor in the afterlife,

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<sup>6</sup> The Zhou dynasty was divided into the Western Zhou (ca. 1050 – 771 BC) and the Eastern Zhou (ca. 770 – 221 BC). The Eastern Zhou is further divided by historians into two sub-periods known as the Spring and Autumn Period (ca. 700 – 480 BC) and the Warring States Period (475 – 221 BC). It was during the Warring States Period that the Qin state succeeded.

<sup>7</sup> The name of the First Emperor is sometimes also written as "Shi Huangdi." Both "Huang" and "Di" are a conflation of "king" and "emperor" in Chinese and, because of their similar meanings, "Di" is often removed for simplicity in English language texts.

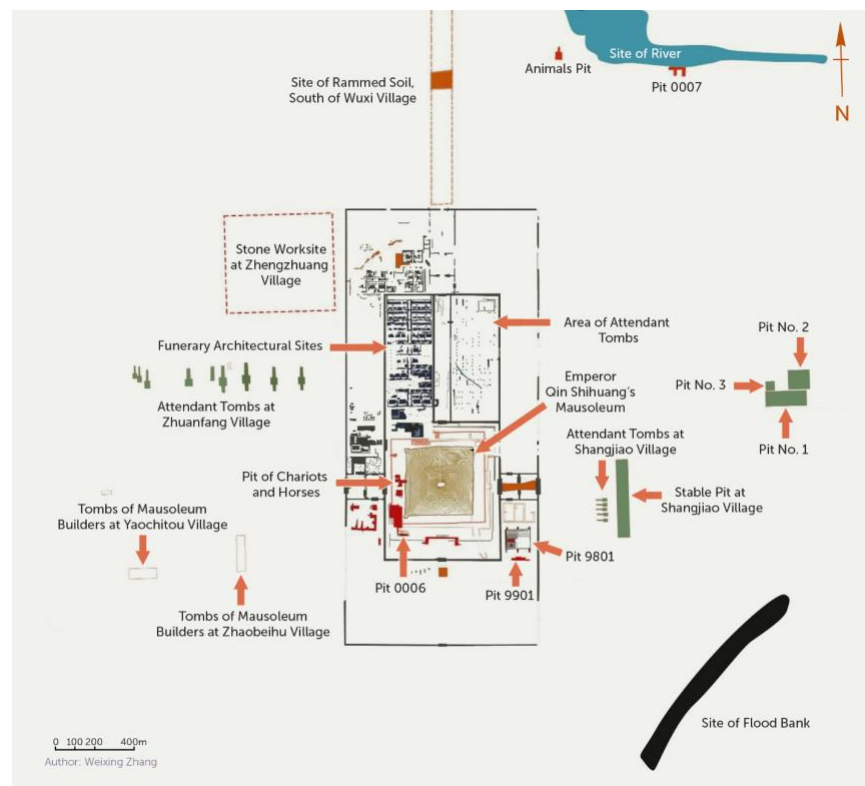
<sup>8</sup> After Emperor Qin Shihuang's death, his son Huhai, who would become known as the Second Emperor, ruled from 209 – 207 BC. During his rule, he attempted to complete the construction of his father's tomb complex but was forced to finish early due to a series of uprisings and power struggles among rivals (He, 2015).



too (He, 2015).

Emperor Qin Shihuang's tomb complex (see Figure 2 for a map) extends over 17.6 square miles near the northern edge of Mount Lishan, roughly 22 miles east of present-day Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, China. Some scholars believe its design is based on the layout of the First Emperor's capital city, Xianyang. This is reflected best through the inner and outer city walls built around a central mound where, based on historical records and soil analysis, a mausoleum containing the body of the First Emperor is thought to be located.<sup>9</sup> Historical records also indicate that the construction of the tomb complex took place over thirty-eight years and involved an estimated 720,000 workers, some forced into labor and others employed by the state. So far, archaeological research has revealed that the complex contains about 300 burial pits and tombs, all housing items scholars believe the First Emperor desired to take with him into the afterlife (He, 2015).

**Figure 2**  
*Map of Emperor Qin Shihuang's Tomb Complex*



*Note.* An interactive image may be found at: <http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/foYs5djswgUuNz5V#r/294061>. Adapted from Weixing Zhang, Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, n.d.

<sup>9</sup> Historical records suggest that the body of the First Emperor is buried inside an elaborate mausoleum containing treasures, booby traps, a ceiling decorated with pearls to represent the moon and stars, and rivers of mercury. The central mound of the tomb complex where scholars believe this mausoleum may be located has not been excavated and there are no current plans to do so. However, two soil studies in 1981 and 1982 have revealed an abnormal amount of mercury in the soil of this central mound, thus concluding that this is likely the mausoleum's location (He, 2015).

The Terracotta Army, housed in just three of the burial pits, consists of more than 7,000 life-size terracotta warriors and horses alongside bronze weapons and wooden chariots arranged in battle formations.<sup>10</sup> Scholars believe these figures might be a realistic representation of the Qin army; each figure is unique but may be identified as a category of soldier in the Qin armed services: infantrymen, archers, cavalymen, charioteers, middle-ranking officers, and generals. These Terracotta Army pits are to the east of the mausoleum, and researchers believe they were placed there to protect the First Emperor in the afterlife.

The warriors are not the only terracotta figures found in Emperor Qin Shihuang's tomb complex. Archaeologists have also discovered terracotta figures of acrobats, musicians, and civil officials, as well as objects such as stone armor, bronze chariots and horses, bronze animals including water birds, bronze ritual objects from earlier dynasties, and much more. Excavations of the First Emperor's tomb complex are ongoing.

### Techniques for Creating the Terracotta Army<sup>11</sup>

Each terracotta warrior is life-size, uniquely detailed, and naturalistic, and one can identify a warrior's rank and role within the military by his pose, hairstyle, hat, clothing, and armor. While most scholars agree that these figures were not modeled after living soldiers, we can see that some effort was made to create a sense of individualism, especially impressive considering that there are more than 7,000 of them. To accomplish this feat, scholars believe that workers used a highly organized, multi-step production process that may have varied slightly according to the type of figure and the specific workshop, which could be either government-owned or local. Workers were likely organized into groups based on tasks due to the complexity of the process (Quinn et al., 2017).

During excavations of the Terracotta Army pits, archeologists discovered Chinese characters inscribed on some of the terracotta figures and bronze weapons. Scholars believe these characters are the names of workers who may have made each figure as well as the location of the manufactory. For example, a bronze halberd – a spear combined with a dagger axe – with the inscription “Sigong” indicates that it was created at *Sigong*, a central workshop for the manufacture of weapons during the Qin dynasty. In order to control quality, Qin law required workers to inscribe their names on the objects they created in case any mistakes were found (He, 2015).

The production process for each warrior figure was complex. Since terracotta is a clay-based ceramic, fabrication began with workers preparing the clay (He, 2015). Recent research suggests that coarse, porous clay was gathered from deposits near each workshop site (Quinn et al., 2017). After using a sieve to remove impurities, workers may have ground the clay into a fine texture and added silicate minerals and sand to make the material both strong and pliable.<sup>12</sup> Once

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<sup>10</sup> These pits are named Pit No. 1, No. 2, and No. 3 and are named according to the order of their discovery. Together, they cover nearly 25,000 square yards.

<sup>11</sup> To see an interactive model of the production process from the Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, visit: <http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/foYs5djswgUuNz5V#r/294062>.

<sup>12</sup> Microscopic analysis of samples taken from workshop sites reveals that different clay recipes were used depending upon what was being made (Quinn et al., 2017).

the clay was prepared, it was kept wet and kneaded repeatedly (He, 2015). The warrior's legs and feet were created first using specially designed molds. Using coiled clay strips, the workers created the torso, attached the legs and feet, then the arms. To create the head, two separate molds were used to make the front and back. Details such as ears, noses, and facial hair were produced separately and attached later, making each face unique. After attaching the head to the torso, workers smoothed the body of the figure with successive layers of finer clay, then incised lines to create decorative details on the surface, such as armor scales and wrinkles on clothing. The figure was then left to dry. Once ready, the figure was placed in a kiln to be fired at a temperature of about 1742 – 1922°F.

After firing was complete, each figure was painted using pigments created from a variety of minerals, including cinnabar (red), malachite (green), azurite (blue), as well as barium copper silicate, an artificial pigment unique to China (known as “Chinese purple”); 15 pigments have been discovered on the figures so far. Many figures appear unpainted today because when the first figures were unearthed and the pigment was exposed to light and air after spending two thousand years underground, the pigments' particles weakened, the remaining water evaporated, and the paint was susceptible to disintegration. It wasn't until 1998 that experts in China were able to develop two techniques to preserve the paint on these figures. The first involves PEG200 + PU (polyethylene glycol + polyurethane) which, when immediately applied to unearthed objects, replaces the evaporating water to adhere the pigments to the figure. The second method can only be used in a laboratory and uses HEMA, a form of electron beam radiation, to stabilize and strengthen the paint. Researchers are still working to improve these preservation techniques.

### **The Terracotta Army: Intent and Impact**

Objects buried with Emperor Qin Shihuang symbolize the power and social status he attained during his lifetime and help us to understand the detailed belief system of the Qin dynasty. Not unlike ancient Egyptian pharaohs, Emperor Qin Shihuang planned to spend his afterlife surrounded by worldly treasures. What he chose gives us an idea of how he saw himself as the First Emperor of China and what he may have thought were the most important aspects of his world.

The underlying inspiration for Emperor Qin Shihuang's mausoleum complex was likely both political and personal. It is a powerful statement of authority for an emperor who reigned just eleven years yet made an impact by unifying China and introducing significant reforms and policies. Although the Terracotta Army is only part of the massive burial complex, there is no known precedent in China for either the scale or sense of naturalism found in the warrior figures and animals, and the sheer magnitude of the Terracotta Army's production is astounding. These figures were arranged in detailed battle formations, no doubt intending to serve as the ultimate army for an underground imperial palace.

The tradition of creating terracotta figures for tombs continued, albeit on a smaller scale, in the subsequent Han dynasty (206 BCE – 220 CE), founded after a series of rebellions among rivals after Emperor Qin Shihuang's death. For example, the mausoleum of Emperor Jing of the Han (188 – 141 BC) contains not only terracotta figures of soldiers and entertainers, but also of women and eunuchs (Dong & He, 2017). Many were designed to be dressed in real fabrics and are



posed more dynamically than those made for the First Emperor. All are much smaller than the figures found in the First Emperor's tomb complex and are built on a one-third scale.

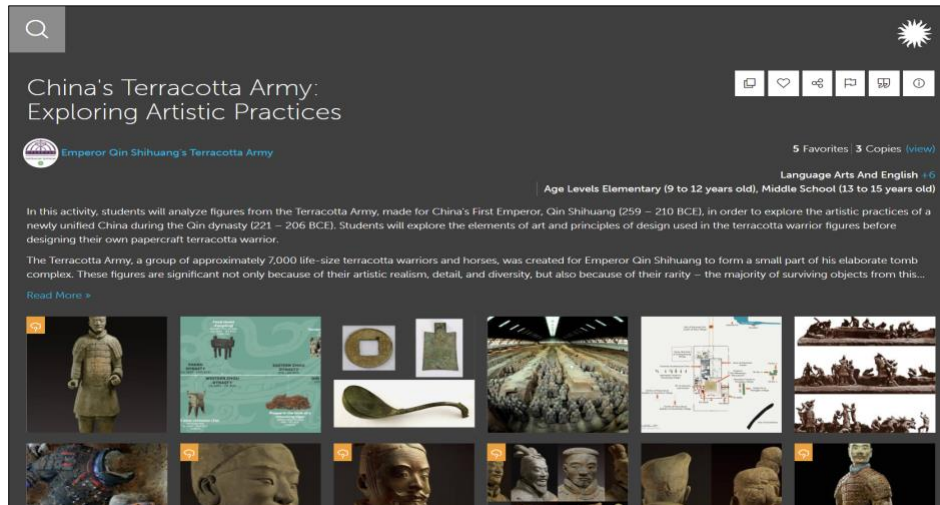
### Activity Framework: Exploring Artistic Practices

We designed the visual art activity, [China's Terracotta Army: Exploring Artistic Practices](#) (see Figure 3), to help students explore, analyze, interpret, and understand how the Terracotta Army reflects the artistic practices of a particular place and a specific moment in time – a newly unified China during the Qin dynasty.<sup>13</sup> Here, students use the elements of art and principles of design to interpret the figures before using what they have learned to design their own terracotta warrior using 3D papercraft or another suitable medium such as drawing, painting, or clay. While the activity should begin with the whole class, students may complete the rest of it individually or in small groups. When accessing [the activity on the Smithsonian Learning Lab](#), an art educator will find a series of interactive digital resources – images of artifacts and maps, printable PDFs, and more – that appear as image tiles. As they navigate through an activity, clicking on each resource will enable them to view it in detail and access directions, information, and discussion questions written for students.

In the following section, we describe step by step how an educator might use the *Exploring Artistic Practices* activity and the digital resources it contains with students. Each step includes corresponding resources, numbered by the order in which they appear in the Smithsonian Learning Lab activity. For example, “Resources 1-7” refer to the first seven image tiles that appear in the activity.

### Figure 3

Screenshot of “China's Terracotta Army: Exploring Artistic Practices”



Note: Screenshot of: <http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/foYs5djswgUuNz5V>.

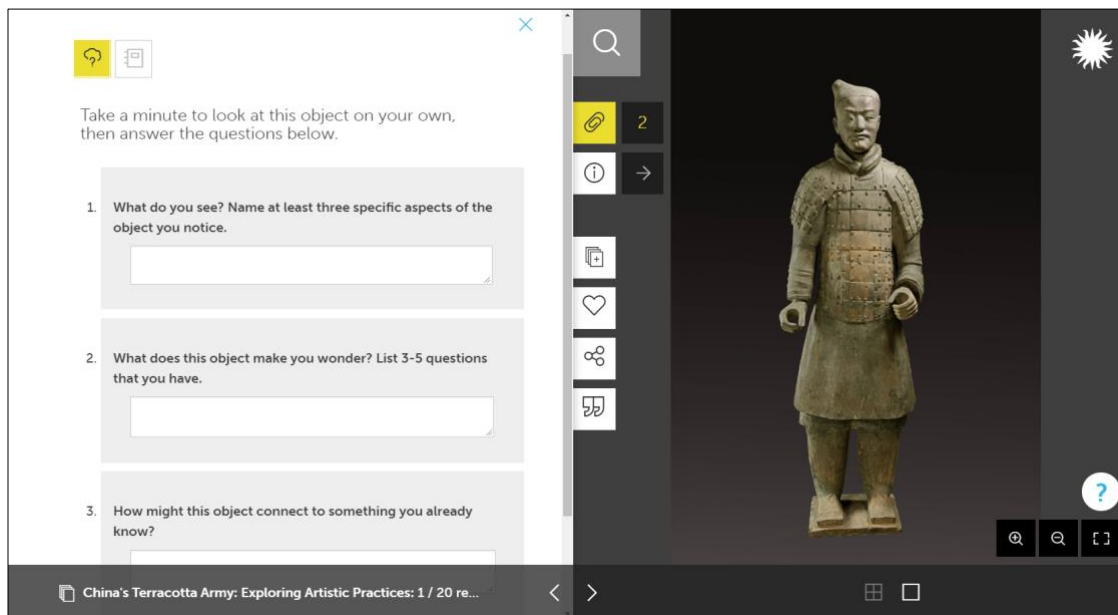
<sup>13</sup> This activity is aligned with the National Core Arts Standards, including: “Anchor Standard 7, Perceive and analyze artistic work,” “Anchor Standard 8, Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work,” and “Anchor Standard 11, Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural and historical contexts to deepen understanding” (National Coalition for Core Arts Standards, 2014). While designed for grades 4-8, this activity is adaptable to upper and lower levels.

### Step 1: Close Looking (Resource 1)

Begin by asking the class to take a full minute to look closely at one of the figures, an armored infantryman, on their own without any information about the object (see Figure 4). Close looking encourages students to slow down and notice details. Then, use the following question prompts to encourage them to expand their viewing in a more focused way in order to make connections and discover others' perspectives through group dialogue. Provide adequate time for several students to answer each question before moving on to the next. These questions are open-ended and should be used to spark peer discussion: 1) What do you see? Name at least three specific aspects of the object you notice. 2) What does this object make you wonder? List three to five questions that you have. 3) How might this object connect to something you already know?

#### Figure 4

Screenshot of "China's Terracotta Army: Exploring Artistic Practices," Resource 1



Note: Screenshot of: <http://learninglab.si.edu/q/1l-c/foYs5djswgUuNz5V#/294057>.

These questions are adapted from the Project Zero Thinking Routine "See, Think, Wonder," designed to help students "make careful observations and thoughtful interpretations" (Project Zero, para. 2, 2019b). Because the routine stimulates curiosity and prepares students for inquiry, it works especially well at the beginning of an activity or unit. Our adaptation of the original routine encourages students to draw upon their prior knowledge, as they may already be familiar with figures such as these.

### Step 2: Building Background Knowledge (Resources 1-7)

After discussion, reveal what this object is – a terracotta figure of an infantryman, just one of the thousands of Terracotta Army figures created for the elaborate tomb complex of Emperor Qin Shihuang, the first emperor of China. Then, build the students' understanding of the objects'

historical and cultural context with background on the First Emperor, his accomplishments, and the purpose of the tomb complex. This is especially important in developing their knowledge of ancient China, but it will also set the stage for their understanding of the artworks' cultural importance today.

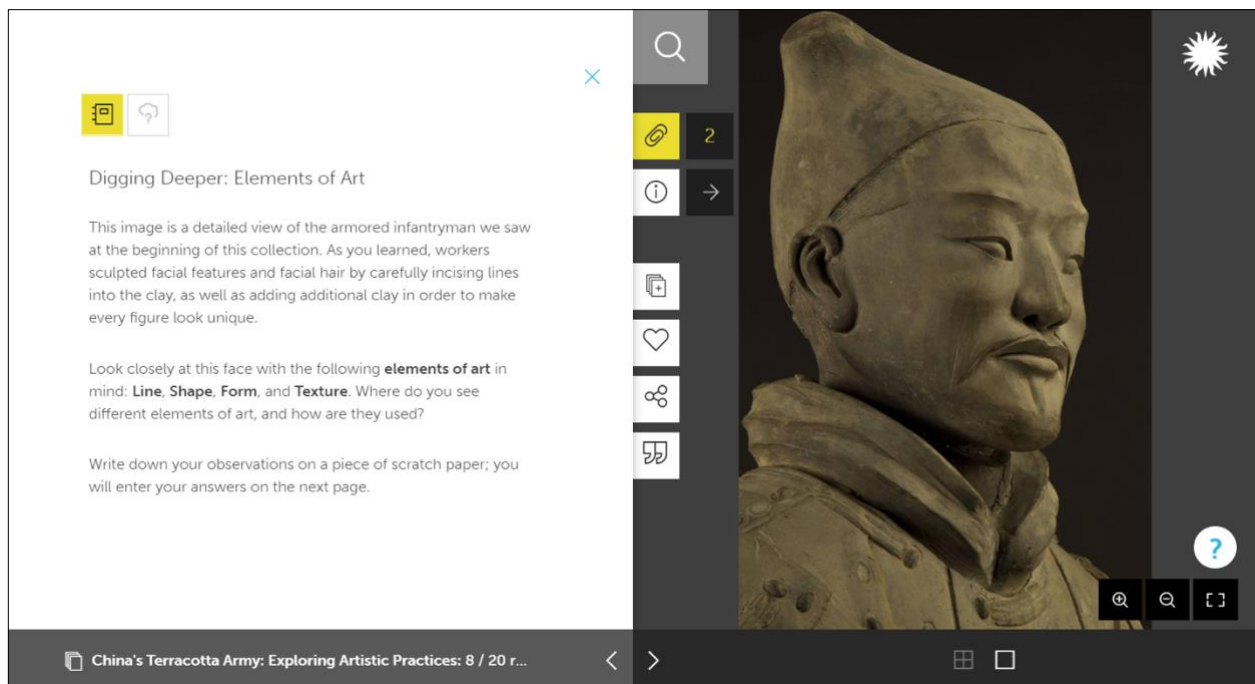
Once this knowledge has been built, use the sixth resource in the activity to show how the figures were made, that is, by using a multi-step process of molding, coiling, firing, and decorating. Students should consider: Why might it have been important to the Emperor that these figures be life-size, uniquely detailed, and painted? Why was it important that he had thousands of them made? Why might they have been buried in a place where they would not be seen by others?

### Step 3: Exploring Elements of Art (Resources 8-9)

Have students begin to look at the figures with the following elements of art in mind: line, shape, form, and texture. Beginning with a detailed view of the armored infantryman they first looked at (see Figure 5), ask the students: Where do you see different elements of art and how are they used? To guide them, you can prompt them with specific questions such as: What types of lines do you see? What shapes do you see? What kinds of forms do you see? How did the workers use texture in this object?

#### Figure 5

Screenshot of "China's Terracotta Army: Exploring Artistic Practices," Resource 8



Note: Screenshot of: <http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/foYs5djswgUuNz5V#r/294064>.

Next, have the students consider the same questions with a detailed view of another figure, a middle-ranking officer. They should then compare the two figures with each other, considering:



How are the elements of art used in each figure? How are they similar, and how are they different? Students may find it helpful to create a Venn diagram to record their observations.

#### Step 4: Observing and Analyzing the Diversity of Figures (Resources 10-11)

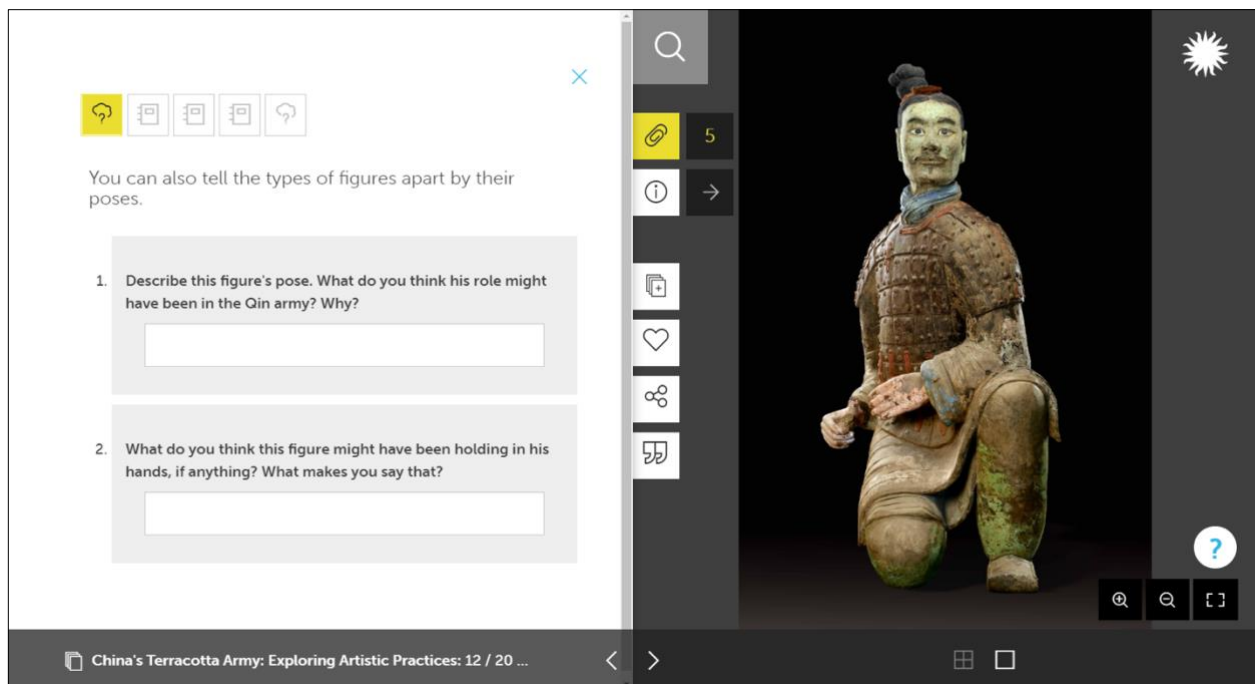
To expand their knowledge, spark further inquiry, and give the students an opportunity to test what they have learned, show the images of many different types of figures without providing information about them. Ask: What similarities do you notice between these figures? What differences? What do you think these differences might mean, if anything? Then, introduce the notion that the figures represent a variety of soldiers, not only middle-ranking officers and infantrymen, but also archers, generals, cavalymen, and charioteers, and that one of the ways they can tell them apart is through their hairstyles and hats.

#### Step 5: Exploring Principles of Design (Resources 12-13)

Looking at a new figure, an image of a kneeling archer (see Figure 6), ask the students to describe the figure's pose. What do they think his role might have been in the Qin army? Why? What do they think this figure might have been holding in his hands, if anything? What makes them say that? This final question will prompt the students to back up their statements with evidence.

#### Figure 6

Screenshot of "China's Terracotta Army: Exploring Artistic Practices," Resource 12



Note: Screenshot of: <http://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/foYs5djswgUuNz5V#r/294068>

Then, describe what this object is, and ask them to look closely at this figure again, this time with the following principles of design in mind: balance, emphasis, movement, pattern, proportion, and unity. What do they notice? To help explain the principles for those who are

unfamiliar, consider guiding this inquiry with the following questions: What is emphasized in this figure? Color, size, texture, form, or a combination? Does this figure seem balanced? Why or why not? Where do you see the pattern? Do you see movement in this figure? Where? How do you feel when you look at it? Does the use of principles influence this view? If so, how?

Following a similar structure as with the elements of art, ask the students to then compare this figure to a full view of the middle-ranking officer whose face they saw earlier in the activity. How is the use of the elements of design similar? How is it different? As before, they might find it helpful to create a Venn diagram to record their observations.

### **Step 6: Using the “Question Starts” Routine (Resource 14)**

To help students reflect on what they have learned and brainstorm questions to explore in the creation of their own artwork, use the Project Zero Thinking Routine “Question Starts,” designed to help them create thought-provoking questions that set the stage for further inquiry (Project Zero, 2019a). Individually or in small groups, ask the students to brainstorm a list of up to twelve questions about the figures, focusing on how they look, how they use the elements of art and the principles of design, what materials they were made from, and the process the workers may have used to make them. Ask the students to use the following “Question Starts” to help them brainstorm their own questions: “Why...? How would it be different if...? What are the reasons...? Suppose that...? What if...? What if we knew...? What is the purpose of...? What would change if...?” (Project Zero, para. 1, 2019a).

Then, ask them to review their brainstormed list and star the questions that seem the most interesting. As a class, select a few to discuss for several minutes. Then, ask them to consider: What ideas do you have about this topic that you did not have before?

### **Step 7: Creating a Terracotta Warrior (Resource 15)**

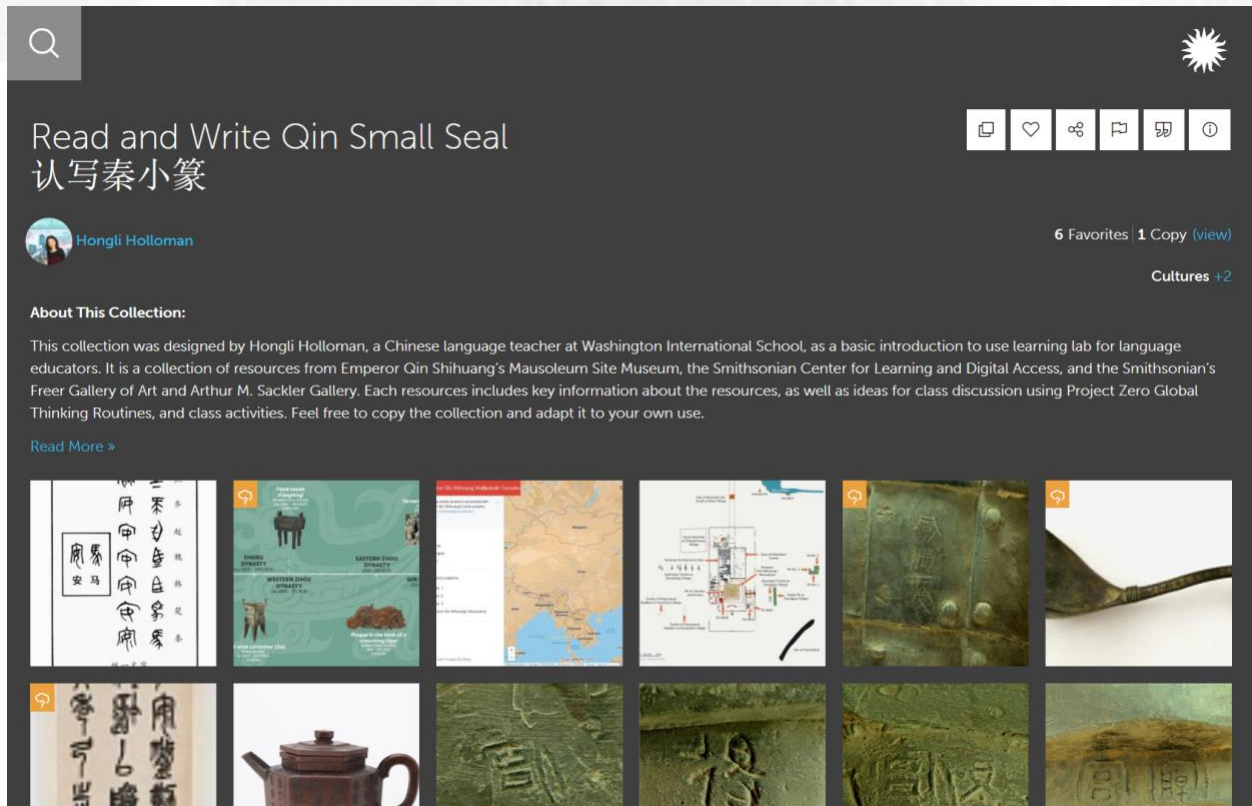
Now the students should be ready to take what they have learned about the elements of art and principles of design and create their own warrior. They might create a 3D papercraft warrior using the printable PDF templates included in the activity (resources 17 and 18), or they could use a different medium or technique such as clay, drawing, or painting. Ask them to choose one or more of the questions they just brainstormed, as well as two elements of art and two principles of design, to explore in the creation of their own warrior.

### **Ideas for Adaptation: Teacher Example**

Studying artwork found in Emperor Qin Shihuang's tomb complex provides exciting opportunities for interdisciplinary learning. Hongli Holloman, a middle- and upper-school Chinese language teacher at the Washington International School (Washington, DC), adapted the activities and artworks available at [s.si.edu/TerracottaArmy](https://s.si.edu/TerracottaArmy) for a lesson designed to support students' understanding of Chinese art, culture, and history as they gain language skills. Her lesson, titled *Read and Write Qin Small Seal* [认写秦小篆] (see Figure 7), is available here:

[s.si.edu/QinSmallSeal](https://s.si.edu/QinSmallSeal).

**Figure 7**  
*Screenshot of “Read and Write Qin Small Seal [认写秦小篆]”*



Note: Screenshot of: [s.si.edu/QinSmallSeal](https://s.si.edu/QinSmallSeal).

In this lesson, Mrs. Holloman pulls together artwork from the First Emperor's tomb complex with artwork from later Chinese dynasties to examine the impact of Emperor Qin Shihuang and the standardized writing system he instituted – known as Qin Small Seal script – on modern Chinese writing systems and the artistic practices of China through time.<sup>14</sup> Among the varied questioning approaches Mrs. Holloman uses, we would like to highlight the Project Zero Thinking Routine, “The 3 Ys,” designed to help students discern the significance of an event in personal, local, and global contexts (Boix Mansilla, 2017). Students consider: “Why might this [topic, question] matter to me? Why might it matter to people around me [family, friends, city, nation]? Why might it matter to the world?” (Boix Mansilla, 2017, p. 8). In any lesson with artwork, including the Terracotta Army, this routine works well to help students consider cultural perspectives and make local-global connections.

### Final Thoughts

The short-lived Qin dynasty shaped Chinese art and culture in significant ways. Studying the material culture recovered from archeological discoveries helps students to not only understand

<sup>14</sup> The Chinese translation of this activity's title, 认写秦小篆, reflects its focus on increasing students' recognition and understanding.



the artistic and cultural practices of the First Emperor and the Qin dynasty, but also to contextualize how such works help to reshape our understanding of this important period and region.

In the process of designing this suite of educational materials, we learned several things. We quickly learned the importance of defining complex terms and adapting difficult-to-understand concepts from recently translated materials, thus included in-text definitions throughout. From research conducted by the Smithsonian Learning Lab team and confirmed through testing with educators, we also found that the latter preferred educational materials they could easily adapt. Therefore, we created a separate activity, *Information and Teaching Resources*, to gather resources teachers could use to provide background information and adapt as-needed into new activities. We developed *Exploring the Tomb Complex*, an easily-adaptable activity that focuses on analyzing objects from the tomb complex, without providing full background information on the First Emperor, making it easy to pull into an existing lesson. We also designed maps that put specific areas of the tomb complex into a larger context. These aid the students in understanding its scale and layout, such as those found in the activity *China's Terracotta Army: The Terracotta Warriors*.

### Figure 8

*Screenshot of tweet by Aimee Yocom, 6th and 8th grade Social Studies teacher at Antelope Crossing Middle School, in Antelope, California*



*Note:* Screenshot of: <https://twitter.com/CrazyMSTeacher/status/968528048332070912>

A study of the Terracotta Army in the art classroom provides an entry point for deeper learning. By using recently translated authoritative resources and digital images from the Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum in these specially designed exercises, ancient Chinese objects are put at the center of discovery. We found that students can use these materials to grasp academic content across disciplines, learn how to look carefully and think critically and analytically, and develop a mindset to, for example, think like a curator and historian. As one California middle school teacher said, "Using Learning Lab by Smithsonian, students become historians as they analyze artifacts from Emperor Qin's tomb (see Figure 8). It is like they are there!!" (Yocum, 2018). In other words, students become active participants in a process of discovery. We encourage art educators to use these techniques elsewhere, with other artworks and other cultures.

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CHAPTER 7

**Appreciating Chinese Literati Paintings (*Wenrenhua*)  
Through a Holistic and Experiential Approach**

Ting Fang (Claire) Chien  
Assistant Professor  
Colorado State University

**Abstract**

This chapter describes the facilitation of a three-hour professional development (PD) workshop on the Ming dynasty's (1368 – 1644 AD) literati painting, or *wenrenhua* [文人畫] in Chinese, for 16 K-5 art teachers in Fort Collins, Colorado. The workshop applied a holistic approach and perspectives on experiential learning as the pedagogies. It included three phases: 1) knowing the historical content, 2) positioning the self in the context, and 3) expressing self-understanding and exploring mind-body connections by making art. In addition to learning the history behind the Chinese literati's paintings through an experiential learning approach, the teachers experienced tea-tasting and its connections to nature, meditation, and art creation, and made a reflective drawing based on what they learned. The end of the chapter will discuss the participants' viewpoints on how they would apply these experiential learning approaches when they teach *wenrenhua* to their students. Suggestions for art educators and future implementation will also be explored in this chapter.

*Keywords:* cultural appreciation, holistic education, experiential learning, *wenrenhua* [文人畫], literati painting

## Introduction

Cultivating awareness and respect for cultural diversity has been established as an essential component of the art education curriculum (Delacruz, 1996; Garber, 1995; Hanes, 2012). One of the fundamental components of teaching multiple cultures is to educate learners to appreciate a culture rather than simply appropriate its symbols and artifacts. This chapter describes a three-hour professional development (PD) workshop for 16 K-5 art teachers in Fort Collins, Colorado, to learn about Chinese literati paintings (*wenrenhua*) [文人畫]. The purpose of the workshop was to cultivate their appreciation of these paintings in the context of Chinese art history. The approaches used were based on holistic education and experiential learning perspectives.

### Teaching to Develop Cultural Appreciation

The primary purpose of the workshop was to cultivate the teachers' cultural appreciation of *wenrenhua* before they applied any cultural appropriation or cultural assumptions in their teaching. Todd (1990) defined cultural appropriation as “the unauthorized adoption or theft of icons, symbols, rituals, aesthetic standards, and representations from one culture or subculture by another” (p. 24). Moreover, “[a]ppropriation [could occur] when someone else becomes the expert on your experience and is deemed more knowledgeable about who you are than yourself” (p. 24). Hence, it is ethically responsible to conduct thorough research for cultural appreciation before being involved in any topics or projects that are not from one's own culture.

To foster cultural appreciation, Declacruz (1996) reminded art educators that they should be aware of “the need to examine the context of artistic production and valuing, rather than focusing on the isolated artist or object” (p. 86) when teaching multiculturalism. By acquiring a better understanding of a cultural context, learners can develop cultural appreciation before misinterpreting any cultural elements or making cultural assumptions. Their own cultural assumptions can easily lead educators to misinterpret another culture because their research or understanding of it goes no further and stops at a superficial level (Garber, 1995, p. 222).

Some existing art projects provide various perspectives on expanding people's awareness of cultural appropriations and ask for cultural appreciation by considering cultural diversity (Hanes, 2012; Students Teaching About Racism in Society, 2013; Yang, 2019). Hanes (2012) stated that a “holistic study that incorporates making things, decorating self and space, exploring values and questioning assumptions—particularly those associated with ritual space—provides opportunity to both reflect and make connections to others” (p. 111). In his semester-long *Chanoyu* (*sadō*) [日本茶道] curriculum for students with Western backgrounds, Hanes included a series of lectures and experiential learning, such as providing the history of *Chanoyu* and its ritual behaviors and relevant art by collaborating with authentic experts. Hanes' curriculum design enlightened this professional development workshop, as the participants were encouraged to make connections between their own personal experiences and the history of Chinese literati paintings through experiential approaches, which are explained in the next section.

## Holistic and Experiential Approaches

To foster an appreciation of *wenrenhua*, the approaches used for the workshop were based on holistic education and experiential learning. Miller (2007) proposed that three principles should be included in holistic education: “connectedness, inclusion, and balance” (p. 6). Connectedness refers to connecting multiple relationships such as mind and body, domains of knowledge, self and community, the earth, and the soul. Inclusion links three various educational orientations together—transmission, transaction, and transformation. These three orientations of inclusion indicate that learning is a process of development from acquiring and accumulating knowledge and skills to intertwining all learning, acknowledged as wholeness (Jeffers, 2012; Miller, 2007). Last, the balance seeks the “‘right relationship’ between the part and the whole where both are acknowledged and nourished” (Miller, 2007, p. 9). In holistic learning, good balances can be observed between certain essential knowledge and the construction of personal meaning-making and ways of knowing. It is also crucial to know that all three principles start from exploring students’ personal experiences and then expand or reach out to broader contexts such as interpersonal and socio-cultural contexts.

The PD workshop focused on creating connections for holistic learning. For people who were not familiar with Chinese art history and *wenrenhua*, it was important to assist them in building personal connections first. Kolb (2015) stated that “characteristics of experiential learning were essential for developing the teachers’ holistic learning experience, such as making connections between the tea tasting experience and Chinese literati paintings that depicted tea tasting scenes. The characteristics of experiential learning are the following:

- Learning is best conceived as a process, not in terms of outcomes.
- Learning is a continuous process grounded in experience.
- Learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world.
- Learning involves transactions between the person and the environment.
- Learning is the process of creating knowledge. (Kolb, 2015, p. 37-48)

In addition to these characteristics, the participants’ reflections were crucial components of the workshop so that the teachers could review their experiential learning process rather than simply see the result.

## History of Chinese Literati Painting (Wenrenhua)

The term *wenren* [文人] refers to the literati or scholar, and *hua* means paintings in Mandarin. The term *wenrenhua* was used in the late Ming dynasty by the scholar and painter Tung Chi Chang [董其昌], who said that “literati paintings started from the [Tang Dynasty’s] prime minister Wang [Wei]”<sup>1</sup> (Tung, Ming dynasty, p. 55). Although the concept of *wenrenhua* can be traced back to the Tang dynasty,<sup>2</sup> it was not widely used until the Ming dynasty (Cahill, 2013;

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<sup>1</sup> See Tung (Ming Dynasty), p. 55. The Chinese text is: “文人之畫, 自王右丞始。”

<sup>2</sup> The order of China’s dynasties from Tang to Ming are: Tang, the Five Dynasties Period, Northern Song, Southern Song, Yuan, and Ming. The annotated timeline of China’s dynasties can be seen on the Weatherhead East Asian Institute at Columbia University website. (n.d.).

[http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/china\\_timeline.htm](http://afe.easia.columbia.edu/timelines/china_timeline.htm)



Fong, 1992). In the early Northern Song dynasty (960 – 1127 AD), literati were scholar officials who served in the Imperial Court. Some of them could paint well, but they would not promote this part of themselves to the public as they regarded themselves as “ruling elites,” not artisans (Fong, 1992, p. 121).<sup>3</sup> By the late Northern Song dynasty, these scholar painters started to appreciate the positive responses that they received by creating expressive types of paintings (*wenrenhua*). In *wenrenhua*, the literati painters were focused more on illustrating the subject or atmosphere ideally and spiritually by using different types of brush strokes, altering the wetness of the ink and considering the white (blank) spaces (Chien, 2012; Fong, 1992).

Ming literati painters mostly depicted regional mountains, hills, streams, or gardens where they could stay together rather than large landscapes with huge mountains or waters (Tan, 2009; Wu, 1993). The main reasons for these choices of subjects can be understood by looking at their historical and social contexts. First, many literati families moved to southern China after wars, changing their depictions of the landscapes in many of their paintings. Second, the first emperor of the Ming dynasty created his empire based on military force. Since he did not want the people to have more power than he did, the ministers of the new Imperial Court were mostly literati. However, the political atmosphere was not friendly to these scholar officials because of the intensified monarchical control (Cahill, 2013; Zhang, 2015). As a result, the imperial authority led to corruption (Zhang, 2015, p. 175). This situation restricted scholar officials’ ambitions for societal and policy reforms. Third, the modified Imperial Court exams increased the challenge of passing them and limited the literati’s creativity (Chien, 2009). Therefore, many Ming literati found it hard to seize a position and express their ambitions and talents.

The complexity and frustration of the Ming Imperial Court led many literati to either silence their voices or return to nature for an ordinary but peaceful life (Wu, 1993). They believed that going back to nature could purify their minds and bodies and keep them from political infighting. In doing so, they could maintain their nobility as intellectuals (Lu, 2016; Wu, 1993). Many Ming literati painters created *wenrenhua* to reflect this ideology (Tan, 2009). Tea-tasting events are some of the common scenes that Ming literati painters depicted to represent contemplation and balance in nature, to be their true selves, and to lead a peaceful life.

### **Influence of Tea on the Literati’s Artistic Creations**

Although the atmosphere of the early Ming dynasty was varied and unpredictable, the economy was prosperous. The modification in tea policy, brewing, and production methods altered the accessibility of tea and how to drink it. It further influenced the literati’s artistic creations. For instance, the traditional method of producing tea cakes as a tribute to the emperor and other royals was abandoned. Instead, the new emperor wanted the tribute to be fresh tea leaves (Avins & Quick, 2009; Benn, 2015; Liao, 2007).

In the past, this tribute of tea went through many processes from grinding the tea leaves to compressing them into tea cakes. By doing so, the tea could be preserved longer after being dried. The technology for producing tea leaves evolved into baking the tea leaves for the drying process (Liao, 2007). Because of the revised tea policy and advanced technology, the production of tea became faster. As a result, more local tea factories made tea without intensive labor and

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<sup>3</sup> Also see Lu’s (2016) discussion of this part on p. 57.

concentrated on cultivating high-quality whole-leaf tea (Benn, 2015). Pouring boiling water directly onto tea leaves in teapots hence became popular at the literati's social events (Wu, 1993). The procedure of brewing tea leaves allowed the Ming literati to be able to taste the "true and natural" (Wu, 1993, p. 300) flavor of tea instead of with spices compressed in the tea cakes, which matched their pursuit of finding their "true selves" (Wu, 1993, p. 279-280).

Many mid-Ming literati would gather to share their tea collections, write poems, and make paintings during tea-tasting events. The action of tea-tasting and observing various kinds of tea became great stimuli for art creations. They would depict their observations of the brewing sounds, colors, flavors, and leaf shapes metaphorically in their poems or paintings at tea-tasting events. Hence, tea tasting became a popular subject in *wenrenhua* (Wu, 1980). This type of tea tasting was not as elaborate as the Japanese tea ceremony *Chanoyu*, but still "requires a highly trained mind as well as palate to appreciate it to the "full" (Calthorpe, 2012, para. 1). The environment surrounding tea tasting was also essential. Many literati built their teahouses next to quiet mountains, hills, or streams so that they could have purified tea-tasting experiences with friends without noise from the city (Liao, 2007; Wu, 1993). Therefore, inspired by this part of history, the workshop included a tea-tasting event to invite the teachers to find inspiration from their observations on tea and have tea in a natural setting.

### **Experiencing the Creation of Art as the Chinese Literati Did**

#### **Objectives of the Workshop**

The PD workshop on the Chinese literati painting style known as *wenrenhua* involved 16 K-12 art teachers. Most lacked prior knowledge of *wenrenhua* or Chinese art history. Therefore, the workshop focused on encouraging participants to connect *wenrenhua* to their own personal experiences by means of experiential learning first. This enabled the teachers to cultivate their appreciation of this painting style. The three learning objectives were to:

- Appreciate *wenrenhua* with a tea-tasting activity.
- Experience body and mind perceptions when appreciating nature and the Chinese literati's art culture in the Ming dynasty.
- Create an artwork (drawing) to express and reflect their appreciation of nature and their tea-tasting experience.

#### **Three Phases of the Workshop**

The workshop was divided into three phases to create holistic and experiential learning. To be applicable to the participants' classrooms, we also covered the four major principles of the State Visual Art Standards in Colorado:<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> The foundational four Visual Art Standards are: observe and learn to comprehend; envision and critique to reflect; invent and discover to create; and relate and connect to transfer. Detailed information and grade level's graduate expectations can be seen in Colorado Department of Education (2020).

- **Knowing the historical background**  
The history of Chinese literati paintings was introduced, including how tea brewing and production changes influenced the literati's life philosophy and art creations. This part covered the standard of "observe and learn to comprehend."
- **Positioning the self in the context**  
A tea-tasting event was used to help the teachers imagine the feelings the Chinese literati perceived when they tasted tea in nature so that they could create a drawing later. This phase mainly involved two state standards: "observe and learn to comprehend" and "invent and discover to create."
- **Expressing self-understanding and exploring mind-body connections by making art**  
The teachers were invited to create drawings that reflected their feelings after their tea-tasting experience and walk in nature. The goal was for them to develop a stronger connection with the philosophy and ideology of creating literati paintings. The teachers also shared how they might apply their workshop experiences to their lesson designs. This phase embodied three standards: "invent and discover to create," "envision and critique to reflect," and "relate and connect to transfer."

### Knowing the Historical Background

In addition to teaching the history of *wenrenhua*, Wen Cheng Ming's and Tang Ying's paintings of tea-tasting were introduced in the workshop. Wen and Tang were two great *wenrenhua* masters in the Ming dynasty and were both famous for depicting their love of tea in their paintings and writings. Thus, their paintings of tea-tasting events are great examples of the Ming literati's pursuit of a "true and natural" life (Wu, 1993, p. 300).

*Tasting Tea* (see Figure 1) and *Chanting Ten Things about Brewing Tea*<sup>5</sup> were chosen to introduce the art teachers to the work of Wen. The compositions of these two paintings are identical. Wen wrote a short poem on the former and ten poems on the latter to address ten important things in tea tasting.

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<sup>5</sup> This artwork is in the Palace Museum, Beijing, China. An image of this painting can be viewed on the website of the Palace Museum: <https://www.dpm.org.cn/collection/paint/232860.html>.



**Figure 1**  
*Wen Chen Ming, Tasting Tea [品茶圖], 1531*



*Note.* Paper, 88.3 x 25.0 cm (main painting). © 2020 The collection of the National Palace Museum, all rights reserved

*Appreciating Tea* [品茶圖] (see Figure 2) was selected from Tang's paintings. Despite different compositional designs, there are similar elements in Tang's and Wen's paintings that depict tea-tasting events. These paintings illustrate how the literati created a peaceful space in which to invite their friends to socialize while tasting teas.

**Figure 2**  
*Tang Ying, Appreciating Tea* [品茶圖], n.d.



*Note.* Paper, 93.2 x 29.8 cm (main painting) © 2020 The collection of the National Palace Museum, all rights reserved

These two paintings both portray mountains, woods, a teahouse, a servant, and visiting friends. They also depict a teapot next to the host, which corresponds to the introduction given about the change in the tea-brewing method.

In the introduction to these paintings, the following “looking questions” were asked to guide the workshop participants in observing their details and to share their findings:

- Where are these places?
- What were the people doing in the paintings?
- If you were a guest at this event, how would you feel?
- Why did the hosts in the paintings serve their tea in these places?

The teachers observed that both paintings depicted mountains and little houses, with space for only three people (the host, the guest, and the servant) and that the host seemed to have tea with the guest. Then they discussed what they thought were the reasons the host would have tea with his friend in the mountains rather than in a teahouse in town or at a private house.

After the discussion, historical facts about the two painters’ political lives were given the participants to explain why most of the Chinese literati in the Ming dynasty chose to embrace nature and tea in their art creations. The goal was to assist the teachers to further connect with and understand the history behind these paintings.

### **Positioning the Self in the Context: Tea-Tasting Inspired by Ming Literati**

After the teachers were introduced to the historical context of tea and the literati, they experienced a tea-tasting event (see Figure 3). This part of their experiential learning was particularly important for them to understand the Ming literati’s philosophy of pursuing truth and nature, as reflected in *wenrenhua*.

For this part of the workshop, three types of tea were chosen: Long Jing, Da Yu Mountain Tea, and Sun Moon Lake Black Tea, which represented three different planting altitudes, oxidation levels, and rolled and compressed forms. The teachers observed and compared these differences by tasting different types of tea and using a study sheet (see Table 1). A similar tea brewing method to the Ming was followed by pouring boiling water onto the leaves. The process engaged the teachers in the process of building “connectedness” for a holistic understanding of tea. Later, they were invited to transfer the mind-body connection between tea-tasting and appreciating nature to their drawings. They were guided to participate in the process of creating “balance” as they tried to contemplate the relationship between the historical content and tea-tasting scenes in *wenrenhua* during the tea-tasting process.



**Figure 3**  
*The tea-tasting event during the PD workshop*



*Note.* Photographed by the author

**Table 1**  
*The Study Sheet for the Tea Tasting Event*

<b>Observing Tea</b>	
<b>Name/Type of Teas</b>	<b>Tea Observation</b>
<p><b>Long Jing Tea</b> (A type of green tea. It was one of the popular teas among the literati in the Ming dynasty) Location: Long Jing, Hangzhou, China</p>	<p>Shape of the tea leaf: Color of the tea: Taste of the tea: <i>What type of personal experience or memory could you connect to the drinking experience?</i></p>
<p><b>Da Yu Mountain Tea</b> (A type of green tea. The production is located at the highest elevation in Taiwan, around 2500 m) Location: Between Nantou County and Taichung County, Taiwan</p>	<p>Shape of the tea leaf: Color of the tea: Taste of the tea: <i>What type of personal experience or memory could you connect to the drinking experience?</i></p>
<p><b>Sun Moon Lake Black Tea</b> (A type of Assamica black tea) Location: Nantou County, Taiwan</p>	<p>Shape of the tea leaf: Color of the tea: Taste of the tea: <i>What type of personal experience or memory could you connect to the drinking experience?</i></p>

*Note.* Made by the author

**Figure 4**

*The teachers observed the shapes of different kinds of tea leaves and wrote their observations on their study sheets*



*Note.* Photographed by the author

**Expressing Self-Understanding and Exploring Mind-Body Connections Through Drawing**

The last phase of the PD workshop was to create an artwork after tasting the teas and appreciating nature. The teachers were encouraged to hold their favorite kind of tea and leave the classroom to observe nature outside for 10 to 15 minutes. They then came back to create their artworks and express how they felt about the combination of tea appreciation, art, and nature. Besides strengthening the connections between history, art, and nature for holistic learning, this phase also offered a chance for “inclusion” to happen. The teachers practiced transmitting the content they learned, enacting this knowledge by choosing their own expressive media, and transferring their understanding to their drawings. For example, Teacher #1’s artwork showed her observation and understanding of the poems and ideas in Wen’s and Tang’s paintings (see Figure 5). Moreover, she inscribed her own poem on her drawing.

**Figure 5**  
*Short poem by Teacher #1*

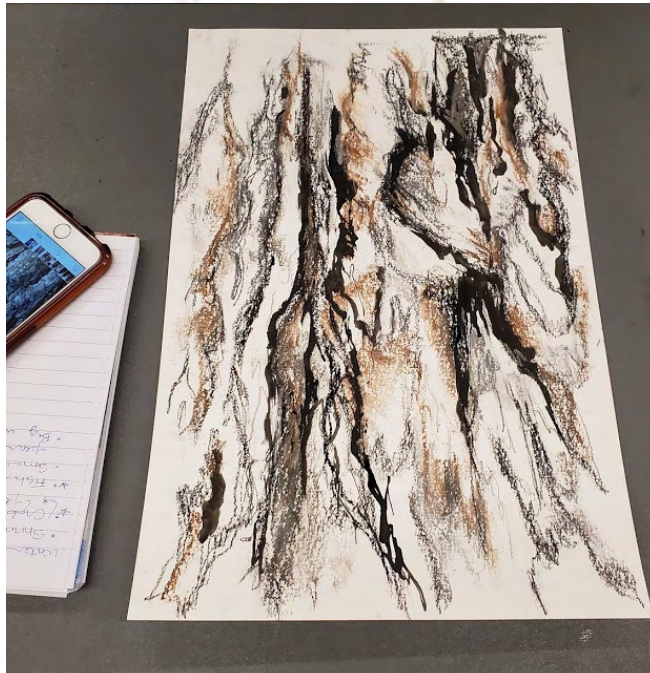


*Note.* The poem: “Each taste, a moment, mindful moment, reflecting the society beyond the everyday.” Photographed by the author

The final art exercise allowed the teachers to use any familiar art materials in the classroom to express their new perceptions of art, tea, and *wenrenhua*. The goal of this workshop was to understand the Chinese literati’s philosophy of creating *wenrenhua*, rather than copying its style (see Figures 6 and 7). At the end of the workshop, the teachers were asked to share what they thought about their experiences and how they could incorporate them into their teaching. With their permission, their reflections were audio recorded while some were completing the final touches of their drawings.

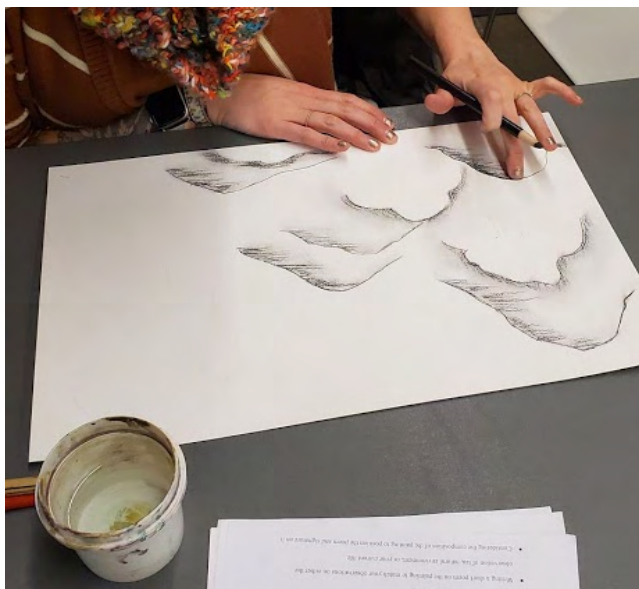


**Figure 6**  
*An example of a teacher using her chosen art media to create a drawing*



*Note.* The teacher chose to use watercolors to depict the tree she observed outside. Photographed by the author

**Figure 7**  
*Another example of a teacher using her chosen art media to create a drawing*



*Note.* This teacher applied oil crayon and finger rubbing to imitate the misty atmosphere often created in *wenrenhua*. Photographed by the author

Fort Collins is a city surrounded by the Rocky Mountains which can be easily viewed from the campus. Not surprisingly, many of the teachers chose to depict these mountains in their artwork. In Figure 8, Teacher #2 expressed her feelings about Da Yu Mountain Tea through her drawings. She indicated that when she tasted the tea, she could feel the air floating in the mist on a high mountain. She was trying to present this “airy” feeling by using watercolors to depict content she had learned and seen in the course (personal communication, November 11, 2019).

**Figure 8**  
*Drawing by Teacher #2*



*Note.* Photographed by the author

Many of the teachers preferred the Sun Moon Lake Black Tea, and all shared how they perceived its rich and fruitful flavor. Teacher #3 said that this tea took her back to the traditional black tea that she had in her hometown in Iran. However, in her drawing, she focused on depicting the snowdrops on trees to represent the delicate taste that she had when drinking the black tea during the workshop (see Figure 9).

**Figure 9**  
*Journal drawing by Teacher #3*



*Note.* Photographed by the author



Some teachers chose to create drawings related to their personal experiences. Teacher #4 shared that this experience recalled her life in Arizona and the desert. She once had tea there, she said, but it was not comparable to the tea in the workshop (see Figure 10).

**Figure 10**  
*Teacher #4 Drawing her memories of Arizona*



*Note.* Photographed by the author



Teacher #5 created her drawing to express the quiet and peaceful feeling she received from the day's learning (see Figure 11). She specifically chose Chinese ink to draw the Christmas trees because she felt they symbolized peace in her culture, which is what she learned from the day.

**Figure 11**  
*Teacher #5 drew Christmas trees to represent a peaceful feeling*



*Note.* Photographed by the author.

## Reflections and Future Implementations

### PD Participant's Reflection

At the end of the drawing activity, in their final written reflection, the teachers shared how they would implement what they had learned when teaching their future art courses. Most of them responded that holding a tea-tasting event would be an accessible activity that could encourage students' learning interest in the Chinese literati art culture of *wenrenhua*. Their reasons are summarized as follows:

- The process of tea-tasting could make students think about the differences between the Chinese tea drinking culture and their Western tea cultures. Moreover, for K-5 students who may not be able to memorize a lot of art history, a hands-on activity like the tea tasting could help provoke their interest in approaching and connecting with the history behind the paintings.
- The tea-tasting activity could help them teach observational drawing of cultural artifacts along with art history to K4 or K5 students. The teacher could transform the final drawing activity into an observational drawing practice when facilitating the tea-tasting activity. Tasting different types of tea, observing, and drawing different shapes of tea leaves could help students connect the information about tea production and contemplate the scenes and feelings that literati painters created.

The teachers' responses showed that the experiential approaches in the workshop were good connecting points that helped them learn and apply to the teaching of *wenrenhua*. A surprising idea that the teachers shared was the comparison of tea drinking between the Chinese literati and Western cultures. This viewpoint was valuable for this workshop's future implementation and would be a useful conversation to have with learners.

### Facilitator's Reflection

Unfortunately, the COVID-19 pandemic that commenced after March 2020 in the United States prevented the facilitation of this workshop again, and therefore revisions to improve on facilitation of the first workshop. Despite making some time adjustments, further suggestions for art educators to consider in the workshop's future implementation include the following:

- Challenges arise when learners have limited knowledge of *wenrenhua* or Chinese art history. The introduction of this history could focus on one tea-tasting painting instead of all three. The teacher could spend more time discussing the nature and subjects that were depicted in the Chinese paintings.
- After considering the teachers' reflections, an observational drawing exercise could be included in the tea-tasting process along with the tea-tasting worksheet.

In the workshop, the teachers learned about the Ming literati's integration of tea, art, and nature. Everything they experienced involved "transactions between the persona and the environment" (Kolb, 2015, p. 45), proving that "learning is a holistic process of adaptation to the world" (p. 43), and "the process of creating knowledge" (p. 48). The teachers who transferred and applied the knowledge to their artworks created the most successful examples (See Figures 5, 7, and 8).

Although challenges were encountered during the process, the workshop exhibited how applying holistic and experiential approaches could be beneficial for teaching a cultural art lesson for the participants who were not familiar with a cultural or historical topic. Teachers could use the provided resources and approaches to make modifications for teaching different grade levels of students about *wenrenhua*. Moreover, it was important to guide the participants to reflect on their learning during the process rather than only on their final products.

### Closing Thoughts

The participants in this workshop learned about Chinese tea culture and the arts, which was reflected in what they felt and experienced after the tea-tasting activity and when creating their artworks to capture their experience. The workshop showed how they could contemplate, appreciate, and connect the Ming literati's art-making philosophy with their own personal understandings or stories, and then reflect them in their drawings instead of appropriating drawing techniques or cultural symbols.

It is crucial to develop a learning experience that honors the similar spirit of the Ming literati for the teachers who want to revise the workshop content to fit into their art appreciation lessons on the same topic. The approaches of this PD workshop provide people from other cultures with the opportunity to understand and to be willing to explore *wenrenhua* in Chinese art history. Creating an experiential and holistic environment for a cultural art lesson is not about making learners become natives of that culture. Rather, to integrate cultural elements and activities into our lessons to connect with learners' personal experiences of comprehending and resonating with a culture. By doing so, learners can develop the cultural respect to appreciate a culture instead of appropriating or making cultural assumptions about it.



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## CHAPTER 8

### When Art Meets Poetry: The Expressive Nature of Chinese Literati Paintings

Yinghua Wang  
Adjunct Lecturer, Ohlone College  
Founder of Happy Valley Art School

#### Abstract

Since the Song dynasty (960 – 1279 AD), the rise of literati painting gradually changed the flower-and-bird painting style from neat and delicate to freehand ink-wash brushwork. Literati painting emphasizes the combination of spirit and form. Artists depict the form of the object and express their emotions, feelings, ideas, and understandings through their portrayal of the item. To increase student interest in learning Mandarin and Chinese culture, I collaborated with a Mandarin teacher to develop an interdisciplinary summer camp curriculum. I introduced students to the literati painting style to explore its poetic and artistic nature and to learn how ancient Chinese scholars expressed their emotions through poems and art. Students created artworks based on their understanding of the poem they learned in camp.

*Keywords:* literati painting, art curriculum design, art integration, summer Mandarin camp



### Historical Background of Literati Painting

From the late Northern Song dynasty (960 – 1127 AD) to the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912 AD), the literati's participation in the critique and creation of calligraphy and painting became common practice. The literati paintings focused on natural things with symbolic meanings, such as plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, flowers, trees, and stones. Defining literati painting, Jiang Liang (2011) wrote,

When Chinese painting came to ink-wash flower painting, it completely departed from the scope of religion and practicality. It has specialized in cultivating temperament, giving the expression of ideas, providing fun and aesthetics, and having free-form brushwork and ink washing. Most authors are scholars, so they are literary. (p. 111)

Departing from tradition, the literati painters in this period sought to involve more emotion and freedom in the creation of their works.

The Yuan dynasty (1272 – 1368 AD) scholars pushed literati painting to its maturity with a simple and elegant style. Ni Zan [倪瓚] (1301 – 1374 AD), one of the Yuan dynasty's master poets and artists, claimed that free-form brush strokes do not seek resemblance but self-entertainment and the expression of inner emotions and feelings. This ink-wash freehand painting style (Xieyi) [写意] gradually replaced the previously favored meticulous painting style (Gongbi) [工笔]. During the Ming (1368 – 1644 AD) and Qing (1644 – 1912 AD) dynasties, freehand flower-and-bird paintings became mainstream. The literati painting style in this period mainly focused on reflecting an interest in ink-wash, brushwork, and infusing thoughts and feelings. Shen Zhou [沈周] (1427 – 1509 AD), Wen Zhengming [文征明] (1470 – 1559 AD), Tang Yin [唐寅] (1470 – 1524) AD, and Qiu Ying [仇英] (1498 – 1552 AD), known as the “four masters of the Ming dynasty,” created new trends during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Shen Zhou's flower-and-bird brush strokes are exquisite, and he incorporates the water-dyeing skills of landscape painting into flower-and-bird painting, which build layers of semi-transparent colors to define the form of the objects. Wen Zhengming incorporates the literati taste in ink-wash and brushwork. He painted meticulously yet maintained a light and elegant style. Characterized by increased secularization and widespread public interest in their artworks, Tang Yin and Qiu Ying chose subjects that were more suitable for the general public's appreciation. These artists applied ink randomly and inscribed impromptu poems on their artworks, which expressed their personality and are full of original spirit. They highlighted the poetic connotation and the expression of real feelings and captured delicate emotional characteristics in their ink-wash and brushwork (Bush, 2012).

Although generally considered a portrayal of an object, an artistic creation is not a simple copy of it. Literati painting depicts the form of its subject and expresses the artist's emotions, feelings, ideas, and understanding through its portrayal. The literary lyric of flower-and-bird painting by the literati extended artistic conceptions and expanded the ideological connotation of flower-and-bird painting. Using brushwork and ink-wash, literati painters drew out the beauty of their subjects and illustrated the characteristics of Chinese painting. The flowing transition of the lines and the intensity and variety of the ink “color” express the emotions, strength, interest, and momentum of the literati artists, and create a sense of time and space, which constitutes an essential state of beauty.

### Literati Painting Examples

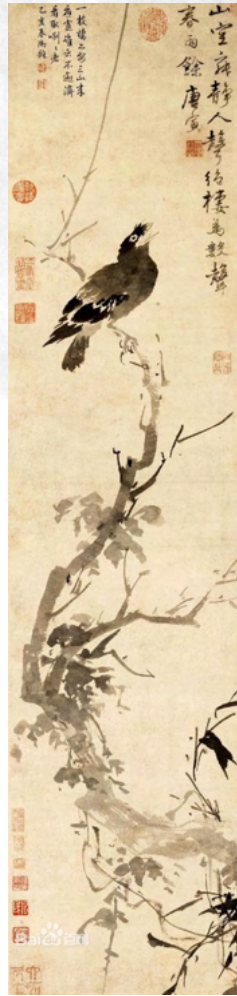
I chose one of Tang Yin's and one of Bada Shanren's [八大山人] 1626 – 1705 AD) paintings for my students to compare and learn from. Tang Yin was a Chinese scholar, artist, and poet of the Ming dynasty, who came from a mercantile background and won first place in the Imperial Examination of his province at 29. The following year, he went to the capital to attend the national examinations, with the eventual goal of pursuing politics. However, he was unfairly accused of cheating and was forbidden to participate in the examination again, which deprived him of the opportunity to serve the country as a respected official, meaning he could no longer fulfill his political dreams. So he became an artist.

The ink-wash artwork *Aged Tree and Parrot* [古槎鸚鵡图] is one of Tang Yin's representative paintings (see Figure 1). The picture, in freestyle ink-wash, portrays a parrot, with its head held high, perched on a branch. The branches are strong and vary in form, rising in a reverse "S" shape. The lines used in the artwork are vivid and fluid, and the branches seem to move slightly in the wind. Vines surround the branches, and there are clusters of new bamboo next to them. The artwork is full of vigor and vitality. At the top right of the painting is a poem inscribed by the artist, which is translated as follows: "It is silent in the barren mountain [山空寂静人声绝], there perched a black parrot chirping a little, and there are still a few spring rains [栖乌数声春雨余]" (Zheng, 2007). Literati artists embraced sorrow and joy in their artworks, expressing their true feelings through both poems and paintings. Tang Yin's poetry and painting are intertwined, enabling the audience to experience the tranquil natural beauty expressed in the piece through both the poem's message and the artwork.

The other piece I chose to illustrate the link between art and poetry was Bada Shanren's *Lotus and Kingfisher* [荷花翠鸟图] (see Figure 2). Bada Shanren was a descendant of Zhu Quan, a prince of the Ming dynasty. After the Qing dynasty replaced the Ming dynasty, Zhu Quan became a monk and called himself Bada Shanren. His miserable life affected his values and artistic creations, and most of his paintings express a hatred for the Qing dynasty and nostalgia for the Ming dynasty. Bada Shanren integrated his subjective consciousness into his art and applied symbolic meaning through the use of fish, insects, birds, and other subjects.

His artwork *Lotus and Kingfisher* conveys a desolate, lonely, and cold atmosphere, which is a spiritual expression of the lonely life and sad feelings of Bada Shanren himself. Full-bodied lotus leaves, non-blooming lotus flowers, slender stems, steep stone peaks, and two kingfishers form this artwork. The focus of the painting is two kingfishers staring at each other. Their human-like expressions add an unsettling quality to the already enigmatic atmosphere in the painting. The kingfisher looking back is the embodiment of Bada Shanren. His dissatisfaction with the new dynasty, yearning for his native country, and disappointment with life made him unwilling to stay in the Qing dynasty, so he designed the bird to stand on only one foot. The inscription includes the word "crying" [哭之] in the top left corner, which takes the viewers into Bada Shanren's inner self and invites them to experience his painful emotions as conveyed by the entire piece (Zhang, 2012).

**Figure 1**  
*Aged Tree and Parrot [古槎鸚鵡圖], Tang Yin*



*Note.* From Shanghai Museum (n.d.).  
<https://www.shanghaimuseum.net/mu/front-end/pg/article/id/CI00000873>

**Figure 2**  
*Lotus and Kingfisher [荷花翠鳥圖], Bada Shanren*



*Note.* From Shanghai Museum (n.d.).  
<https://www.shanghaimuseum.net/mu/front-end/pg/m/article/id/CI00001031>

### The Framework of My Curriculum

As part of a Chinese American community, 95% of our Happy Valley Art School students are Chinese American. These children can understand Mandarin although English is their first language. Our art school provides summer camps to these children in a bilingual classroom setting. Many parents, especially first-generation Chinese American immigrants, struggle to teach their children Mandarin and introduce them to Chinese culture. My school has attempted to develop art curricula that teach our students Chinese painting and calligraphy. We expect our summer camp to cultivate their interest in traditional Chinese art, teach them more about Chinese culture, and promote their positive self-identity as Chinese American.



Happy Valley Art School's summer camps offer a continuous five-day period to immerse the students in a subject. The following is the camp schedule: morning Mandarin camps from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm, and afternoon Chinese painting camps from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm. Ten students were enrolled in my summer class, all of whom were in Grade 3.

### Collaboration with a Mandarin Teacher

I was fortunate to collaborate with a Mandarin teacher in developing an integrated curriculum that could generate an active learning process for the students to learn Mandarin, art, and culture. I worked with the Mandarin teacher to discuss our expectations, previous lesson ideas, student and parent feedback, difficulties encountered, and teaching strategies. To find a connection between Mandarin learning and art concepts, I decided to introduce the students to literati painting, so that they could explore the poetic and artistic nature of their art style and how ancient Chinese scholars expressed their emotions through poetry and art. The students created paintings to express their feelings and understanding of a poem as a performance task.

As discussed with the Mandarin instructor, she focused on teaching the poetry, the words and their meaning, and how to write Mandarin words. The art curriculum was integrated with the school's language curriculum. While the Mandarin teacher taught the poem's definition, I as the art teacher guided the students through sketching compositions based on their understanding of the poem. I taught in Mandarin to build a Mandarin-speaking environment. The vocabulary and meaning of the poem were highlighted and repeated during the art camp so that the students could use the words and phrases they learned. I also taught the students Wang Wei's [王维] (701 – 761 AD) poem "The Dale of Singing Birds" [鸟鸣涧]. Wang Wei was a famous poet in the Tang dynasty (618 – 907 AD). Su Shih [苏轼] (1037 – 1101 AD), another Chinese artist, commented on Wang Wei's poetry and painting: "There is painting in the poem, and poem in the painting." There are three reasons I chose this poem for my students. First, the Mandarin teacher found the vocabulary in it matched the students' Mandarin learning level. Second, I wanted to encourage them to understand the meaning of the poem and to explore their own connection to it. Third, the poem is full of imagery, which inspired the students to visualize their understanding and create their own artworks. Below is the full poem in English and Mandarin, translated by Yuanchong Xu (Yang, 2010).

I hear osmanthus blooms fall unenjoyed; [人闲桂花落]  
When night comes, hills dissolve into the void. [夜静春山空]  
The rising moon arouses birds to sing; [月出惊山鸟]  
Their fitful twitters fill the dale with spring. [时鸣春涧中] (p. 19)

## National Art Education Standards Alignment

This curriculum is aligned with the following 2014 National Core Art Standards:

- **Creating:** VA: Cr1.2.3a — Apply knowledge of available resources, tools, and technologies to investigate personal ideas through the art-making process; VA: Cr2.1.3a — Create personally satisfying artwork using a variety of artistic processes and materials; VA: Ce3.1.3a — Elaborate visual information by adding details in an artwork to enhance emerging meaning.
- **Presenting:** VA: Pr6.1.3a — Identify and explain how and where different cultures record and illustrate stories and history of life through art.
- **Responding:** VA: Re.7.1.3a — Speculate about processes an artist uses to create a work of art; VA: Re.7.2.3a — Determine messages communicated by an image; VA: Re.8.1.3a — Interpret art by analyzing use of media to create subject matter, characteristics of form, and mood.
- **Connecting:** VA: Cn10.1.3a — Develop a work of art based on observations of surroundings. (National Core Arts Standards, 2014)

## Student Learning Objectives

Considering the expressive and symbolic nature of literati painting, the curriculum's major idea is that artists express their emotions and feelings through art and language. To understand this idea, the students explored the following questions:

- How did ancient literati express their feelings through art and poetry?
- How does art connect to the expressive qualities of a poem?
- How did ancient Chinese scholars express their understanding of nature through ink and brushwork?
- How can you depict your interpretation of a poem through ink and brushwork?

The students explored how to convey meaning through ink and brushwork. They also tried to create an artistic conception based on their understanding of the poem and their reflections on daily life. Therefore, to fulfill these learning objectives I developed the study of the following skill sets:

- Basics of Chinese brushwork
- Tones and blending methods of Chinese ink
- Exploration of lines and how lines create meaning in art
- Transformation from poetic meaning to artistic creation
- Composition—positive and negative spaces
- Application of a limited color palette and contrast

## Assessments

I designed scaffolding assignments and a final project to help the students fulfill the learning objectives gradually. These assignments worked as class exercises that helped the students

explore and learn the major idea of creating an artwork. The following were their scaffolding assignments and descriptions:

- **Exploration of brushwork and line art**

Most of the students had never learned about Chinese painting, so this assignment taught them how to hold a brush, load ink, and create a variety of lines. They had the freedom to play with brush and ink to create lines and explore how the forms of lines created different meanings.

- **The voice of ink**

Chinese artists use ink to create a variety of tones to indicate or provide an illusion of color changes. The artists considered this “ink magic,” with the five “colors” of dry, wet, thick, light, and scorched. Among these “colors,” “dry” and “wet” indicate how wet the ink is; “thick” and “light” indicate how dark the ink looks, and “scorched ink” refers to a tone even darker than “thick” ink. Simply put, artists create these ink “colors” by blending different amounts of water with ink. This scaffolding assignment encouraged the students to experiment with mixing water and ink to produce the “five colors” on Chinese Xuan paper (rice paper).

- **Methods of painting birds**

I demonstrated the steps and methods for painting birds. The students learn the techniques and practice painting them. They were instructed to search for real bird reference images to practice sketching birds and to paint birds in the free-form Chinese painting style.

- **Methods of painting trees**

I provided some examples of trees and demonstrated a variety of ways to paint them. The students practice painting trees, branches, and leaves. They search for reference images if necessary.

- **Sketches of transforming a poem’s meaning into an art composition**

Once the students learn the meaning of the poem during the Mandarin camp, they drafted sketches that displayed artistic composition based on their understanding of the poem. They also searched for literati paintings and real bird/tree images for reference.

The scaffolding assignments provided a foundation for the students to create a literati painting based on their understanding of the assigned poem and their reflections on daily life. They learned the basic skill sets of Chinese painting and discussed their sketches and compositions with me, which helped them create artwork for the final project. Scaffolding assignments and the main project enabled me to evaluate the students’ learning progress and efficiency. I also use various formative assessment methods, such as observing the students working, conversing with other students, their self-evaluation and peer evaluation, and exit-classroom tickets. Based on the findings, I continuously adjusted their teaching methods. The rubrics (see Table 1) used to assess the final project were as follow:



**Table 1**  
*Rubrics for assessment of the student artwork*

	Excellent	Good	Need Work
The meaning expressed by the artwork Re.7.1.3a, Re.7.2.3a, Re.8.1.3a	The student expressed emotions and feelings from the artwork and poem and his/her reflection on daily life.	The student expressed a little emotion and feeling from the artwork and poem.	The student barely expressed any emotion and feeling from the artwork and poem.
Originality and the student's voice Pr6.1.3a, Cn10.1.3a	The artwork is innovative, completely original, well thought out, and thoroughly developed.	The artwork is thought out and developed throughout.	The artwork appears to still be in progress.
Brushwork and line variety Cr1.2.3a, Ce3.1.3a	The student demonstrated fine brushwork and applied a variety of lines to depict the objects.	The student demonstrated nice brushwork and applied lines to depict the objects.	The student barely demonstrated any brushwork. Line quality needs much improvement.
Composition and design Ce3.1.3a, Cn10.1.3a	The student experimented with principles of design and composition to make the visual elements work well.	The student worked a little with principles of design and composition.	The student barely used any principles of design and composition.
Craftsmanship Cr1.2.3a, Cr2.1.3a, Ce3.1.3a	The artwork reflects the deliberate control of the media. Advanced craftsmanship.	The artwork reflects the control of the media. Proficient craftsmanship.	The artwork appears to still be in progress.
Work habit Cr1.2.3a	The student worked in class for the entire period. Did not need to be reminded to focus on the task. Table conversation was focused on art talk.	The student worked in class most of the period. Needed very few reminders to focus on the task.	The student needed many reminders to focus on the task.

## Learning Design and Teaching Strategies for the Visual Art Segment

After settling the students' learning objectives and assessment evidence, as the art teacher, I developed a detailed lesson plan for every class. The following is a description of the lesson plan and class activities.

### Day 1

During the first day of class, I introduced Tang Yin's and Bada Shanren's artworks. I asked the students to use a Venn diagram to analyze the differences and similarities between the two paintings. I then recounted the artists' life stories and encouraged the students to feel the emotions expressed in the artworks. They also reflected on their own life experiences, such as sharing when they felt lonely or sad. From these reflections and sharings, the students began to gain a sense of the feelings conveyed by the artworks. I used these questions to guide them:

- What kinds of lines do you see?
- What gradient color (value) do you see from the ink-wash?
- What do you see in the artworks?
- What do you think the birds are doing in the painting?
- What expression do you see on the birds' faces?
- Why do you think the artists create the birds in this way?
- What stories can you tell from the artworks?
- What types of emotions do you feel from the paintings?
- In addition to painted objects, what other types of elements do you see in the artworks? Can you recognize their meanings?

After posing these questions, I introduced the supplies unique to Chinese painting including Xuan paper, brushes, and ink. I demonstrated how to hold a brush, the parts of a brush, how to dip and mix ink with water, and how to paint a variety of lines with brush and ink. The students then worked on the first exercise, such as exploring brushwork and line art. I continuously checked the students' progress and offered instructions as needed. When the students finished their first exercise, they reflected on their difficulties and achievements.

### Day 2

I discussed Tang Yin's and Bada Shanren's artworks with the students again, focusing on the ink-wash "colors." The students distinguished the different ink-wash tones in the paintings. I then demonstrated how to mix water and ink to produce a variety of tones, load a brush with different tones, and paint with center- and side-brush techniques. The students worked on the second exercise, the voice of ink. After they finished the practice, I encouraged them to talk about the tones they applied and the difficulties they encountered.

The first two scaffolding assignments prepared the students for the fundamental mastery of the ink-wash techniques. I analyzed the parts of a bird, demonstrating several ways to paint a bird, and guided the students by exploring the birds' shapes. They practiced painting their birds based on reference images of real birds, which was the third scaffolding assignment—methods of

painting birds. I required the students to pair with each other and write one thing they liked about their partner's artwork and one suggestion for improving the painting of the bird.

### Day 3

I discussed the painting of trees in Tang Yin's artwork with the students and focuses on the posture of the branches, the types of lines, and the ink-wash tones. I demonstrated how to paint trees and branches. The students worked on the fourth assignment—methods of painting trees while referring to real images of trees. I also helped the students analyze the posture of the trees and decide on the composition of branches for their paintings.

Since the art curriculum is integrated with the Mandarin curriculum, the students have learned the meaning of the poem “The Dale of Singing Birds” by this time. I discussed the meaning of the poem and what stories students could tell from it. The following are questions I asked to inspire the students for their own artworks:

- Please describe the meaning of the poem in your own words.
- What are the keywords describing the image of the poem?
- Where and when does the story happen? Who are the main characters? What is happening? What do you feel from the poem? What is the atmosphere you want to describe in your artwork?
- Let's do some visual research and work on at least three design sketches.

The students then worked on the fifth exercise—sketches of transforming the poem's meaning into an art composition. They created composition sketches based on their understanding of the poem. I divided the students into groups of three. The students in each group voted for their favorite composition and told each member of their group why they chose it and offered one suggestion to improve its design. Finally, I held a one-on-one meeting with each student to help them decide on the composition of their final project.

### Day 4

The students started work on their final projects based on their composition. I supervised their progress and guided their creations. They practiced several times before they felt confident enough to paint their final artwork. In addition to ink-wash, they also used Chinese mineral paints to apply color to their work. Once they finished their final piece, the students noted one thing they liked and offered one suggestion to improve their artwork. Each student also made a “two-star and one-wish” card for self-evaluation. Two stars represented two things the students were proud of about their artwork, and one wish represented an aspect they could improve.

### Day 5

The students glued their artworks and poems on a large piece of paper. Some decorated their final artwork with lines, shapes, and patterns. They put on an art exhibition to display their art and Mandarin homework. Each student then presented their artwork to their parents and

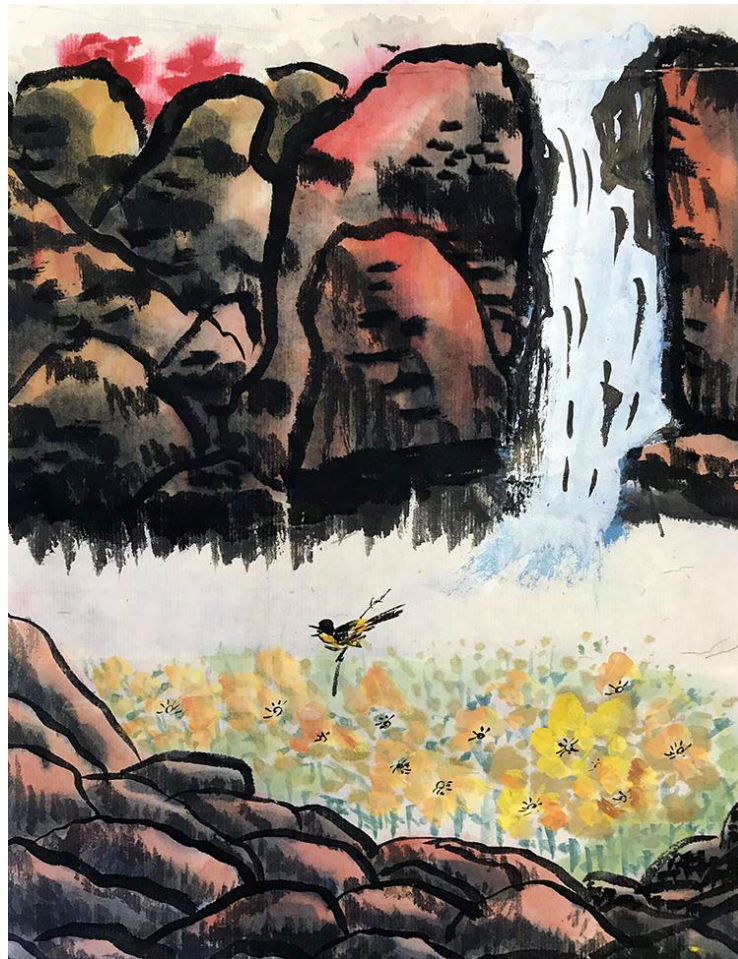


discussed their interpretation of the poem, their creative process, and what they expressed in their artwork.

### Students' Artwork Examples

I as the art teacher, functioned as a facilitator and knowledge resource. After providing the students with the information and techniques, I allowed them to be creative, constructing a safe place for them to experiment, make mistakes, and demonstrate problem-solving. After the Mandarin teacher taught the poem's meaning, I discussed how each student interpreted the verse and depicted it in their artwork. The students highlighted some keywords and phrases in the poem, such as "quiet mountain night," "rising moon," "osmanthus blooms," and "awakening birds." Then, they sketched out compositions based on these keywords and expressed their understanding of the poem. Figure 3 is a sample student piece that focuses on the quiet mountain sunset and a suddenly awakened bird in the middle. Figure 4 is an image of an owl becoming very alert when night comes. Each student illustrated their narrative about the poem with an attractive design.

**Figure 3**  
*Student Artwork Example 1*



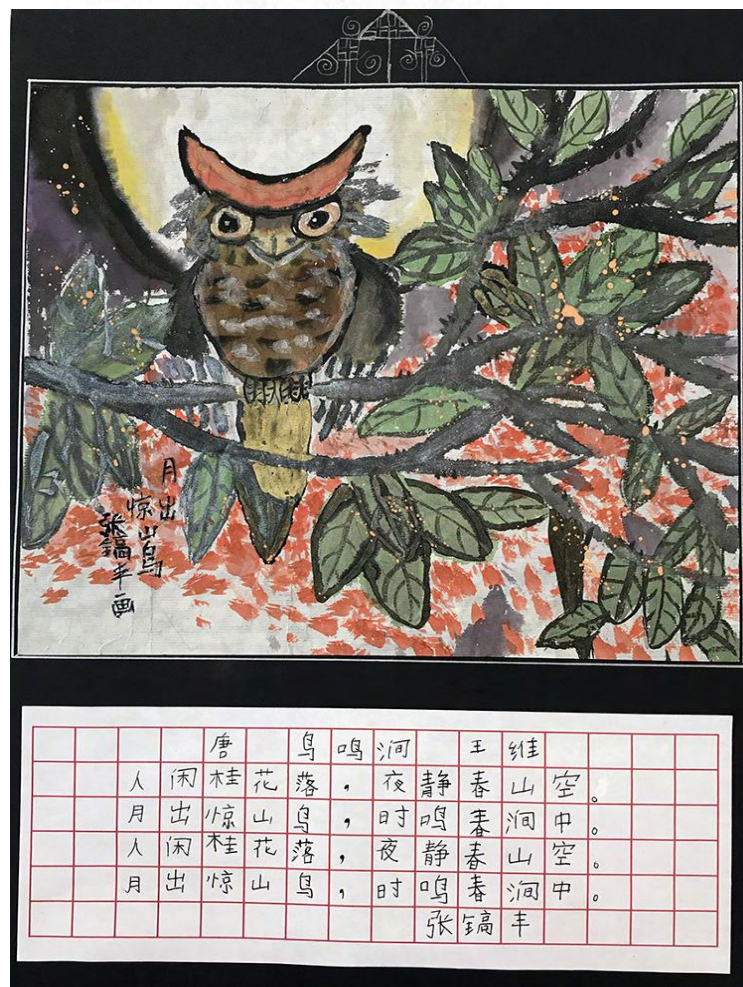


Their art expressed their interests and life experiences. The following are sample narratives of students describing their work.

Nobody is on the mountain. It is very quiet except for the sound of the waterfall. The small bird is awakened suddenly because the moon rises. The bird opens its mouth and chirps several times and sleeps again. The mountain is quiet again, only the flowers blooming quietly. (Student 1's description of her artwork shown as Figure 3)

Owls are one of my favorite animals, so I chose an owl as the major character in this artwork. It was getting dark, and the moon rose high in the sky. It was a full moon and the moonlight shone on the dark night mountain. You can see the osmanthus flowers falling. I doubt if the owl can smell the flowers. The owl just had a nice nap. Now it was very alert since the moon rose and it was a dark night. Did it prepare for a midnight hunt? I was wondering. (Student 2's description of his artwork shown as Figure 4)

**Figure 4**  
*Student Artwork Example 2*



## Reflection and Conclusions

Both the Mandarin teacher and I found that the integration of the Mandarin class and the art class helped the children better understand the poem's meaning. The students could better describe their work with an interesting narrative, encouraging them to use the Mandarin they had learned in the class. The art curriculum integration with their Mandarin study also increased the students' interest in traditional Chinese art and culture.

I suggest designing a long-term integrated art and Mandarin curriculum plan, since the present curriculum cannot support a systematic Mandarin and Chinese painting teaching process. In the future, I hope to work with the Mandarin teacher to create a year-long curriculum plan for the integrated teaching of Mandarin and Chinese art.

Although I taught Chinese poems and painting in this summer camp, this integrated art curriculum can also be applied to any language, literature, and art style. For example, art teachers can collaborate with literature teachers and extend the same teaching strategies to any poem. The integrated art curriculum can help students to understand the selected literature better and to visualize how they interpret the piece visually in their artwork.

I also suggest combining various art teaching forms and art media to expand the depth of art and language learning. The Chinese painting form I taught during the summer camp limited the skillsets students learned and did not allow them to explore a variety of art media. In the future, teachers can incorporate various art media and art forms, such as small animations or illustrated books that combine writing skills, performance, and art. Mixed-media projects are also interesting practices that could inspire students to express their interpretation of the literature in innovative ways.



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CHAPTER 9

**High School Students Learning About Chinese Seals:  
Creating Their Own as a Printmaking Art Lesson**

Mackenzie Pell  
High School Visual Art Teacher in Newton County, Georgia

**Abstract**

Introducing students to artistic traditions outside their own experience and knowledge can broaden their minds and help them develop appreciation for other cultures. In this chapter, the medium of printmaking is used to teach high school students a Chinese art form and bridge the gap between Eastern and Western artistic traditions. Methods are presented for teaching a high school lesson on Chinese seals using a printmaking project in which the students create a pair of seals or personal “logos,” showcasing aspects of their unique identities. The students learn the history and function of Chinese seals, as well as the technique of collagraph printmaking in order to simulate the seal carving process. Approaches used for teaching this lesson include visual thinking and design (elements of art and principles of design).

*Keywords:* yin style seal, yang style seal, relief printmaking, collagraph

## Introduction

Chinese seal carving is an ancient art form in which names, phrases, and imagery were carved into the surface of small palm-sized blocks of materials such as stone, wood, or jade, and used to make an imprint on certain kinds of materials. Dating back to the Eastern Zhou dynasty (770 – 256 BC), these seals were originally used by the emperors and government officials to sign and authenticate documents (Bai & Finlay, 1993). Seal carving is closely related to another major Chinese art form, calligraphy (UNESCO, 2009). Ming (1368 – 1644 AD) and Qing (1644 – 1911 AD) dynasties' literati painters adopted seals as an expressive signature and personalized identity marker, incorporating various types of inventive calligraphic scripts, pseudonyms, and meaningful poetic verses into their seal designs. Today, seals are used by all levels of Chinese society for both practical and expressive purposes. Personal seals are the equivalent of handwritten signatures, and their use is an act of acknowledging inherent responsibility for a particular purpose.

In this chapter, I first give the historical background of Chinese seals. Second, I provide pedagogical approaches for teaching a lesson on these seals. Third, I provide a five-hour printmaking project designed for high school learners. Teaching students about seal carving can help them construct personal meaning by experimenting with this art form as a possibility for creating variations of expressive, symbolic signatures inspired by their own stories and interests. Students can also gain knowledge of an art form outside their own cultural experience.

I originally developed this lesson for implementation in a virtual or hybrid instructional model of learning because it employs simple and easy-to-find recycled cardboard materials to use with a collagraph printmaking technique (Lefert et al., 2021). Chinese seal carving is very similar to such printmaking types as woodcut or linocut: a material is slowly removed from the seal to reveal a raised design which can be “printed” many times over. While collagraphy uses different, non-traditional materials and tools, the carving process and consideration of positive and negative space for creating Chinese seals are still simulated as students cut away cardboard material to create their seal designs. To teach this lesson on Chinese seals, printmaking is used as the bridge between Western and Eastern artistic traditions.

## Historical Background

The lesson presented here focuses on the use of seals during the Ming (1368 – 1644 AD) and Qing (1644 – 1911 AD) dynasties, with emphasis on their use by literati painters as well as by the Qianlong Emperor Hongli (1711 – 1799 AD). Prior to these two dynasties, seal design was highly regulated and their use was reserved for the emperor, government officials, and select businessmen. During this time, seals were used to sign and authenticate documents and business transactions. Interest in seal design and creation was at its height in the Han dynasty, wavered in the Tang, but was revived in the Ming dynasty by literati painters. Seal use was expanded from practical to expressive in the late Ming dynasty as the literati painters began designing and carving seals (Bai & Finlay, 1993). Seal content and design became less prescribed and more inventive. The seal functions explained below apply to both historical and contemporary times.

Chinese seals are designed and used for different occasions and purposes. The most basic of these uses is the equivalent of a handwritten signature. It is most common for regular individuals



to have a pair of name seals used for this purpose—one in the yin carving style and one in the yang carving style. In Chinese painting, artists use name seals as well as other seals for specific locations within a painting. Known as “decoration” or “location” seals, these include a subcategory called introduction seals which specify the year the artwork was made, the season in which it was made, a studio/study name where the artwork was produced, or a personal message (a philosophical verse, etc.). Location seals also include edge seals and corner seals (placed at the edge and corner of a painting). Each of these seals must be properly placed in the correct number according to established guidelines in order to maintain the compositional balance of the overall artwork and not to distract from the artwork itself.

Seals are also used by Chinese collectors of artwork, books, and scrolls. Collectors own special seals which they use to stamp artwork that they either view or purchase. This is the reason historical Chinese paintings often contain so many seals in seemingly odd locations (see Figure 1). While artists use seals according to prescribed guidelines so as not to disturb the balance of their artwork, this rule is not followed as often by esteemed collectors wishing to make their contact with and appreciation for the artwork known to others.

**Figure 1**

*A Spring Gathering. Shen Zhou (1427 – 1509), ink and color on paper. Ming dynasty, ca. 1480*



*Note.* Shen Zhou / Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Purchase — Charles Lang Freer Endowment, F1934.1

“A Spring Gathering” by Shen Zhou in the Ming dynasty (see Figure 1) is a painting that was owned at one time by the Qianlong Emperor (Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art, n.d.-a). This painting depicts two small figures in a hut in a mountain forest landscape and includes an inscription in calligraphy on the right. Of interest are the multiple seals surrounding the painting, in some cases directly on top of it. These seals are marks of ownership and admiration over time, and much like countless other Chinese paintings, the actual painting itself is nearly “overwhelmed by this enthusiastic display of appreciation” (Hearn, 2008, para. 2). Through the centuries, a single

painting would become covered by dozens of seals as collectors and owners added theirs (China Online Museum, n.d.). The largest seal is likely that of an emperor.

Most of the seals on the painting in Figure 1 are in the yang or red seal style (the characters are printed in red ink since the background is carved away to reveal them). One small seal (bottom left of the largest seal) is in the yin or white seal style (the characters are printed in white since they are directly carved). Each of these seal styles represents one of two methods commonly used in printmaking types similar to seal carving: woodcuts and linocuts. The artist typically a) cuts away the positive space (yin) or b) cuts away the negative space (yang). One method is chosen over the other for the particular visual effect the artist is seeking. The yin and yang categories of seal design reflect the pervading concept of yin and yang in Chinese culture. In this philosophical principle of dualism, opposing forces attract and complement each other to achieve balance and harmony. Yin represents darkness, passiveness, water, earth, softness, and femininity, while yang represents light, action, fire, heaven, hardness, and masculinity. Students can be prompted to think about how the visual qualities of each seal type, or technique, might reflect these characteristics.

Connected to the linework in Chinese seal design is the quality of the seal ink paste (in the form of an inkpad or red ink paste) used to stamp the seal. Seal ink paste is handmade of natural materials and only requires three basic ingredients: castor oil, Chinese mugwort (a plant fiber), and white clay. The traditional red color is created with the addition of cinnabar (inorganic mercury sulphide). High quality seal paste made by skilled craftsmen should be fine, sticky, and smooth, and is crucial to successfully displaying the intricacies of a seal's design and linework when stamped. To apply seal ink paste to a seal, the seal is pressed firmly and evenly into the paste several times (or by tapping), although firmness varies depending on the seal material. The “inking” instructions used in the studio project of the lesson presented here imitate this process.

**Figure 2**

*Two seals belonging to the Qianlong Emperor, with fitted stands and a decorated box. Jade seals and the wooden box inlaid with semi-precious stone, mother-of-pearl, silver, and gold. Qing dynasty ca. 1780*



*Note.* Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Anonymous gift, F1978.51a-f



In Figure 2, a pair of jade seals specifically made for the Qianlong Emperor Hongli (who reigned from 1735 to 1796) during the Qing dynasty is an example of how seals were intricately carved and designed. The round seals rest on a wooden stand and are housed in a wooden box inlaid with semi-precious stones, mother-of-pearl, silver, and gold. One seal impression reads “heavenly ability” while the other reads “rare achievement to reach seventy years old,” both referring to the emperor himself (Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art, n.d.-b). The multicolored inlaid design on the top of the box is a tiger-hunting scene, described in poetic verse by the emperor on the front of the box (Smithsonian National Museum of Asian Art, n.d.-b). In combination, these seals and the design of their box can be read as a statement of great power, strength, and ability, even in old age.

During his lifetime, the Qianlong Emperor amassed a personal collection of roughly 2,200 ancient seals (Fuxiang, 2016). Of his many motivations for collecting these seals, one stands out, which is that he felt that they could “evoke a sense of meeting people from the past during the [seal] exploration and appreciation process” (Fuxiang, 2016, p. 59). This idea shows just how closely these seals could be linked with identity, perhaps serving as stand-ins for historical personages in the emperor’s mind. From his specially commissioned containers to his mandated albums, descriptions, and epilogues for seals, Emperor Hongli took great care and diligence to obtain, authenticate, organize, catalogue, and house both his collected and personal seals (Fuxiang, 2016). The Qianlong Emperor understood and valued seals not only as preservers of history and calligraphic scripts, but also as pieces of their owners’ minds (Fuxiang, 2011, 2016). During his lifetime, Emperor Hongli also commissioned the creation of more than 1,800 personal seals which served the symbolic purpose of documenting his merits and life achievements (Fuxiang, 2011). The inspiration for the content of these seals included life events (birthdays, etc.), qualities of his character, his wishes for the future, other personal achievements, as well as original poetry and personally meaningful literary excerpts (Fuxiang, 2011).

### **Two Approaches to Seal Design**

For this visual art project, the students first learn the history of Chinese seals as an art form, including aspects of their function and design. They consider their “Western” signature (initials, etc.) as well as pictorial elements they could use in their original seal designs to represent elements of their unique personal identity as the owner and user of the pair of seals they will create. This lesson uses two main strategies: visual thinking and design.

#### **Visual Thinking**

The visual thinking strategy (VTS), which is used in the student discussion portion of the lesson, is a structured method for conducting group discussions about art objects in which they are encouraged to create their own understanding and narrative of art. They are asked to respond to these key questions: a) What is going on in the artwork? b) What do you see that makes you say that? and c) What else can you find? In these discussions, “individuals of roughly equal (often very little) exposure to art bring their different life experiences, knowledge, talents, and interests to bear on solving a problem—the possible meanings of an unfamiliar work of art” (Yenawine, 1998, p.



317). VTS is particularly useful for teaching students about diverse art objects outside their own experiences and biases (Yenawine, 2003).

Because the history and creation of Chinese seals are likely unfamiliar to many students in a Western classroom, asking them to first contribute their own thoughts and ideas in response to open-ended questions (VTS) about the seals would be a way to help them feel more at ease with this new art form before delving into the art history content. The students' contributions are valued and used to propel the activity, encouraging them to share more of their thoughts and ideas.

## Design

Chinese seals as an art form can also be examined in terms of their design. By responding to targeted questions (see Table 2), the students can point out the elements of art and principles of design that they observe in the seals' compositions. Figure 1 presents the students with a good example of various seal designs, shapes, and styles. Some have more of a complex design (such as the seal in the upper left corner) while others are slightly simpler with more negative than positive space (the round seal towards the middle). Variation in line quality and density can be seen throughout the seals in Figure 1, some more delicate in style while others (the largest and the one in the bottom left corner) are bolder. Diversity in linework has been described as one of the most interesting features of Chinese seals and should be a main point of study for the students (Weizu, 1997).

Line (an element of art) and variety of linework (a principle of design) across diverse calligraphy character styles should be studied by the students, along with how linework (strokes) is used in the seal compositions. Examples of the line quality and visual texture of script styles (bird and insect scripts, a coiling seal script, a small seal script, a large seal script, etc.) should be compared and students asked to describe the feelings or associations these line styles evoke in them. Texture in seal design can even be explored by the students if they use different types or parts of the recycled cardboard (e.g., the corrugated part).

To help the students understand the purpose of the two seals they will be creating, the project should be explained as an opportunity to design their own personal "logos." Logos are meant to *identify* the product, organization, etc., that they symbolize. They contain imagery and/or text and utilize color, line, shape, balance, texture, unity, proportion, etc. In the students' design, their logos must be aesthetically pleasing but also successful in representing a product, etc. They can be asked: Which specific elements of your identity (name, life events, traits, interests, cultural heritage, imagery/symbols, etc.) does your logo represent? How do you do this simply and effectively?

## Lesson

The seal-making project is completed over five hours (one week, one hour per day), during which the students complete the group discussion and sketching/journaling activities and create their pair of seals. This project aligns with the Connecting and Creating Categories of the National Core Arts Standards (see Table 1), as well as with the printmaking standards of Georgia Standards of Excellence in Visual Art (see Appendix A).

**Table 1**  
*National Core Arts Standards, Visual Arts*

<b>Anchor Standard</b>	<b>Level (HS)</b>
Connecting (Standard 10): Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art	VA:Cn10.1.1la: Utilize inquiry methods of observation, research, and experimentation to explore unfamiliar subjects through art-making.
Creating (Standard 2): Organize and develop artistic ideas and work	VA:Cr2.1.1la: Through experimentation, practice, and persistence, demonstrate acquisition of skills and knowledge in a chosen art form.

The first part of the lesson (one hour) includes the history of Chinese seals and a class discussion on their design (using the Elements of Art and Principles of Design). Art history content should include the origin of Chinese seals, materials used, carving methods (yin and yang, or white and red), purpose of the seal's use (private or official), and the common content of seal designs. For the class discussion, teachers should choose from many historical and/or contemporary Chinese seals to show the students (Several reference articles listed at the end of this chapter include many examples of historical and more contemporary seals, both imperial and private.). It is important that teachers choose a variety of seals, especially those containing text, imagery, different scripts, carving methods, etc., in order to provide the students with enough examples and inspiration for their studio activity of creating their own seals. Isolated seals as well as paintings with seals should be shown (see Figure 1). VTS and the design-specific questions in Table 2 can be used for the group discussion.

**Table 2**  
*Group Discussion Questions*

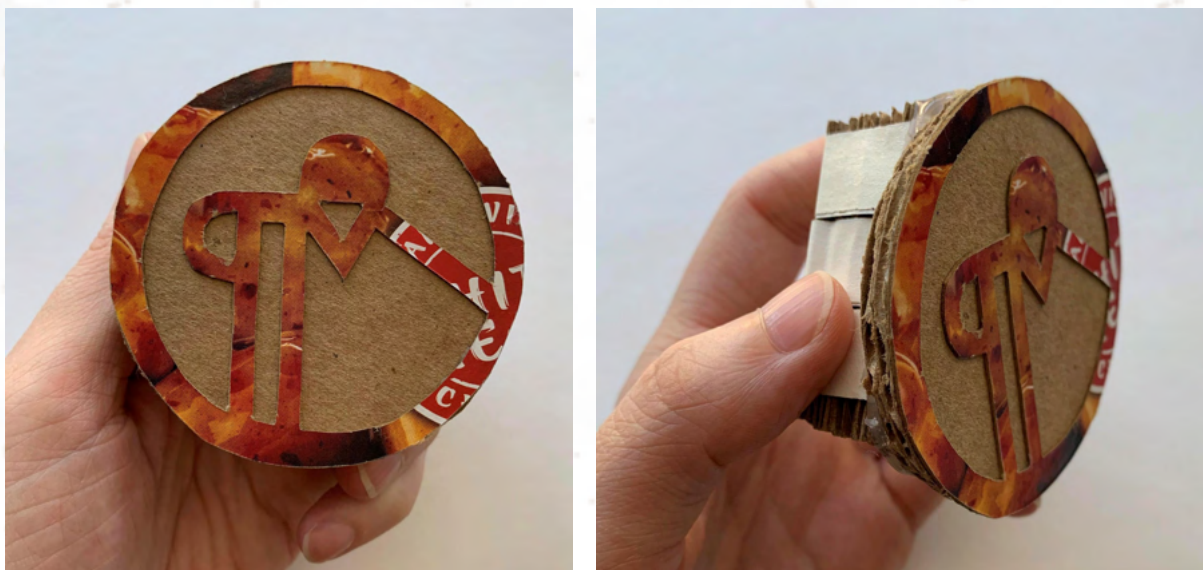
<b>Question</b>	<b>Elements of Art &amp; Principles of Design Addressed</b>
1. Describe the placement of the seals in the painting. Does this affect the way we see the painting itself?	Space, proportion, emphasis, unity, balance
2. Describe the lines in the seal designs. Are there differences in lines between different seals? Does the linework remind you of something (a feeling, an object, an animal, etc.)?	Line, shape, texture, variety
3. Describe the interaction of positive and negative space in some of the seal designs. Do some seals have more/less positive or negative space than others? Why might this be so?	Space

The informal assessment for this portion is an exit ticket (see Appendix B). By the end of this part of the lesson, the students should be able to identify the common styles of Chinese seals (yin and yang), their purposes, and content (names, phrases, etc.).

During the second part of the lesson (one hour) the students conduct visual/textual research in their sketchbook in order to formulate ideas and designs for their pair of collagraph seals. They are encouraged to consider the example of Qianlong Emperor Hongli's motivations for seal commission as they design their second seal focused on their personal history (This second seal should primarily consist of symbolic imagery rather than text.). The students' research is assessed informally by using a self-checklist for their 4-5 visual journal pages (see Appendix C). By the end of this portion of the lesson, the students will have researched and created two seal designs based on their identity (interests, cultural background, etc.).

The third part of the lesson (three hours) consists of the hands-on collagraph seals studio project for which the students use recycled cardboard (see Figures 3-6). They should be reminded that traditional Chinese seal carving involves different materials and tools, and that this technique only simulates the process. It is also important to include an Exacto knife use and safety demonstration for the students, as well as a list of expectations and rules for their use. This studio project asks the students to create a pair of seals, one using the yin method and one the yang method. Additionally, one seal should consist of text only (initials, pseudonym, nickname, etc.) while the other should primarily consist of symbolic imagery. Together, these two seals should represent one or more aspects of the student's personal identity. Materials and steps for constructing the seals are listed in Appendix D. However, the students may also experiment with shapes other than a circle (squares, ovals, triangles, etc.). This studio project can be assessed using a formal summative assessment in the form of a teacher rubric (see Appendix E). At the end of this portion of the lesson, the students will have experimented with the collagraph printmaking method, and have used recycled materials to create two personalized seals inspired by the Chinese seals.

**Figure 3**  
*Teacher sample collagraph seal*

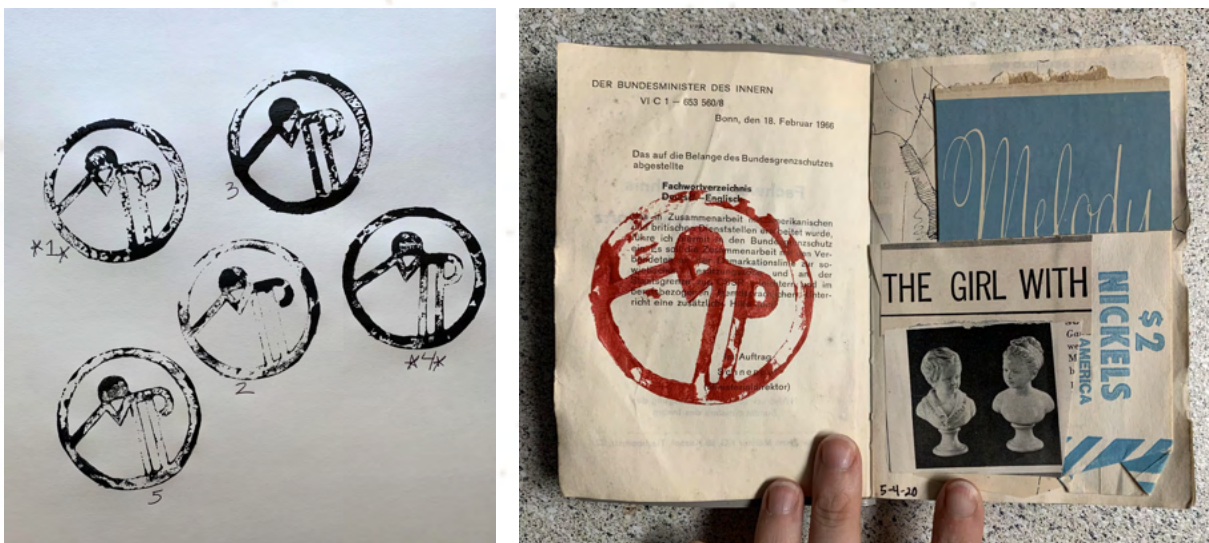


*Note.* The design of this seal includes name initials as well as an abstracted image of eyeglasses connected to the letters. Front and side views are shown



**Figure 4**

*Stamped teacher sample seal (left) and same seal stamped on a collage sketchbook (right)*



*Note.* Students experimented with paint application (amount and method) in order to achieve more than one successful seal impression, choosing their best at the end (left). They are shown that they can use their seal on a variety of personal items of value, such as books or artwork (right)

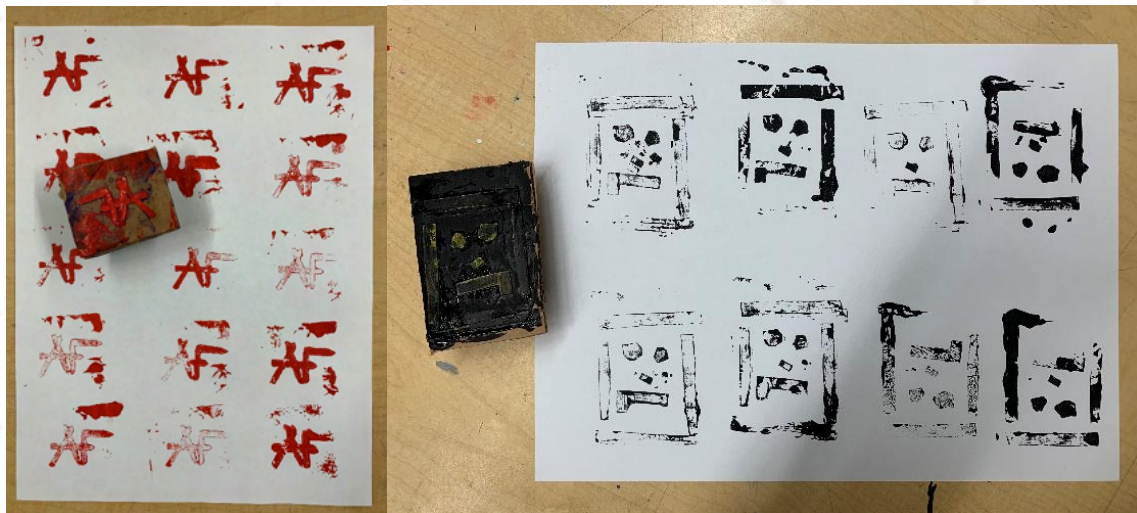
**Figure 5**

*Seal created by a high school student*



*Note.* Created by Aeryn Barrentine, this seal is based on a pen name she has used: *Yoake no Taiyo*, meaning “Dawning Sun” in Japanese. A pre-existing interest in Asian art and Chinese seals influenced her seal design and use of characters

**Figure 6**  
*Seals created by two high school students*



*Note.* Created by Austin Fuller (left), this seal features his initials in a design of connected letters. Austin explained that he has always really liked his name and wanted to feature it while also creating a simple design that would be easier to cut. Created by Tony L. (right), this seal features the first letter of his last name as the mouth of a happy face. Tony wanted to represent his extroverted and energetic personality with a happy face while incorporating an element of his name

### Challenges and Limitations

Although this lesson was successful with high school learners, there are a few challenges and limitations. When showing examples of Chinese seals, calligraphy characters could appear to be simple, abstract drawings (i.e., cartoons) to Western students and student populations not at all familiar with Chinese writing. To guide these students in order to avoid this misinterpretation, teachers can explain and reiterate that Chinese seals do in fact contain written language in the form of Chinese characters. This leads to another potential issue: students might want to use Chinese characters in their seal designs, and/or the teacher may not know them. The teacher can explain to students that learning Chinese characters is not the focus of this lesson and that it will take time to learn them in order to prevent inappropriate uses. Those who have not formally studied or speak Mandarin often do not fully understand characters' meanings, leading to misuse or improper appropriation. Instead, instruct students to design their own fonts/scripts, letters, pictographs, and symbols. Another challenge could be the level of difficulty in cutting out intricate seal design details for some students. This can be solved by allowing larger seal sizes for those experiencing this difficulty. Chinese seal artists' processes and materials should be explained early in the lesson and reiterated during the studio project portion.

### Extensions

For middle or high school students, an additional challenge could be added by asking them to design storage boxes for their seals using recycled cardboard, paying close attention to the example of Figure 2. This project could easily be paired with a project on Chinese painting or



calligraphy, as well as incorporated as part of a printmaking unit. The materials for the project presented are simple and inexpensive, suited for either virtual or in-person learning modalities. The printmaking portion of the lesson could be adapted for the elementary level by using some safer options for materials. Bar soap, a starchy vegetable (e.g., a potato), or styrofoam trays could be carved by these students by using wooden or plastic tools instead of Exacto knives.

### **Conclusion**

Over the course of their development as an art form, Chinese seals have evolved from a practical art to an expressive one linked closely with personal identity. As many high school students no longer receive in-school guidance for learning to sign their name, this lesson could introduce them to another culture's method of doing so, helping them develop ideas for their own signatures. By the end of this lesson, they will have made connections to another culture's artistic traditions and drawn upon their own personal histories to create seals expressive of their unique identities. The students will leave the lesson with newfound appreciation for and an understanding of an art form outside their own experience.



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### Appendix A

<b>Printmaking Standards</b> (from the Georgia Standards of Excellence in Visual Art)
<u>VAHSPR.CR.2C:</u> Experiment with papers, plates, and other printing surfaces and/or technologies.
<u>VAHSPR.CR.2f:</u> Practice safe and appropriate use and care of printmaking media and tools.
<u>VAHSPR.CR.3b:</u> Produce and sign artist proofs in a series of prints using varied methods (e.g., monoprints, linoleum relief, woodcut, collagraph, etching, serigraphy, screen printing, lithography).

### Appendix B

<b>Chinese Seals Exit Ticket</b> (Correct Answer Highlighted)
1. In the _____ seal carving method, the negative space (background) is carved away so that the design prints in red. (Answer: yang)
2. Which of the following Chinese used <i>private</i> seals? a. Artists, art collectors, common citizens b. The emperor, artists, art collectors c. The emperor, government officials, art collectors d. Common citizens only (Answer: A)
3. True or False: Seal designs can include such things as names and sayings (text), but never imagery. (Answer: False)
4. Chinese seals have been used for which of the following purposes? a. as a signature for certain documents b. by an artist signing an artwork c. to mark personal items, belongings, or gifts with importance d. by the emperor to authenticate documents e. all of the above (Answer: e)

### Appendix C

#### Visual Journal Assignment Self-Checklist: Seal Design Research

- \_\_\_\_\_ Created 4-5 full pages using at least two (2) mediums (pen, watercolor, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ One of these pages consists of variations of both initials and signatures
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pages contain *written* evidence of ideas (concept mapping/webbing, lists, notes, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pages contain *visual* evidence of ideas (seal design sketches, resource imagery, etc.)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pages contain two larger/detailed finalized seal sketches (yin and yang--one with text and one with symbolic imagery-- each labeled)
- \_\_\_\_\_ Pages contain written explanations behind the two final sketches (4-5 sentences each)



### Appendix D

*Materials (underlined) and steps for creating the collagraph seals using recycled cardboard*

Step	Instructions
1. Make the seal base	Use a <u>jar lid</u> to trace a circle in <u>pencil</u> on the <u>recycled corrugated cardboard</u> and cut the circle out with an <u>Exacto knife or scissors</u> .
2. Draw the seal design	Use the same lid to trace in pencil a circle on the <u>thinner cardboard (recycled food packaging)</u> . Then draw the seal design within this circle.
3. Cut out the seal design	Use an <u>Exacto knife</u> to <u>carefully and slowly</u> cut out the design.
4. Create the seal handle	Use the lid to trace another circle on the corrugated cardboard. Draw a square within this circle and cut this square out. Use this square to trace 3-4 more squares on the corrugated cardboard and cut these out.
5. Attach the seal design to the base	Apply <u>white glue</u> to the “right side” of the design (the plain brown cardboard side) and glue it down onto the base. It will be backwards on the base, but will print correctly when inked and placed face down on the paper.
6. Attach remaining parts with glue	Glue together the 3-4 handle squares in a stack. <u>Tape</u> can be used to strengthen the stack. Glue the stack to the back of the base and press with a heavy book for about 5 minutes to ensure glue adherence.
7. Ink the seal	Use <u>acrylic paint</u> and a <u>paintbrush</u> to gently and evenly spread an area of paint out on a piece of scrap cardboard. Press the seal into this paint. Use the brush to lightly add paint in areas on the seal where it did not pick up enough paint.
8. Stamp the seal on paper	Stamp the seal onto <u>paper</u> with firm even pressure—using the palm of the hand works well. Clean the seal by stamping excess ink off onto scrap paper.

## Appendix E

### *Rubric for Collagraph Seals*

Criteria	Exemplary (4 points)	Satisfactory (3 points)	Needs more work (2 points)	Unacceptable (1 point)
<b>Technique</b>	Created two seals each showcasing a different carving method (one yin and one yang). Complexity of design is high.	Created two seals each showcasing a different carving method (one yin and one yang).	Created only one seal using one of the two methods. Design is highly simplistic.	Did not create any seals (did not progress beyond sketches) or seal parts have not been put together.
<b>Content</b>	One seal consists of initials/name (text) <u>and</u> the other seal consists of imagery (either imagery alone or in combination with text) linked with personal identity.	Both seals <i>primarily</i> consist of text (initials, letters, name) only. Imagery linked with personal identity is not incorporated as a prominent feature in either seal.	Seal(s) consist of text <i>only</i> (initials, letters, name). No imagery linked with personal identity is incorporated into the seals.	Did not create any seals (did not progress beyond sketches), or seal parts have not been put together.
<b>Construction</b>	Seals are very neatly formed, constructed, and refined (no jagged cardboard from cutting, glue globs). Seals feel solid in construction.	Seals are formed and constructed well. Seals feel solid in construction.	<b>Seals</b> are not formed and constructed well. There is evidence of jagged edges from cutting, glue globs. Parts seem loose or coming apart.	Did not create any seals (did not progress beyond sketches) or seal parts have not been put together.
<b>Persistence &amp; Experimentation</b>	Seal impressions on paper show very even ink/paint distribution and design is clearly visible. There is evidence of many repeated and successful impressions (7-10).	Seal impressions on paper show fairly even ink/paint distribution and design is visible. There is evidence of several repeated and successful impressions (3-6).	Seal impressions on paper show very inconsistent ink/paint distribution and design is hard to see. There is little evidence of repeated and successful impressions (1-2).	Did not create any seals (did not progress beyond sketches) or seal parts have not been put together.
Feedback				Score: ____/16



CHAPTER 10

**Inheritance and Integration:  
Weaving Qing Dynasty Imperial Garments  
into a Design Curriculum**

Grace Hu  
Avenues: The World School

**Abstract**

The Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912 AD) was the last imperial dynasty in Chinese history and a multiethnic empire, stretching from Manchuria, through Mongolia, all the way to Tibet. In this chapter, I explore the symbols on imperial garments which serve as an excellent example of the Qing court's system of cultural integration to stabilize its rule over a multiethnic empire. This chapter decodes various symbols to explain how the Qing court inherited Chinese (Han) culture but integrated Manchu and Mongol traditions at the same time. A unit plan with teaching approaches, procedures, and illustrated worksheets is provided for this purpose, as well as related student artwork examples. I created this unit plan when I was teaching as an IB visual art teacher at DC International School from 2017 to 2021. At the end of the chapter, I provide strategies to promote cultural appreciation and interdisciplinary unit planning ideas to further explore the broader meaning and function of symbolism.

*Keywords:* cultural inheritance, art integration, symbolism, visual system, cultural appreciation, multicultural curriculum



## Introduction

When I attended a lecture by Professor Daniel McKee at the National Gallery of Art in 2019, I was inspired by his theory “Bifocal as Metaphor: Two Ways of Looking at Art”, i.e., with nearsighted or farsighted vision (McKee, 2019).<sup>1</sup> His theory made me realize that I instinctively look at art with nearsighted vision: I see it through my own perspectives and values. “Individuals’ cultural backgrounds influence their choices of what and how they view art and influence a great portion of the meanings of the images they view” (Sturken & Cartwright, 2004, as cited in Han, 2019, p. 8). It is essential to keep in mind that the artist might share different ideas with us from a different cultural context. If someone holds any cultural stereotypes, he or she most likely will miss seeing whole dimensions of the art. Reflecting on my own teaching practice, I encourage my students to interpret artwork using different lenses: what they see in the image, how they view it based on their personal experience, and how the artwork would have been seen in its historical and cultural context. My goal is to ultimately create a multicultural art curriculum that empowers students to inquire about, appreciate, and understand multiple cultural traditions (Chung, 2012).

As Banks & Banks’ (2019) stated, “most social scientists today view culture as consisting primarily of the symbolic, ideational, and intangible aspects of human societies” (p. 6). This chapter provides readers with Chinese symbolic art traditions and concepts to help educators make meaningful connections while integrating Chinese art into teaching contents. In the first part, readers develop an understanding of the visual language system of power and privilege in the Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912 AD) that was represented artistically on imperial garments. As a multiethnic empire, the Qing dynasty was a period of cultural inheritance and ethnic integration. On one hand, the ancient Han Chinese traditional cultures were preserved and continued to evolve during this period; on the other, it was a period of significant integration of culture by the Manchu, Mongolian, and Han ethnic groups. Therefore, symbols appearing on the Qing dynasty imperial garments, Chaofu [朝服] (Formal Court Dress), also reflect both the inheritance of traditional Chinese symbols and the integration of ethnic groups. In the second part, I provide a fashion design lesson plan inspired by symbolism in Chinese art. The unit plan includes student-centered and inquiry-based teaching approaches that engage students creatively in the learning process. A set of formative assessments leads to a fashion design summative assessment. I also provide worksheets and digital learning platform activities as supplementary resources.

### Brief Historical Background of the Qing Dynasty

In 1644 AD, the last Han-Chinese dynasty, the Ming dynasty (1368 – 1644 AD) was overthrown by a peasant rebellion. However, the next one, the Qing dynasty, was not founded by the rebel leader, but by Manchus, an ethnic group living in the northeast of China, the larger area generally called Manchuria, which had long been “building up the political and military institutions needed to govern sedentary farming populations” (Ebrey, 1993, p. 588). Thus, Manchu chieftains took advantage of the Han-Chinese peasant rebellion, taking over the whole of China and founding the Qing dynasty,<sup>2</sup> which became home to multiple ethnic groups, the Manchus, Mongols, and Han-Chinese.

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<sup>1</sup> A recording of this talk can be accessed via: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zyg-cvR7Coo>, Professor Daniel McKee’s lecture starts at 3:50:30.

<sup>2</sup> A Map of the Qing dynasty (1850 A.D.): <https://www.britannica.com/topic/Qing-dynasty>

To stabilize their authority over the majority Han-Chinese, the Manchu ruling class decided to keep most of the its people's traditional scholarship and art. For instance, the long-existing Chinese art symbolism and aesthetic value system remained intact after the Qing dynasty's rule (Sullivan, 2008). On the other hand, the Qing court integrated multi-ethnic elements such as Manchu traditions and Tibetan Buddhist symbols to adorn daily objects and items such as textile design (National Museum of Asian Art, n.d.). Imperial garments in the Qing dynasty served as a great example of the inheritance and integration of these cultures and identities. Under the patronage of its emperors, many traditional artistic crafts such as weaving and embroidery reached their peak in terms of technical refinement. All these elements contributed to the grandeur of the Qing court regalia that were decorated with intricate designs and elaborate embroidery.

### **Symbolism and Power of the Imperial Garments in the Qing Dynasty**

Symbolism is an essential part of Chinese art, which is described as “the image beyond the image,” hinting at a meta-physical truth, inexpressible in words, but made manifest above all in the art itself (Sullivan, 2008). In this chapter, I explore two categories in the symbolism of the imperial Qing garments system: those inherited from the long-existing Han-Chinese culture; and those from the integration of Manchu, Han and Mongolian traditions and identities. In Chinese history, dress patterns capture the national spirit and traditional culture, which is an important part of the numerous and precious Chinese cultural heritages. Dress is also considered one of the criteria by which to distinguish people's status and rank (Ding & Li, 2014). Although the Qing dynasty has changed the traditional Chinese garment style slightly by incorporating the Manchu clothing style, the Qing kept many Chinese traditional symbols in their imperial garment designs to stabilize their legitimate rule over the Han ethnic group and to show their determination to achieve ethnic group integration. There were detailed written regulations by court officials about the appropriate materials, style, and decoration for court garments to be worn by various nobility and court officials' according to their ranks. The following sections explain the meaning of several major symbols representing power and privilege and analyze how they served as a system to maintain a strict hierarchy in a vast empire under Qing rule.

#### **Cultural Inheritance**

##### ***Symbols of Power***

The Qing dynasty emperors preserved most of the Ming dynasty's strict court garment system, which helped maintain a clearly defined Confucian-based hierarchy. In the Qing dynasty, the official costumes were expanded to be even more intricate and detailed. The officer's attire—symbols on the garment and precious stones and feathers on the headwear (Qing official headwear, 2018), would not only indicate the official's rank but also whether the emperor valued the officer or not. If one officer got a promotion, the honor would be visible to everyone. For example, emperors granted three-eyed peacock feathers on the headwear for the most essential officials and aristocrats. Yet only seven people were allowed to wear these many feathers during the entire Qing dynasty's history (Li et al., 2019). And vice versa, if one got a demotion, everyone would see it on the attire too. Deprivation of the precious stones and peacock feathers on the headwear was

considered a huge humiliation. By manipulating this symbolism to award or punish officials, the emperor of the Qing dynasty demonstrated his sovereignty and enhanced his rule.

### *Symbols of the Emperor*

The earliest record of the Twelve Symbols of Sovereignty can be found in the ancient Chinese *Shangshu* [尚书] (Book of Documents), one of the Five Classics of ancient Chinese literature (Yetts, 1912). It is a tradition for the Chinese emperors to include the twelve symbols on the emperor's robe to show their imperial authority. These symbols, which can only be used by the emperor and empress, consist of, in their order of importance: the sun, moon, a constellation of three stars, mountain, dragon, pheasant, two goblets, seaweed, grain, fire, ax, and a Fu (rule/judgement) symbol (see Figure 1). The Twelve Symbols of Sovereignty system clearly represents the emperor's interpretation of the cosmos, their aspiration of ruling with virtue and wisdom and their absolute authority to rule as the Tianzi [天子] (son of the heaven). Just to name a few, the sun, moon and a constellation of three stars, represent the emperor's kindness and protection, which reaches every inch of the emperor's territory. The two goblets originated from the bronze ritual vessels in ancient times, which remind people of filial piety to the family and absolute loyalty to the emperor. The ax and the Fu symbol stand for the power of judgement and punishment (Nationsonline, n.d.).

### **Figure 1**

*An Illustrated Guide to the Twelve Symbols of Sovereignty (provided by the author)*





### Uses of the Symbols Dragon and Mang [蟒]

The Qing emperors inherited the symbol of the Dragon as a representation of the royal family. Besides the Dragon, another mythical creature, the Mang, can be constantly found on imperial garments in the Qing dynasty (Wang, 2017). The only difference is the number of toes. Dragons always have five (see Figure 2). A four-toed dragon-like creature is always a Mang<sup>3</sup>. In very rare conditions, the emperor awarded an official a five-toed Mang robe to wear. It is one of the highest honors an official could receive.

#### Figure 2

*A Dragon Symbol on the Summer Chaofu, By Permission of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Gift of Shirley Z. Johnson, F2015.7 (Detail)*



There was a strict and detailed system for the use of style, color, and number of the Dragon/Mang pattern. In short, a Mang robe would never be bright yellow because this color belongs exclusively to the emperor and empress. Officers could wear the four-toed Mang robe during festival occasions, but there was a rule of how many Mang patterns one could have on their robe by one's rank. Only the first three highest-ranking officers could wear nine Mangs on their

<sup>3</sup> An image of a Mang can be viewed via: <https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/50497>

robes. In the Ming Dynasty, only on a particular occasion, would officers be authorized by the emperor to wear the Mang robe. However, in the Qing dynasty, the emperor made the Mang robe part of the court garments as a tactic to win more royalty (Wang, 2017).

### **Buzi [补子]: Rank Badge for Officials**

The Qing court has preserved the rank badge system from the Ming dynasty. In front of each official's court garment, there was a square badge that identified his rank. There were “nine ranks each for civil and military positions and, accordingly, nine figures that could be found on badges for each. Civil badges display a range of nine bird types in contrast to the military badges' nine animal figures” (Dine, 2021, para 2). For example, a crane signifies the top rank for civil officials,<sup>4</sup> and a qilin [麒麟] (Chinese mythological creature)<sup>5</sup> represents the top rank for military officials.

### ***Symbols of Privilege***

#### **The Traditional Chinese Auspicious Symbols – The Eight Treasures**

The Eight Treasures (see Figure 3), also known as the Babao [八宝] (eight precious things), is a set of auspicious symbols in Chinese tradition. The number eight is also believed to bring good fortune. In fact, the auspicious symbols are not just limited to eight. If we want to count all the symbols that are considered a treasure, we would probably come up with a “hundred treasures” [百宝]. Thus, the Eight Treasures is just a subset of auspicious symbols, eight of which can be flexibly adjusted by the designer from a pool of auspicious symbols. The most popular combination is: the flaming pearl, the double lozenges, the Ruyi [如意] (wish-granting scepter), the double coins, the silver ingot, the red coral, the stone chime (or bronze bell), and the pair of rhinoceros horns.

The selection of these treasures is closely related to Chinese traditions, religion, and art. For example, the stone chime and bronze bell were essential musical court instruments in China's bronze age dating back to the Zhou dynasty (1045 – 256 BC). Confucius believed that these two instruments produced virtue-promoting music. Although the bronze bell's place in the court ensemble was gradually replaced by stringed musical instruments after the Qin dynasty (221 – 206 BC), it still left a profound impact on Chinese culture. Chinese people's love and respect for bronze bells has never subsided. As a result, stone chimes and bronze bells have been included as symbols of treasures. With the patronage of the Qing emperors, Chinese traditional scholarship and the respect for Confucianism continued to develop. In the National Museum of China, in the painting *Confucius Listened to the Shao Music in the State Qi* [孔子在齐闻韶], made by Jiao Bingzhen [焦

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<sup>4</sup> The image of a rank badge with crane can be accessed via:

[https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/60388?&exhibitionId=%7bdc3a5679-487a-488a-9d94-2a6f1255e415%7d&oid=60388&pkgids=457&pg=0&rpp=20&pos=13&ft=\\*&offset=20](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/60388?&exhibitionId=%7bdc3a5679-487a-488a-9d94-2a6f1255e415%7d&oid=60388&pkgids=457&pg=0&rpp=20&pos=13&ft=*&offset=20)

<sup>5</sup> The image of a rank badge with a qilin can be accessed via:

[https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/69750?&exhibitionId=%7bdc3a5679-487a-488a-9d94-2a6f1255e415%7d&oid=69750&pkgids=457&pg=0&rpp=20&pos=16&ft=\\*&offset=20](https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/69750?&exhibitionId=%7bdc3a5679-487a-488a-9d94-2a6f1255e415%7d&oid=69750&pkgids=457&pg=0&rpp=20&pos=16&ft=*&offset=20)



秉贞] in the Qing dynasty,<sup>6</sup> we can see both Chinese and Manchu languages, and on the left side, the stone chime and bronze bell.

**Figure 3**

*An Illustrated Guide to the Eight Treasures. (Illustration by the author. Symbols from the dragon robe from Google Culture and Art)<sup>7</sup>*



Peaches  
(Peach means  
"longevity")



Ingot



The Ruyi (wish-  
granting scepter)



The Double Coins



Book or Painting Scroll



The Double Lozenges  
(lozenge means a  
rhombus or diamond  
shape)



Stone/Jade Chime



The Buddhism Swastika,  
or Wan Zi Wen [万字纹]  
(Wan, means "ten  
thousand," an auspicious  
number in Chinese  
numerology. This symbol  
stands for brightness,  
longevity, and good fortune.

<sup>6</sup> The work by Jiao can be accessed via:  
[https://k.sina.com.cn/article\\_1624763627\\_p60d7eceb02700rhjw.html?from=cu#p=1](https://k.sina.com.cn/article_1624763627_p60d7eceb02700rhjw.html?from=cu#p=1)

<sup>7</sup> The dragon robe image can be accessed via:  
[https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/\\_/HwGg3OWC6Xx-7Q](https://artsandculture.google.com/asset/_/HwGg3OWC6Xx-7Q)



### Sea and Mountain Pattern

The Sea and Mountain Pattern (see Figure 4) includes three major parts: water (waves), a mountain standing in the middle of the water, and the colorful diagonal bands called “water feet.” A traditional pattern, it means a fortune as big as the mountain and longevity as deep as the sea [福山寿海]. In the Qing dynasty, the sea and mountain pattern’s significance reached its peak in history and became one of the essential signatures of the Qing imperial garments.

#### Figure 4

*The Sea and Mountain Pattern on the Summer Chaofu (formal court dress), By Permission of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Gift of Shirley Z. Johnson, F2015.7 (Detail)*



In the Chinese language, one of the many words for waterbody is “jiang [江],” and mountain is “shan [山].” Together, “jiang shan [江山]” means “the country.” Deepwater, portrayed by colorful diagonal bands, is called “Shuijiao [水脚],” meaning “water feet” in Chinese. It stands for “extension” and “endless.” “Extension” embodies the emperor’s power to rule all parts of the country, just as water bodies extend themselves over all the country. “Endless” means the emperor’s wish to rule forever, and good luck never comes to an end. Together, these design elements reflect the Chinese conception of the cosmos and the emperor’s supreme power in a feudal society. Further, “sea” in Chinese can be written as 海潮. The character “潮” has a similar pronunciation to “朝”, which means “the court.” So, the sea and mountain pattern became an essential part of court garments. This pattern can be found on many court garments as well as on many royal ladies’ ceremonial robes.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>8</sup> The image of the Woman’s Ceremonial Robe can be accessed via:  
<https://www.metmuseum.org/art/collection/search/53715>

## Ethnic Integration

### *Garment Style*

When designing the imperial garments, the Qing dynasty incorporated elements from native Han-Chinese dress, such as the pleated skirt and symbols of power mentioned in the previous paragraphs. On the other hand, the Qing court integrated the Manchu people's culture into some clothing details designed to signify Manchu ethnicity and signal cultural heritage, for example, the design of the sleeve in imperial garments. In contrast to the wide, flowing sleeves of Chinese garments, the cuffs are shaped like horse hooves (broad at the top and narrow at the bottom).<sup>9</sup> They resemble the bottom of the sleeves worn by a Manchu ruler's ancestors, who were hunters and archers. Such sleeves were made to be rolled up in daily life and lowered when hunting to warm the hunter's hands without affecting their ability to shoot. However, for the imperial garments, the shape was symbolic and not worn on a hunt (National Museum of Asian Art, n.d.). Designing luxurious peacetime garments with sleeves that signify the Manchu traditions of exceptional horsemanship projected the Qing emperors' memory of their intrepid ancestors and preserved Manchu ethnicity.

### *Tibetan Buddhist Eight Auspicious Symbols*

The Buddhist Eight Auspicious Symbols include (see Figure 5): The White Conch Shell, The Endless Knot (also called The Knot of Eternity), The Pair of Golden Fish, The Lotus Flower, The Parasol, The Vase, The Wheel, and The Victory Banner (Salisbury, 2019).

#### **Figure 5**

*An Illustration of the Tibetan Buddhist Eight Auspicious Symbols (provided by the author)*



<sup>9</sup> Image of traditional Han-Chinese robes can be accessed via: [http://www.china.org.cn/travel/2013-06/07/content\\_29056662\\_6.htm](http://www.china.org.cn/travel/2013-06/07/content_29056662_6.htm)



Tibetan Buddhism is the religion of both Tibetans and Mongols. In the Qing dynasty, the emperors revered Tibetan Buddhism with great fervor, built new Buddhist monasteries, and converted many existing ones to Tibetan Buddhism (Chou, 2007). As independent scholar Carl Déry pointed out, “Even though the Manchu government was patterned on the Ming model, Qing emperors presented themselves as a hybrid of the Confucian sage ruler, an heir to the tradition of Inner Asian khanship, and a Buddhist Cakravartin” (Déry, 2016, p. 639). In this social and political environment, this set of auspicious Tibetan Buddhist symbols became an essential part of the imperial garment decoration.

## Weaving Traditional Chinese Symbols into a Fashion Design Unit

### Visual Art Standards Alignment

This unit plan was created under the International Baccalaureate (IB) Middle Years Programme 3 for both 7th and 8th graders (MYP 3) at the DC International School. It can easily be adapted to different grade levels, ranging from 6th (MYP 1) to 9th and 10th (MYP 5), or to serve a different set of standards (see Appendix A) such as the National Core Arts Standards (State Education Agency, 2014).

### Engaged Student Learning: Thinking Routines and Inquiry-based Strategies

One integral part of the IB curriculum is inquiry-based learning, whereby students have an active, central role in their learning and the teacher acts as a facilitator. For this unit, as their facilitator, I adopted two thinking routines from the Artful Thinking Project (developed by Project Zero at the Harvard Graduate School of Education)<sup>10</sup> to encourage the students’ inquiry. The first routine is Ten Times Two, which can be easily adapted for any class activity to encourage students to push beyond their first impressions and obvious features (Looking: Ten Times Two worksheet, 2019).<sup>11</sup> In addition, I practiced the See/Think/Wonder routine<sup>12</sup> with my students in my daily teaching to raise their awareness of distinguishing between observations and interpretations and enhancing their ability to make connections between the known and the unknown (Project Zero, n.d.).

### Learning Objectives

- Students will closely examine selected Qing dynasty’s imperial garments and learn how their various symbols represent power and prestige.
- Students will develop an understanding of the ruling class’ use of a visual language system to maintain absolute authority over their reign.

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<sup>10</sup> Detailed introduction of Project Zero can be accessed via: <https://pz.harvard.edu/who-we-are/about>

<sup>11</sup> Looking Ten Times Two requires students to observe the image and then write down 10 words. After that, look at the image again and try to add 10 more words to the list. The complete worksheet can be accessed via: [https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Looking%20-%20Ten%20Times%20Two\\_0.pdf](https://pz.harvard.edu/sites/default/files/Looking%20-%20Ten%20Times%20Two_0.pdf)

<sup>12</sup> The See/Think/Wonder Thinking routine encourages students’ inquiry by asking three essential guiding questions: “What do you see?”, “What do you think about what you see?”, and “What do you wonder about?” More detailed introduction can be accessed via: [http://pzartfulthinking.org/?page\\_id=2](http://pzartfulthinking.org/?page_id=2)



- Students will be able to describe how culture and belief influence these symbols and how they reflect the Chinese conception of the cosmos.
- Students will be able to demonstrate the ability to meaningfully inherit traditions, integrate cultural elements with their own designs, and make culturally responsive art designs.

### Essential Questions

- What is a symbol? Why does the usage of symbols exist across different cultures?
- How has the Chinese ruling class used symbolism to reflect their power and privilege?
- How do Chinese traditional culture and beliefs influence their design and use of symbols?
- Do you think the traditional symbols still influence our daily life today? How?

### Vocabulary

- **Chaofu:** Chaofu means “Court Garment”. “Chao” means “Court”, and “Fu” means “Garment”. It is a garment that the emperor, aristocrats, and court officials wore for formal occasions, such as court assemblies and ritual events. The decorations and symbols on the Chaofu vary based on its owner’s rank and political status.
- **Symbol:** A visual image that represents something abstract and is used to convey ideas and beliefs.
- **Auspicious Symbol:** Visual images that suggest a successful and favorable future.
- **Privilege:** A special right and advantage granted or available only to a particular person or group (Privilege, n.d.).

### Lesson Procedures

#### *Observation*

Students start with an image of a Chaofu (formal court dress) from the Freer Gallery of Art collection (see Figure 6).

#### *Group and Whole Class Discussion*

Method 1: The teacher can choose some questions from the guiding question worksheet (see Appendix B) to lead class discussions. The teacher may also prepare four cards with Describe, Analyze, Interpret and Inquire questions listed as follow-ups. Then, assign four small groups and ask each to pick a card with questions on the back. After group discussion, the whole class will get back together, and each group will share their findings and thoughts with the whole class.

Method 2: Students use the Project Zero thinking routine Looking: Ten Times Two worksheet to observe the Chaofu (see Figure 6) and write down the details they observed. They finish the “A First Look” column for this time and leave the “Second Look” column blank for now. After students finish the first column, the teacher facilitates the whole class discussion by asking students guiding questions (listed above). Next, the teacher briefly introduces the history of the Qing dynasty and background knowledge on Chaofu. Let the students finish the “Second Look” part with a focus on the symbols on the robe. Encourage them to zoom in on details such as patterns

hidden in the waves and point out as many symbols as possible. Finally, the teacher guides the students to share what they've observed and to raise questions. The teacher can encourage the students to choose one or two symbols they have found with their “Second Look” and participate in the discussion using the See/Think/Wonder Thinking Routine.

**Figure 6**

*Summer Chaofu (formal court dress) for a top-rank prince*

*(By permission of the Freer Gallery of Art, Smithsonian Institution, Washington, DC: Gift of Shirley Z. Johnson, F2015.7)*



There are many online platforms that can support students’ exploration of an image. For example, teachers can create a “Collection” under a certain theme at the Smithsonian Learning Lab<sup>13</sup> and upload related resources as “tiles” in the collection for the students to explore on their

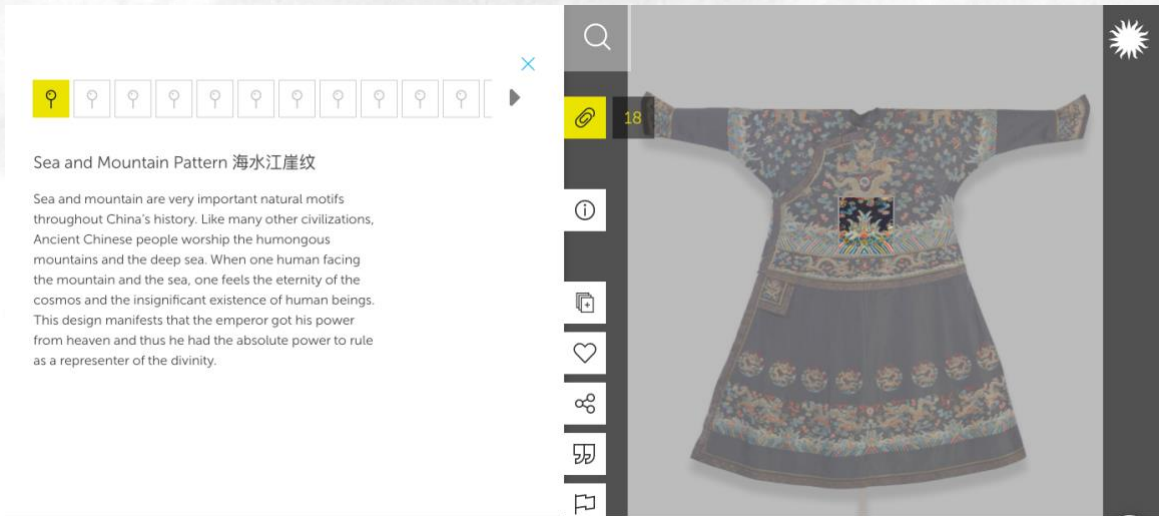
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<sup>13</sup> Smithsonian Learning Lab Privacy, Safety and Security information can be accessed via: <https://learninglab.si.edu/help/faqs#:~:text=How%20can%20children%20under%20age,up%20the%20account%20for%20them.>

own. In this unit, the teacher can use the interactive activity<sup>14</sup> that I created in my class collection (see Figure 7). The zoom-in function will help students focus on an individual symbol.

**Figure 7**

*Seen in Interactive Zoom Activity at the Smithsonian Learning Lab Collection (by the author)*



***Diving into Symbols’ Meanings and Cultural Contexts***

**Projects as Formative Assessments**

I designed several projects and class activities as formative assessments (see Appendix C) during the unit to check the students’ understanding and foster their agency in the learning process. The first drawing project aimed to train them to use both nearsighted and farsighted vision when creating art. The second compare–and–contrast activity encourages student inquiry and enhances their understanding of the Qing dynasty’s visual hierarchical system. The third matching game serves as a fun activity to check the students’ knowledge of the symbols. The fourth curation activity aims to flip the learning process and exercise the students’ higher order thinking ability.

**Summative Assessment**

At the end of this unit, the students create a fashion design artwork with traditional symbols they’ve learned. This is a culturally inclusive summative assessment with two goals. First, it guides them through an exploration of the Chinese visual system of symbolism and helps them reflect on the esthetic values they’ve learned. Second, it is responsive to the needs of all students, which allows all individuals to acknowledge their cultural identities and significance (Chung, 2012). Student agency is emphasized in the creative process. They are free to design in any fashion style, which means they don’t necessarily need to follow the Qing dynasty’s imperial garment or traditional Chinese dress style; rather, they can make contemporary designs for a T-shirt or a wedding gown. The only requirement for the design is to meaningfully integrate at least three

<sup>14</sup> The collection A Close Look at the Chinese Imperial Garment - The Symbolism of the Power and Privilege at the Smithsonian Learning Lab can be accessed via: <https://learninglab.si.edu/q/ll-c/F81XrDTyHAAtPIJxC#r/843566>

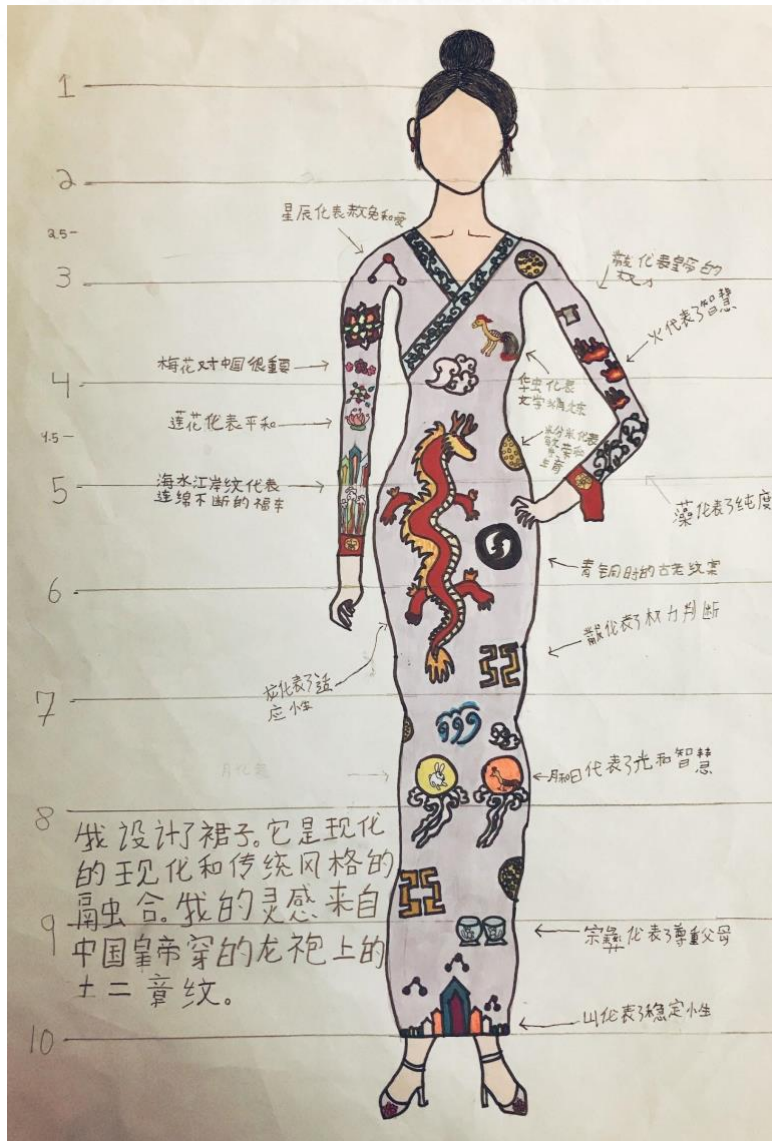


Chinese symbols into it. After finishing it, they need to write an artistic statement to explain their creative process and the stories behind their designs.

I found it fascinating to see my students exhibit a cross-cultural understanding of art. Just to name a few, some researched Chinese traditional clothing styles to be more precise within their historical context; some studied the symbols in their own culture and tried to find similarities among cultures; some used cartoon figures or animals to encourage gender equity (see Figure 8). While reflecting on the meaning of symbols, they were not limited to the traditional context. Many of my students have grasped the essence of symbolism and apply it meaningfully and appropriately incorporating their own diverse ethnic backgrounds and esthetic values.

**Figure 8**

*Emily Comar and Sarah Deal, 6th grade, Qipao Design inspired by the Twelve Symbols of Sovereignty. Alcohol Marker (artwork provided by the author)*



**Figure 9**

*Lucca Bey, 9th grade, The Moon. Alcohol Marker (artwork provided by the author)*



These two artworks are culturally responsive and serve as excellent examples of how they applied cross-cultural understanding in fashion design. The group artwork (see Figure 8) integrates dragon robe symbols into a Qipao [旗袍], a body-hugging dress style that had emerged around the 1920s with Western fashion influence and was seen as a symbol of promoting gender equity (Cheongsam, 2020). This design shows the students' effort to inherit the Chinese aesthetic value and at the same time reinvent the tradition. Lucca's design (see Figure 9) is a modern dress that features the moon symbol from the Twelve Symbols of Sovereignty and the Sea and Mountain Pattern. This design suggests that the Twelve Symbols of Sovereignty should belong to everyone, and everyone should be able to enjoy the beauty of the patterns without worrying about rank and privilege.

In terms of artwork sharing, I usually organize an art exhibition and display my students' artworks on the wall of the corridor outside the art studio at my school (see Figure 10). During distance learning related to the pandemic, however, I encourage my students to share their artwork



on the digital platform Padlet (please be aware of the age restriction for using Padlet).<sup>15</sup> Teachers can curate the virtual exhibition and upload student artworks (see Figure 11), or let students upload their artworks by themselves (see Figure 12). Teachers can enable the like/comments functions and turn on content filtering to monitor the student's language.

**Figure 10**  
*Students' Unit Artwork Exhibition at the School (by the author)*



**Figure 11**  
*An Example of Student Artwork Sharing (Teacher-Curated) on the Padlet Website (by the author)*



<sup>15</sup> Padlet Terms of Service can be accessed via: <https://padlet.com/about/terms>





that the definition of symbols is evolving with time and now their creation is no longer dominated by the ruling classes. We are in an era in which everyone can create symbols. Symbolism is an ideal bridge to connect multiple subjects and offers great possibilities for creating interdisciplinary unit designs. In Appendix D, I share a symbol research project for an art and social studies interdisciplinary unit, together with my students' research findings, my reflections, and an example of their summative assignment. In Appendix E, I provide more topics and themes that teachers can consider for teaching symbols in various subject areas.

### Conclusions

When integrating Chinese Art content into the curriculum, it is critical to define it within its aesthetic framework and promote cross-cultural understanding by engaging our students in meaningful thinking routines and teaching approaches. In this unit, I provide students with space for creativity meanwhile guide them away from using symbols superficially or inappropriately – I adopt Project Zero thinking routines and teaching approaches such as looking at artwork with both nearsighted and farsighted vision to help students understand the Chinese symbols and reflect on them in both Chinese and their own cultural backgrounds. During this process, it is equally critical to guide students to investigate and understand how their cultural assumptions and biases might influence the ways in which they have constructed their knowledge in Chinese art (Banks & Banks, 2019).

Take the cultural difference between “dragons” as an example. Chinese dragons are depicted and perceived quite differently from Western dragons. Dragons (Lóng, [ 龙 ]) are considered very auspicious in Chinese culture and don't have the Western dragons' evil-looking appearances such as huge bat-like wings and triangular snake eyes. Although “dragon-slaughter” might sound like a cool theme for some students, they should realize why it is inappropriate to apply it to the Chinese traditional symbolic fashion design. To enhance a meaningful learning process, I always design a curation activity (see Appendix C) in each unit. Therefore, students not only continue their research on Chinese traditional symbols and garment styles as art forms, but also investigate those in existing cultural biases. Eventually students develop an authentic understanding of the beliefs, traditions and aesthetic values conveyed by the symbols. When they create their summative assessment, the knowledge of traditional symbols and the understanding they drew from different cultural backgrounds becomes their unique visual language to express their cross-cultural understanding of Chinese traditional symbols and textile.

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## Appendix A

### Visual Art Standards Alignment Under IB MYP and Nation Core Arts Standards

#### IB MYP 3 (7th and 8th grade) Standard.

- Criterion A. Knowing and Understanding:
  - ii. demonstrate awareness of the relationship between the art form and its context
- Criterion D. Responding:
  - ii. demonstrate understanding of the role of the art form in original or displaced contexts
  - iii. use acquired knowledge to purposefully inform artistic decisions in the process of creating artwork.

This lesson is also aligned with the National Core Arts Standards (State Education Agency, 2014).

- Responding:  
Anchor Standard 7: Perceive and analyze artistic work  
Enduring Understanding: Individual aesthetic and empathetic awareness developed through engagement with art can lead to understanding and appreciation of self, others, the natural world, and constructed environments.

Essential Question(s): How do life experiences influence the way you relate to art? How does learning about art impact how we perceive the world? What can we learn from our responses to art?

VA: Re.7.1.7a: Explain how the method of display, the location, and the experience of an artwork influence how it is perceived and valued.

VA: Re.7.1.8a: Explain how a person's aesthetic choices are influenced by culture and environment and impact the visual image that one conveys to others.

- Connecting:  
Anchor Standard 11: Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding  
Enduring Understanding: People develop ideas and understandings of society, culture, and history through their interactions with and analysis of art.

Essential Question(s): How does art help us understand the lives of people of different times, places, and cultures? How is art used to impact the views of a society? How does art preserve aspects of life?

VA: Cn11.1.7a: Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses.

VA: Cn11.1.8a: Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity.

## Appendix B

### Guiding Questions for Group and Whole Class Discussion on Chaofu

#### *Describe*

- What have you noticed about the line, shape, and color?
- What material makes the shining patterns on Chaofu?
- What have you noticed about the design of this robe?
- Why are the cuffs shaped like horse hooves?

#### *Analyze*

- What symbols have you seen?
- Who made this Chaofu, and who would wear it?
- What kind of occasion was this Chaofu designed for?
- Do you think the patterns convey meanings? If so, what is the message these symbols try to tell us?

#### *Interpret*

- Why do specific patterns, such as the cloud and the waves, repeat many times?
- Do you think the symbols are related to religion and belief? Why?
- Why are there so many nature-related symbols on this robe?
- Why is the whole design symmetrical?

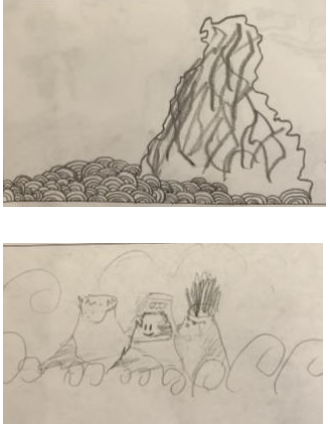

#### *Inquire*

- How does the design represent the power and privilege of the ruling class?
- Do you think the symbols on the Chaofu are exclusive to the ruling class only? Can these symbols be used in ordinary people's clothes?
- When you think about dragon robes, what kind of symbols do you expect to see? Are these symbols on this Chaofu?



### Appendix C

#### Dive Into Symbols' Meanings and the Cultural Context: Examples of Projects and Activities as Formative Assessments

Project/ Activity	Description	Student Artwork Example
<p>1. The Sea and Mountain Pattern Quick Drawing</p>	<p>This is a quick project that only requires about 15 mins.</p> <p>Step 1. Before introducing the Sea and Mountain Pattern to the students, the teacher gives them about 10 minutes and asks them to draw according to the scene: there are strong waves in the sea, and there is a high mountain standing in the middle of the waves. There are many treasures hidden in the waves;</p> <p>Step 2. Ask the students to compare their drawing with the Sea and Mountain Pattern, turn, and talk with people around to discuss what similarities and differences they have observed.</p> <p>This activity aims to encourage students to come up with questions and curiosity before they learn the contents.</p>	
<p>Extension of Project 1. Design Your Own Sea and Mountain Pattern</p>	<p>This can serve as an extension for the first project for teachers who have two 50-minute class periods. The natural art elements, various applications of lines and geometric shapes, and the symmetrical design principle makes the Sea and Mountain Pattern an excellent resource for students' drawing and design practice.</p> <p>Requirement: include the major elements in the traditional pattern -- the sea, the mountain, the water, and add a new element into their design. The "new element" they need to integrate into their design can be another traditional Chinese symbol or any elements they think fit the design.</p> <p>Note: In the first artwork, the student chose to integrate two essential Chinese art design principles into his version of the Sea and Mountain Pattern: symmetry and round pattern. In the second formative artwork, the student kept most of the</p>	

	<p>traditional Sea and Mountain Pattern design. He integrated a dragon pattern into the design. The flame around the dragon was influenced by the Japanese cartoon drawing style.</p> <p>If you compare the student work between the “quick drawing” and the Sea and Mountain Pattern design, you can see the students’ learning process: they begin with their own ideas and cultural contexts, and then they learn about new cultural knowledge. After the practice of compare and contrast, they reflect on their understanding and make an effort to integrate culture and reinvent tradition. In the end, they attain their own unique art style.</p>	
<p>2. Rank Badge Compare and Contrast</p>	<p>The teacher can use this work to provide students with three badge images to compare and contrast: the rank badge for a civil official, the rank badge for a military official, and a dragon roundel that could be only worn by the emperor. And after the students’ observation, the teacher facilitates the discussion by asking the similarities and differences between the three badges. The teacher’s notes can be found in the worksheet to guide the questions.<sup>16</sup></p> <p>The goal for this activity is to understand the visual system of hierarchy in the Qing dynasty.</p>	
<p>3. Symbol and Meaning Matching Game</p>	<p>Step 1. To play this game, the teacher needs to use the Illustrated Guide to Symbols on Imperial Garments.<sup>17</sup> This guide includes the major symbols that can be found on the Chaofu image, and their meanings. The teacher prepares a set of cards with one symbol on each card, and a set of cards with the meaning of each symbol.</p> <p>Step 2. The teacher hands these cards randomly to the students. Each student will have one card, with either a picture of a symbol or the meaning of one symbol.</p> <p>Step 3. Give them 5 minutes to find their match. Students who get a card of symbols cannot show the image to another student. They need to describe the image. The goal of this activity is to think through by describing the symbol.</p> <p>After the activities, let students research in groups and develop an example of how traditional symbols have influenced our daily lives. The symbols can be Chinese or any from the students’ own cultures.</p>	

<sup>16</sup> Teacher’s note for the Rank Badge Compare and Contrast Activity can be accessed via: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1cNRdclYFM1PtcuDsIyiA1Yd9s6Vj3MnVF4-Hj4r93Qk/edit?usp=sharing>

<sup>17</sup> The worksheet of Illustrated Guide to Symbols on Imperial Garments can be accessed via: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/13btpOQM2taBcRd8u-pOfWtCsJ39wOB15xBWXAu6tvis/edit?usp=sharing>

<p>4. Curation Activity</p>	<p>Group project (2-3 students per group). Each group creates a presentation with the topic “Top 3 Chinese Traditional Garments That We Want to Introduce to You”. The form of the presentation can be flexible, such as video, Podcast, Padlet, Google Slides, etc. Students need to research and study Chinese traditional garments’ styles and their related history. To guide the research, the teacher can provide the students with some resources such as a pool of the names, pictures and a brief introduction of some Chinese traditional garments, such as Qipao, Hanfu, etc., to get them started. Besides the traditional way to call each group to share the presentation in the class, there are many digital platforms that can help with sharing their thoughts and ideas. For example, high school students can make videos and upload their works to the class Flipgrid<sup>18</sup> that the teacher created for this topic.</p> <p>The rationale of this activity: Before the students start their fashion design project, they need to understand the cultural context of the Chinese garment styles. Rote memory of symbols’ meaning can’t nurture a student’s sensitivity to cultural stereotypes, and it doesn’t help with avoiding cultural appropriation. Students need to be self-initiated. They are more serious about the knowledge they found out through their own explorations.</p>
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<sup>18</sup> Flipgrid website can be accessed via: <https://info.flipgrid.com/>



Appendix D

China Export Porcelain and Cultural Diplomacy Unit Research Project and Reflections

Research Content	Assignment	Students Findings	Reflection
<p>Search for one Chinese export porcelain image before the 18th Century and one in/after the 18th Century.</p>	<p>Bringing a distinctive feature that you want to discuss in class.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Besides the well-known blue and white porcelain and familiar dragon symbol, Chinese export porcelains have many kinds of decorative patterns.</li> <li>Before the 18th Century, exported porcelain designs reflected what was popular in the Chinese market. However, with the development of international trade in the 18th Century, the Western market's preferences got valued.</li> <li>During the 18th Century, Chinese export porcelains were deeply influenced by Western aesthetic values. There are many commissioned works with Western images such as a family crest, or historical sites such as Mount Vernon.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The teacher needs to set a precise scope rather than a general direction to avoid using stereotyped keywords or general words such as "Chinese Porcelains" to start the research.</li> <li>These discoveries can be the foundation for further discussion and help students break their stereotypes of Chinese art. In the unit's summative project, the teacher can let the students design symbols for modern Chinese porcelain exported to the United States.</li> </ul>
<p>Example of Student Artwork: <i>Haze Warren, 7th Grade, Finding a Common Ground. Watercolor. Haze created a porcelain plate design using symbols to convey his wish for peace and a common ground for the U.S. and China.</i></p>			

## Appendix E

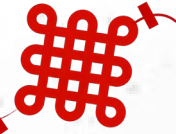
### Topics of Integrating Symbolism into Academic Subjects

Theme	Example Topic	Contents
Similarities in Symbolism around the world	Connection to nature	Awe at nature’s power and the creation of such symbols as the sun and moon, river, mountains, and animals was a universal phenomenon in ancient civilizations such as the Mayan and Egyptian.
The Uniqueness of Symbolisms in Different Cultures	The Difference Between Symbolism in Western and Chinese Art	<p>In Western art, artists once used the human skull quite often to represent mortality and reflections on life and death. <i>Memento mori</i>, which translates to “remember that you will die,” was a common view in Western culture. It “asked people to detach from their worldly goods and luxuries” (Stewart, 2019, para. 3). However, in Chinese art, symbolism is mainly about good things, such as good fortune and high virtue. Thus, all the symbols that were selected are considered the most beautiful and precious things.</p> <p>It would be interesting for students to investigate individual historical and social backgrounds to understand the difference between the creation and use of symbols in the West and the East. For example, high school students could research such topics as how different symbolism reflects different philosophical ideologies between the East and the West.</p>
Evolving Symbolism in Today's World	Symbolism in Today’s World	<p>Does symbolism only belong to the past? Do we still have symbolism in today's society? Teachers can lead a discussion about the contemporary use of symbolism and explore how its function and goal has shifted throughout time. For example:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Can anything become a symbol? Andy Warhol could have created his pop art Campbell's Soup Can paintings to symbolize the comfort associated with this food. Why is a symbol such as this important? Because its associated meanings are widely accepted, or simply because it resonates with a person’s feelings?</li> <li>● Many of us love to use Emojis. They are so popular that MOMA has a collection of them on</li> </ul>

		<p>exhibit. How does the creation of an Emoji represent the digital era and has it changed the way we socialize with each other?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Can we count the Pussyhat as a symbol? How does it convey the message of gender equality? What elements make a symbol popular?</li></ul>
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## CHAPTER 11



### **Decoding Visual Images from Taiwan’s Japanese Colonial Period: The Art of Taiwanese Artist Kuo Hsueh-Hu (Guo Xue-Hu, 1908 - 2012)**

Yichien Cooper  
Washington State University, Tri-Cities

Kevin Hsieh  
Georgia State University

#### **Abstract**

Works of art represent and reflect the visual culture of a state or country through the personal perspectives of the artists. Kuo Hsueh-Hu (Guo Xue-Hu) [郭雪湖] was a prominent Taiwanese Eastern gouache (mineral color painting) artist who lived through the 50-year Japanese colonial rule in Taiwan (1895 – 1945). In this chapter we trace Kuo’s art and life to illustrate how he evolved from a non-academic trained painter to a career as a gouache painter – all in the midst of turbulent political storms in Taiwan. We highlight characteristics and embedded elements of Taiwan’s traditional and evolving visual culture during its colonial period within Kuo’s paintings to decode meaning and unearth deeper connections between his art and the political climate in which he worked. Because they are seen as representing Taiwan’s identity and imbued with the rich visual culture of Taiwan, Kuo’s artworks are currently included in Taiwan’s elementary and secondary visual arts curricula. We therefore include three art lessons on Kuo Hsueh-Hu by three Taiwanese art teachers to provide others with the opportunity to adapt them to their own teaching.

*Keywords:* Kuo Hsueh-Hu, Guo Xue-Hu, mineral color painting, Eastern gouache, Taiwan Japanese colonial period, *Festival on South Street* [南街殷賑]

## Introduction

In 1895, after China's Qing Dynasty (1644 – 1912 AD) lost the First Sino-Japanese War, Japan took over the island of Formosa (now Taiwan) per the Treaty of Shimonoseki. In 1927, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture the Taiwan Education Bureau, under Japanese rule, organized the Taiwan Art Exhibition (TAE) [台灣美展], which subsequently occurred every year from 1927 to 1936. This exhibition featured Taiwanese professional and amateur artists and was the first large scale art exhibition in Taiwan. Modeled after Japan's Imperial Academy Art Exhibitions [帝展], held yearly from 1919 to 1935, the TAE included two categories, Eastern Painting (*Toyoga*) [東洋畫] and Western Painting. In this way, the Ministry promoted Eastern traditions, aesthetics, and techniques on the one hand, as well as Imperial Japan's modernization efforts on the other. Needless to say, the TAE inspired numerous Taiwanese art critics and aspiring artists, who saw it as a gateway to a career in art. Among these, Kuo Hsueh-Hu [郭雪湖] (1908 – 2012), an unknown youth, took the Taiwanese art world by storm. His consecutive wins at the TAE installed him as the preeminent Eastern gouache [東洋膠彩畫] (mineral color painting) expert in Japanese-ruled Taiwan. His sudden fame was a double-edged sword, however. Although it enabled him to achieve his dream of becoming a professional artist in Taiwan, his participation in the exhibition was viewed as his support of Japanese rule of Taiwan and resulted in further alienation of him from his beloved Taiwan. This difficulty was further compounded by the World War II with China and Japan on opposing sides and was seen in the political turbulence caused by the ruling political party, Kuomintang (KMT) even after the World War II. As a result, Kuo lived in exile overseas from 1964 to 1987 in order to avoid rising political tensions associated with the Chinese nationalistic ideology of Chiang Kai-Shek (1949 – 1975) and Chiang Jing-Kuo (1975 – 1988).

This chapter is divided into two parts. In Part I, we provide contextual information on Kuo's art and life to illustrate how he survived and even thrived in the midst of the political storms disrupting Taiwan. Our major sources include Kuo's 70<sup>th</sup> and centennial exhibition catalogues (National Taiwan Museum of Fine Art, 1989 and 2008), personal interviews with Kuo's family members,<sup>1</sup> and a memoir by Kuo's youngest son, Sunny Song-Nain Kuo (Kuo, 2019). We took his advice "not to romanticize my father's journey as others have done so, for it gives people a false image of my father's art career as nothing but a smooth ride" (personal communication, September 2, 2021). Our goal is to cover the dilemmas and crossroads that Kuo faced throughout his life as he resisted and negotiated an unsettling cultural and political climate. We introduce Kuo's signature works, emphasizing unique characteristics and embedded elements of visual culture. We believe that within these elements are keys to a Taiwanese identity that was suppressed during Japanese colonization. Further, we describe the profound impact on Kuo's life of the rise and fall of a Kuomintang-ordered martial law in Taiwan from 1949 to 1987. In Part II, we highlight the iconic status of Kuo's works in Taiwan, where he has become a national icon. Finally, we describe three art lessons shared by Taiwanese art teachers

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<sup>1</sup> All face-to-face, phone, or text interviews with Kuo's family members were accumulated by Yichien Cooper beginning in 2016. That year, Yichien paid a visit to the residence of the late Kuo Hsueh-Hu and had the privilege of viewing works by Kuo and other contemporaries in his private collection. The authors wish to thank Kuo's family for their assistance and the Kuo Hsueh-Hu Foundation for its permission to use images of Kuo's works.

that illustrate his influence. Kuo's *Festival on South Street* (1930), was designed for both elementary and middle school students, while others, Kuo's *Near Yuan-Shan* [圓山附近] (1928), and *Festival on South Street* [南街殷賑] (1930), were designed for high school students. It is our hope that this contextual, historical, and personal account of Kuo's journey, along with samples of successful art lessons using Kuo's signature works, will provide rich material that art teachers around the world can easily adapt for their own classrooms.

## **Part I: The Art and Life of Kuo Hsueh-Hu**

### **Coming of Age in Colonial Taiwan**

Kuo was born in 1908 as Kuo Chin-Huo [郭金火] in Da-dao-cheng [大稻埕], modern day Dihua Street in the commercial district of Taipei, Taiwan. It was 13 years after the Qing Dynasty had turned Taiwan over to Japan after losing the first Sino-Japanese War. When Kuo was two, he lost his father and went to live with his grandmother and mother. Although he received public education, his overriding interest was in the arts. His artistic talent began in his elementary years. His art teacher, Ying-sheng Chen [陳英聲] (1898 – 1961), introduced Kuo to basic watercolor techniques using a plein-air approach. This early encounter with the use of pigments to paint outdoors had a profound impact on Kuo's art career. After graduating from elementary school, he attended a vocational school to learn civil engineering technical drawing but dropped out due to his family's desperate financial circumstances. He soon found, however, that his ability to draw could provide a sustainable living at a time when mass printing and photographs were neither accessible nor affordable to many. He taught himself traditional Chinese ink painting by copying masterworks, and landed work as an apprentice under Master Tsai Hsueh-Xi [蔡雪溪] (translated as Snowy Stream). In this role, Kuo reproduced religious portraits in ink and assisted in mounting Chinese painted hand scrolls. Tsai renamed Kuo, Hsueh-Hu [雪湖] (translated as Snowy Lake), to mark their teacher-student linkage, and Kuo Hsueh-Hu became the name he used for the rest of his life (Hsieh, 2009; Kuo, 2019).

Kuo's artistic development in Japanese colonial Taiwan was framed by his recurring achievements at the TAE, which reflected the changing political and aesthetic values of an ambitious Imperial Japan. We focus here on Kuo's three consecutive successes, beginning in 1927, at the TAE. Although these accomplishments breathed life into his art, they also foreshadowed his future alienation and mistreatment by the KMT government and the Taiwanese art world in the midst of the turbulent political circumstances.

### **Looking Beyond Traditional Painting Techniques**

To promote local arts and culture vibrancy, the Japanese Ministry of Education, Science, and Culture organized the first juried TAE in 1927. The main judges were Kinichiro Ishikawa [石川欽一郎] (1871 – 1945) and Koto Gobara [郷原古統] (1887 – 1965), who led the Western Painting Category and Eastern Painting Category, respectively. Challenged and motivated by the exhibition, Kuo routinely analyzed the compositions of the old masters, sketched outdoors, and paid careful attention to the ink paintings being mounted in various frame shops around town.



Yet, the more he practiced, the more Kuo began to question some of the common practices in ink painting. Many artists entered juried art competitions by recycling popular themes and copying techniques. He felt tired by frequent topics like the traditional *shikunshi* [四君子] (the four gentlemen—the plum, orchid, bamboo, and chrysanthemums), portraits of Bodhidharma, and simple copies of old masters' landscapes. Attempting to break these norms, he gradually incorporated observational details from his plein air practices to express his own interpretations of Eastern Painting (Kuo, 2019). One of these is *A Landscape of Pine Trees and Waterfall* [松壑飛泉] (see Figure 1). In it, Kuo infused the classic Three Distances Method [三遠法] (height distance, level distance, and deep distance) of Guo Xi [郭熙] (ca.1020 – 1090, AD), from the Northern Landscape School (Northern Song Dynasty, 960 – 1127 AD). In these paintings, his focus was on the magnitude of the natural surroundings, such as towering mountains and misty creeks (Fong & Watt, 1996; Hsieh, 2009). His expressive brush strokes were evidence of his practice of drawing in and from nature (Kuo, 2019).

**Figure 1**

*A Landscape of Pine Trees and Waterfall*, 1927, ink on paper, 162cm X 70cm



Historically, Western artists have tended to use fixed perspectives, such as one point perspective, to create images. In contrast, many traditional Chinese landscape painters have used moving perspectives or multiple perspectives in their work. While Western landscape paintings are meant to be looked at, traditional Chinese landscape paintings are meant to be traveled within. Traditional Chinese landscape paintings invite viewers to wander through the scenery of the painting. Further, artists often integrate symbolic meanings in both the composition and visual elements in such literati-style<sup>2</sup> landscape paintings, enabling artist-scholars to subtly express a political stance. Landscape paintings from the Northern Song Dynasty, for example, contain many political, societal, and philosophical implications. A mountain in the center drawn with heavy ink represents the emperor, while other shorter mountains on the side represent government officials. A similar metaphorical approach was applied to other landscape elements, such as buildings, trees, and rocks. Hsieh (2009) called this a “contextual perspective” (p. 50), one that guides learners to contextually investigate visual elements and decode potential symbolic metaphors that may be hidden.

Undoubtedly, Kuo’s *A Landscape of Pine Trees and Waterfall* was deeply influenced by traditional Chinese landscape painting, and fuses both Southern School and Northern School traditions. The hierarchical composition is strategically divided by mist and clouds, demonstrating his understanding of the Southern School’s focus on the use of water and ink to accentuate an atmosphere. By contrast, Kuo portrayed the towering mountains and angular tall trees with heavy ink, a method derived from the Northern School tradition. As seen in Kuo’s painting, at the lower right corner, a trail leads the viewer to walk through the painting, pause briefly at the rapid streams at the foreground, hop on steppingstones to cross the stream, and follow the winding path into the mountains.

Kuo was one of three young artists whose work was selected at the 1927 TAE event. Their wins surprised many art critics and artists who valued Chinese literati painting techniques. Kuo, a no-name, self-taught youth, outshone other well-known artists of his time. He received high praise from contemporary art critics who appreciated his creative approach. More conservative art critics, however, speculated that the exhibition was not a fair competition. They believed that Japanese juries would use the outcomes of the exhibition as propaganda and impose Japanese Imperial aesthetic values on the general public (Hsieh, L. 2009). However, Kuo was unaware of the political undercurrent that might eventually devour his career as an artist in Taiwan. He was honored that his works were displayed among other established artists as it affirmed his dream of becoming one. He was especially fascinated by the work of Koto Gohara, which vividly blended ink painting and Western influences through expressive articulation of lines and gradations of ink. The use of gouache further aroused Kuo’s curiosity about this medium (Kuo, 2019).

### **The Impact of *Datsu-A Ron***

The direction of the TAE was shaped by ideas put forth in the anonymous 1885 publication *Datsu-A Ron* (On Leaving Asia) [脫亞論], thought to be the work of Fukuzawa Yukichi [福澤諭吉] (1835 – 1901). Yukichi viewed the conservative Confucian practices of the

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<sup>2</sup> the painting style focus on artist’s self-expression and personal painting styles).

Chinese Qing Dynasty and Joseon Korea as obstacles to Japan's modernization. Many Japanese nationalists believed that renouncing Asian norms and embracing everything Western held the key to accelerating Japan's economic power and ability to colonize neighboring countries. Laced with ambition, *Datsu-A Ron* became a guiding principle for Japan's drive to become the leader of a new order in the East (Bonnett, 2006). In line with this ideology, artists in Japan turned to Western art techniques and movements, such as the expressive qualities of impressionist approaches. Between 1894 and 1898, Fukuzawa Yukichi continued to advise the Japanese government on the importance of assimilating Taiwan through education, art, and culture to facilitate the protection and defense of the Okinawa islands. He believed that the development of infrastructure in Taiwan was a necessary step for the betterment of the whole of Japan. Accordingly, in domains as varied as education and railroads, city planning and arts and culture, Imperial Japan sought to assimilate and instill Japanese values in the people of Taiwan (Hsueh, 2007).

The first 1927 TAE had shaken the Taiwanese art world. In part, it rejected *Zhong-yuan* (middle China) [中原] and the long-established Chinese painting tradition of mainland China. *Zhong-yuan* valued imitations of old masters or *Xie-Yi* (expressive) [寫意] style, in which the artists purposefully reduce the rigidness and confinements while rendering with the forms. The expressive quality of the brush strokes is often associated with a spiritual connection that mirrors the artists' state of mind (Fong & Watt, 1996). In addition, the unexpected wins by Kuo encouraged other Taiwanese artists to critically define the meaning of Eastern Painting style. Undoubtedly, the TAE judges sought to promote aesthetics that would be accepted by Imperial Japan.

With this in mind, one might ask if the hidden political agenda of the TAE was to remove Chinese literati-style ink painting from the popular mainstream in Taiwan and replace it with art and culture that further injected Japanese values and aesthetics? In this case, why would Kuo's *Landscape of Pine Trees and Waterfall* receive such high recognition? We believe the reason is related to Kuo's attempts to break with the accepted methods for creating Chinese traditional paintings. His blending of angular brush strokes originated from his observations in nature and resonated with a revolutionary vision that the Japanese government highly valued.

It is interesting to see this approach in the feedback of lead judge, Koto Gobara. Koto criticized copying of the work of old masters and pointed to a lack of individuality in traditional ink paintings (Kuo, 2019). Gobara said he was taken by Kuo's reinterpretation of the mountains, which reminded him of everlasting towering mountains and cliffs on the east side of Taiwan. He later painted similar large-scale mountain scenery of his own. Gobara walked along the winding mountain paths and drew from nature, blending ink painting with plein air painting. Some had considered Kuo's win to be simply beginner's luck, but for Kuo, the recognition proved to motivate him even further and start him down a new road. Inspired by Gobara's works, he gradually switched to gouache. The process of making mineral-based pigments fascinated Kuo, and the quick coverage required by gouache during plein air painting sessions satisfied his habit of studying scenery while painting outdoors. Kuo became bolder and stepped away from typical Chinese literati painting themes, focusing more on daily genre. In this way, he pushed the boundaries to redefine what would be considered the Eastern Tradition.



## A Prominent Medium in Two Cultures

Nihonga, a traditional Japanese art, was a term coined by Ernest Fenollosa (1853 – 1908), an American Orientalist who cautioned Japanese artists not to abandon their own culture in the midst of the Meiji Restoration [明治維新] (1868 – 1889). Fenollosa urged Japan to enrich their inherent aesthetic tradition, gouache could serve as a medium that would blend Western painting and traditional Japanese ink painting (Larking, 2012; Hsueh, 2007). To use gouache, artists had to combine mineral-based pigments with a binding agent, nikawa (gelatin), and apply it directly to a surface, such as wood panels, silk, paper, fresco, lacquer, cotton, or hemp (Hsieh, 1998). Because it incorporates natural mineral powder, ink, oyster shell powder, metallic pigment, and water to create the paint, the medium is highly versatile and known for its heavy and bright color effects, or *zhong cai* [重彩] (Cooper, 2017). The popularity of Nihonga had boosted the popularity of orientalism along with exports of Japanese arts and culture to Europe, creating a sensation on the Japanese and European art scenes. Such positive outcomes won Nihonga the status of Japanese Toyoga (Eastern painting).

Curious to learn, Kuo had developed an interest in gouache that led him to pay more attention to Nihonga after the 1927 TAE. To prepare for the 1928 TAE, Kuo sought new subject matters to match this new medium. Kuo's son, Sunny, recalled, "my father decided to switch his focus from traditional Chinese landscape painting to Eastern Gouache landscape painting because he wanted to explore and learn a new medium" (Kuo, 2019, p. 30). Much different from the simplicity of ink painting, the complex and labor-intensive nature of gouache painting (Cooper, 2017; Hsieh, 1998) led Kuo to frequent local libraries and to study painting catalogs. He then went to the Yuan-Shan area of Taipei City to observe the surrounding landscapes at different times of the day, eventually generating at least 10 drafts and sketches for his entry in the 1928 TAE, *Scenery near Yuan-Shan* [圓山附近] (see Figure 2). Sunny Kuo explained,

My father did not know how to produce the gelatin, mix pigments, or brush work at that time. And that was why he went to the library so frequently to learn the Eastern Gouache techniques... He put a lot of effort into it. There were a lot of tries and errors that were not easy for him. (Kuo, 2019, p. 32)

Kuo's daughter, Komi Chen, also a gouache artist, attested to the painstaking process by which her father developed his gouache skills. She recalled how, when young, she witnessed him spend hours and hours grinding up powders and mixing them with gelatin to obtain the consistency and colors he desired (K. Chen, personal communication, July 29, 2016).

**Figure 2**

*Scenery near Yuan-Shan, 1928, Eastern Gouache on silk, 91cm x 182cm*



Kuo's perseverance paid off, for *Scenery near Yuan-Shan* received high praise at the 1928 TAE. Displaying mastery of a style reminiscent of ancient cave murals, Kuo's depiction of the natural landscape also shows special characteristics of the Taiwanese regional culture of the time (Kuo, 2019). The main color in this work is green, also prominent in the traditional Chinese landscape paintings of the Qing Dynasty. In fact, the use of a bright green color in the landscape paintings of Chinese artists (or workers) originated, and became established, during the Tang Dynasty (618 – 907 AD) and is especially evident in the blue-green color murals in the Mogao Caves [莫高窟]. The rich and heavy green color in Kuo's work depicts not only the subtropical habitat of the Yuan-Shan area but also portrays the Taiwanese agricultural community of that time by including a female farmer working in the field. Compared to Kuo's 1927's work, which still largely relied on the artist's imagination to portray a landscape scene, Kuo's *Scenery near Yuan-Shan* brought viewers closer to a familiar place with daily life activities.

### **Everyday Life as a Genre for Art Creation**

The recognition Kuo received at the TAE not only affirmed his artistic direction but liberated him from producing art without purpose and creativity. Because of the exhibition, he was able to interact with many other artists and exchange ideas and experiences. He found Western methods of depicting three-dimensional spaces challenging. At the same time, he wanted to break away from landscape paintings and focus more on daily events. Living in Dadaocheng, he was always attracted to the hustle and bustle of street scene.

The painting *Festival on South Street* (see Figures 3 and 4), completed in 1930, won the top prize at the TAE. Kuo was 22. *Festival on South Street* represents a departure from landscape-focused, horizontally composed traditional Chinese ink painting, on such topics as the

festival in Ze-Duan Zhang's [張折端] (1085 – 1145) 17-foot-long hand scroll *Along the River During the Qingming Festival* [清明上河圖], which invited viewers to walk alongside, anticipating the festive events unfolding along the river. Zhang's early portrayal of a holiday filled with ceremonial rituals to commemorate ancestors successfully captured the economic and social dynamics of the Northern Song Dynasty. In contrast, Kuo's winning painting depicts, in a lively and realistic fashion, the economic and social particulars of his time and place.

*Festival on South Street* gives a panoramic bird's eye view of Dadaocheng, the busiest and most prosperous district of Taiwan in the 1920s. The composition is more intimate, as if we are sitting on a second-floor balcony immersed in a robust moment. Jane Kuo, the artist's daughter, explained, "In order to create the towering effect, my father strategically added an imaginative third floor for most buildings" (J. Kuo, personal communication, March 26, 2018). In doing so, Kuo makes room for business signs to float in mid-air, as if participating in the festivities and not bothering the people down below. In seeking to show how Japan had adapted Baroque architecture styles in Taiwan to make it into a modernized colonial territory, Kuo worked hard to master the blending of Western and Eastern painting styles. He applied multiple perspectives to street scenes, inviting viewers to sometimes look up and sometimes look down. Moreover, he recreated the heart of a colonial economic and cultural hub that had endeared itself to him since childhood. Kuo researched prominent business logos of the time and intentionally placed them in the painting. *Festival on South Street*, then, is not a mere recreation of a typical street scene; it is a collage of a time and place that comes alive from the artist's personal experiences.

It is obvious that Kuo went to such great lengths to create this non-traditional piece in order to challenge himself, but as his son revealed, Kuo had a practical reason: "My father was always restless when it came to paint. But the primary motivation was actually about winning the competition. After all, the sizable prize money was able to feed my family the whole year. (S. Kuo, personal communication, March 28, 2018)

The lively street scene in *Festival on South Street* seems to suggest that Taiwanese citizens enjoyed a thriving livelihood under Japanese rule. As if playing chess, Kuo carefully calculates every move in the composition and seeks to win the game. Indeed, the towering store signs represent dynamic and prosperous life. If one looks closely, however, one sees that the signs mostly advertise Taiwanese delicacies and traditional products. The vendors carry baskets only of Taiwanese fruits, such as pineapples, bananas, and wax apples. The scene also aligns with Taiwan's Hungry Ghost Festival [中元節], which annually commemorates ancestors every July 15<sup>th</sup> of the lunar calendar. Kuo purposefully uses as a backdrop to this visual narrative the most influential Taiwanese temple of that time.

In portraying Taiwan's Hungry Ghost Festival, Kuo shared a bit of everyday life, a topic long celebrated in Japanese *Ukiyo-e* prints. Visual clues in the painting hint at possible narratives, which in turn helps viewers explore relationships and meanings in the juncture between Taiwanese and Japanese cultures (Goodson, 2012). In fact, we find the essence and added value of *Festival on South Street* in its embedded stories. Kuo planted many clues in the painting, clues that illustrate what popular culture looked like in Japanese-ruled Taiwan of the 1930s. This vividness is exactly why many view this work as a time capsule. We see 1925 Ford Model T



Classic automobiles cruising down a street filled with pastries, Chinese medicines, fabrics, and fashion stores. Kuo even purposely wove in popular brands like Tiger Balm, a type of analgesic remedy that is still sold in stores today. These and other elements have become conversational pieces and may stimulate the sharing of many personal stories.

If we examine this painting with an eye to its deeper meanings, then, each visual element serves a purpose in conveying a narrative about colonial identity. A sign that features an indigenous Taiwanese couple, for example, signifies Dadaocheng's critical economic and cultural status and its wide influence in Southeast Asia, coastal China, Japan, and eastside of Taiwan. At the same time, hints of shifting political power and values are present, lurking within the seemingly prosperous scene. Two 1925 Ford Model T Classic automobiles, representing the rich and the powerful, are gradually exiting the street, for example. Further, we see no Japanese flag flying, and instead a sign in the shape of Taiwan is very visible at the forefront. Whether intentional or accidental, the sign pinpoints a sense of place and belonging for all Taiwanese people. All these careful depictions and arrangements suggest that it may have been the land, the way of life, and the people of Taiwan that Kuo wanted to preserve. We believe it is safe to say that the painting is a still-shot that captures Kuo's early upbringing and adult experiences, secretly voicing his beliefs and revealing an identity that stands against the oppressive colonial powers that dominated Taiwan.

**Figure 3**

*Draft, Festival on South Street, 1930, Eastern Gouache on silk, 134cm X 195cm, Authorized by the Kuo Hsueh-Hu Foundation, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Collection*



**Figure 4**

Festival on South Street, 1930, Eastern Gouache on silk, 134cm X 195cm, Authorized by the Kuo Hsueh-Hu Foundation, Taipei Fine Arts Museum Collection



Following the 1930 TAE, Kuo continued to illustrate familiar scenes that he might have encountered daily. Whether it was agriculture fields, the crowded Dadaocheng, or boats in the harbor, his paintings were lively and approachable. These artworks project a booming economic and cultural hub, and perhaps, as some art historians have pointed out, they portray a prosperous and peaceful relationship between Japanese and Taiwanese (Hsiao, 2013; Hsieh, 1998).

Kuo continuously gained recognition for the 10 years following the first TAE in 1927. He won more prizes than any other artist under Japanese rule (Chan & Shih, 2008), and his success granted him the chance to study briefly in Japan, where he met many other young up-and-coming Taiwanese artists (Kuo, 2018). His unique approach to depicting closeness with one's surroundings has attracted so many followers that it has been nicknamed *Hsieh-hu Style* (Kuo, personal communication, September 10, 2021).

During that time in Japan, tensions between Imperial Japan and the Republic of China were growing. In response, Japan orchestrated increased political and cultural sanctions against China to advance their ambitions. Japanese themes and Nihonga styles were placed over traditional ink paintings. Despite Japan's dream of building a pan-Asian empire, the idea of what was "Oriental" expanded from the dominant Chinese aesthetics (*karamono* [唐物]) to include

more regional folk arts from Korea, Southeast Asia, and Okinawa (Oh, 2019). Influenced by this notion, the Japanese colonization positively facilitated Taiwanese local and folk arts. Taiwanese artists and scholars began to explore the influence of colonial Japan on Taiwan's national and cultural identities. Various Taiwanese art groups and societies used visual art as a means of increasing the public's awareness of related issues. Kuo's *Festival on South Street* (see Figure 3) is a prime example of the use of visual culture to imbue viewers with a sense of Taiwanese identity.

Kuo's efforts to advance his gouache techniques had received the seal of approval from government arts agencies. He acted as a cultural ambassador to promote peaceful relationships between Taiwanese and Chinese artists, traveling to Guangzhou (1941, 1943, 1944). As a judge and invited artist at various art exhibitions, he strived to retain his voice in support of for Taiwanese artists, who continued to practice their craft in the context of clashing cultures and uncertain political realities.

### **The Challenge of Rising Chinese Nationalism**

In 1945, Japan lost World War II and returned Taiwan to the Republic of China. To many Taiwanese, the end of Japanese colonialism was a time to reclaim their ancestral linkages with the Chinese mainland, and arts and culture groups were eager to participate in this change. Kuo was among the artists, writers, and academics who welcomed the end of Japanese colonial rule and hoped to preserve and promote the uniqueness of Taiwan's art and culture. In 1946, at a meeting of the Taiwanese Cultural Development Association [台灣文化協進會], in an atmosphere filled with excitement, participants shared diverse political perspectives, not knowing that waves of Chinese nationalist ideology were moving toward them. And despite the efforts of Kuo and contemporary Western-style artist, Yang San-lang [楊三郎] to organize the 1<sup>st</sup> Taiwan Provincial Fine Arts Exhibition and show their support of the new Taiwanese government, within a few months China took extreme action. It banned the use of both native Taiwanese and Japanese languages and instituted a mandatory implementation of the *Three People's Principle*, a political philosophy developed by Sun Yet-sen [孫中山] (1866 – 1925) and the cornerstone of the Republic of China's founding party, the Kuomintang. On February 28, 1947, the massacre by KMT resulted in the execution of the artist and activist Chen Cheng-po [陳澄波]. Criticism by any elite scholar, artist, or writer in Taiwan was effectively silenced, demolishing any dreams of a self-ruled Taiwan. Guided by extreme KMT nationalism, the political climate worsened after Chiang Kai-Shek's retreat to Taiwan due to the declining military power of his party in the Chinese Communist mainland. Chiang declared martial law on May 20<sup>th</sup> in 1949.

Fueled by the urge to restore Chiang's power and achieve stability, his followers called for a national painting style that reinstated traditional Chinese ink painting as the true *guohua* [國畫], the authentic representation of a true Chinese government. Conflicts between artists from China and regional artists from Taiwan escalated. The tensions stemmed in part from different approaches. Chinese artists sought to follow the art of the traditional old masters, while Taiwanese artists had abandoned such practices since 1927. Armed with KMT's nationalist ideology, the artists who had migrated from Communist China strategically discredited Taiwanese gouache artists as unpatriotic and pro-Japanese. They even viewed plein air



observational drawings and paintings with expressive qualities as Japanese-influenced because these were valued during the Japanese colonial era. The only choices left to Taiwanese artists were to turn to guohua or endure the humiliation of exclusion from mainstream exhibitions. This hostile situation existed into the 1950s, when American abstract painting took over as the new aesthetic standard. For someone who had won recognition during the era of Japanese rule, Kuo immediately became an outcast at the center of ongoing political storms. In an effort to support his growing family, Kuo tried to survive by traveling to the Philippines and Thailand (Kuo, 2019; S. Kuo, personal communication, September 4, 2021). With the help and encouragement of Koto Gohara, Kuo held his solo exhibition in Osaka in 1955. Although living overseas, Kuo knew that the label "Japanese style" stigmatized his work, leading him to find his own "Chinese style." He studied Chinese antiquities, with a specific interest in ceramics and porcelains. Eventually, in 1964, he uprooted his family and moved to Japan.

There were times when Kuo hoped to return to Dadaocheng, yet, as fate would have it, political turbulence once again pushed him away from Taiwan. After Kuo Hsueh-Hu and Kuo Song-Fen visited Taiwan in 1974, more sanctions against him were put in place. Not allowed to step back into Taiwan, Kuo moved to the San Francisco Bay area in 1978. Fearing KMT's punitive order over Kuo Song-Fen's (Kuo Hsueh-Hu's eldest son, 1938 – 2005) political points of view, Kuo decided not to return to Taiwan in order to protect his family. As his children recalled, Kuo's studio faced the Pacific Ocean, and he named it *Gazing Home*, for he longed to return to Taiwan. In the years to come, Kuo painted many such seascapes. As he would look out his window, the scenery would remind him of the sampans and trading boats of Dadoucheng (see Figure 5) and he would dream of visiting childhood places. Meanwhile, in Taiwan, Kuo Hsueh-Hu became persona non grata and was erased from the public consciousness.

**Figure 5**

*Sampans on Dan-Chiang River, 1982, Eastern Gouache on silk, 66cm x 86.5cm, Authorized by the Kuo Hsueh-Hu Foundation.*



### Kuo Hsueh-Hu's Return to Post-Martial-Law Era Taiwan

In the 1980s, Taiwan moved toward a more democratic state under then-President Chiang Ching-Kuo, and the society at large began to value the state's regional identity and heritage. Many artists who had been Kuo's contemporaries during the Japanese colonial era regained their recognition. With the establishment of the Taipei Museum of Fine Art in 1983, the Taiwan art world became more diverse and inclusive (Hsiao, 2013). Interestingly, the location of the Taipei Museum of Fine Art is at the foot of the bridge in *Scenery Near Yuan-Shan* (1928).

As sanctions in Taiwan loosened, Kuo's daughter, Dr. Kuo Cheng-Hsiang (widely known as Dr. Ann Kuo) [郭禎祥], took action. A renowned and influential art educator who shaped the development of Taiwan's field of art education, Kuo Cheng-Hsiang began to organize a solo exhibition of her father's work, in anticipation of his return. On July 15, 1987, Chiang Ching-Kuo ended Taiwan's 38 years of martial law (May 20, 1949 – July 15, 1987), and that October, Kuo returned to Taiwan for the first time since going into exile in 1964. Kuo welcomed this belated fame and enjoyed several solo exhibitions. He continued to paint until his death in 2012, at 104 years old. (See Figure 6)

#### Figure 6

*Kuo Hsueh-Hu Working in His Studio, Gazing Home, Authorized by the Kuo Hsueh-Hu Foundation.*



In the context of Taiwan's complex history, Kuo's artistic journey, his hardships, and determination continue to capture the hearts of the Taiwanese people and inspire other artists. In 2016, his story became the backdrop to a Taiwanese TV series and a Netflix original, *La Grande Chaumière Violette* [紫色大稻埕]. His painting, *Festival on South Street* (1930), which had

fallen through the cracks during the Taiwan martial law (1949-1987), also regained popularity. It was featured in a promotional poster for the American Broadcasting Company's TV show *Fresh off the Boat* (Season Three), which pays homage to Taiwan's vibrant and festive culture. This painting also inspired *A Glorious South*, a board game developed by Ariel Yi Chi Chang. Finally, *Kuo Hsueh-Hu: Three States of Home Gazing* (2020), a complete virtual reality experience by virtual reality artist and director Huang Hsin-Chien (1966 –), features Kuo's longing to returning to Taiwan along with his signature works, won the 2020 Asian Academy Creative Awards in the Best Immersive (360, VR) category.

## **Part II: Teaching and Learning About Kuo Hsueh-Hu: Applications from Taiwanese Educators**

Kuo's journey as an artist, and artworks such as *Festival on South Street*, have significantly influenced the work of many Taiwanese artists' works. His works are widely acclaimed for fostering the national/cultural identities of the people of Taiwanese over generations, because they are, in essence, a snapshot of the past. In this section, we explain how Kuo's artworks align with recent Taiwanese educational reform emphasizing regional history and cultural identity. The variety of subject matters, including the everyday genre, makes Kuo's works rich visual resources for teaching and learning about Taiwanese identity, historical events, and visual culture in elementary and secondary art classrooms.

### **Domains for Lesson Planning**

Art teachers in Taiwan adapted from Bloom's Taxonomies of Educational Objectives, namely, cognitive, affective, and psychomotor domains. These domains are part of the 2019 Taiwanese Educational Standards across a 12-year curriculum. This curriculum aims to foster students' key competencies, with an emphasis on comprehension and application. The overarching educational goal is to encourage students to take the initiative in learning, engage with civic practices, and seek the common good. In planning lessons with Kuo's art, the complex historical and cultural context within which Kuo lived and worked, however, suggests the need for a fourth domain. We suggest that this goal be called curriculum connections, to underscore how art teachers can utilize Kuo's works to expand learning about art, identity, history, and culture.

In the following sections, we offer three practical examples of classroom lessons based on *Festival on South Street* (1930) and designed by three art teachers in Taiwan. We chose these lessons, which range from elementary, middle, and high schools, to demonstrate how *Festival on South Street* (1930) provides opportunities learners at a variety of levels.

### **Elementary Level<sup>3</sup>**

Elementary Level: (1) Cognitive domain: Students are given an introduction to Kuo's life and work, with a focus on art appreciation. (2) Affective domain: Through critical analysis, students understand how visual elements affect the overall mood of the painting, specifically how Kuo's approach in composition and rendering of color achieves a vibrant and harmonious

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<sup>3</sup> Lesson idea and student artwork provided by elementary school art teacher, Chian-Ling Chen in Taiwan.



everyday life scene. (3) Psychomotor domain: Inspired by Kuo’s typical daily life in South Street, students draw a specific event or an unforgettable life experience. Students are encouraged to rely less on instructions and focus more on demonstrating their personal articulation. (4) Curriculum Connections domain: Since *Festival on South Street* highlights daily activities and local festive events, students are introduced to community-based festive events and their historical significance in their region, with a focus on connections to social studies and local history.

Studio Application: Students are given the prompt: “This is me at [*name of a place*]. This is the day I [*did what*]” to encourage them to recall an unforgettable experience. Students use the visual elements of color, composition, shape, and scale to depict human activities and their surroundings, as shown in this 4<sup>th</sup> grader’s drawing (see Figure 7).

**Figure 7**

*Ying-Yan Chen, 4th Grade, I Am at A Zoo. This is the Day I Met the Tigers. Oil pastel. Lesson and example provided by art teacher Chian-ling Chen.*



**Middle School Level<sup>4</sup>:**

Middle School Level: (1) Cognitive domain: Students begin the lesson by watching selected film clips on Kuo’s life. Sources include a film on Dadaocheng, behind-the-scenes interviews, and public television programs. (2) Affective domain: With a focus on the street signs in the painting, students complete activity sheets (see Figure 5) that introduce them to the activity and explain certain design elements and aesthetics. (3) Psychomotor domain: Students modified learned skills to answer questions listed in activity sheets. (4) Curriculum Connections domain: Students made comparative studies on street signs between the 1930s and present day. Students made social studies-related connections, specifically, how visual communication reveals ways of life in a certain era.

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<sup>4</sup> Lesson idea, worksheet, and student artwork provided by middle school art teacher, Yi-Ching Wu in Taiwan.

Studio Application: Concentrating on effective signage design, students use Shrinky-Dink to create store signage key chains, highlighting Taiwanese delicacies and cultural value (see Appendix 1).

**Figure 8**

*Students' Shrinky-Dink Taiwan Key Chain in making. Picture provided by Yi-Ching Wu*



**High School Level<sup>5</sup>:**

High School Level: (1) Cognitive domain: Students read content in the high school art textbook that introduces them to Kuo's life and art and describes how and why his works have resonated with the people of Taiwan over many decades. (2) Affective domain: Students form groups to discuss and interpret Kuo's works, as the teacher highlights Kuo's artistic process and the expressive qualities in his landscape paintings. (3) Psychomotor domain: Students participate in a school-wide field trip to Dadaocheng, where they roam historical alleys and immerse themselves in stores, tea leaves, and aromas from food vendors. Students took notes on architectural elements from the Japanese-ruled era. (4) Curriculum Connections domain: Students are introduced to the past and the present of the Meiji Bridge [明治橋] depicted in Kuo's *Scenery Near Yuan-Shan*. Students learn how the bridge was built in 1901 and stood as the most beautiful bridge in Taiwan until it was unfortunately demolished in 2002. Students studied street signs from past to present. Students also discussed the advantages and disadvantages of artist-inspired consumer products, such as board games, postcards, or daily accessories.

<sup>5</sup> Lesson idea provided by high school art teacher, Pei-rong Tsai in Taiwan.

### Suggestions and Beyond

In striving for excellence, Kuo changed his painting styles throughout his career. Each of his pieces continues to gain traction in the art world. As art educators, when we encourage learners to construct narratives it is critical to provide opportunities for them to discuss and understand how art and life intertwine. We can ask many questions to stimulate the critical thinking of learners, such as, “How and why do artists evolve their artistic styles over time? What other artists throughout history have had experiences like Kuo’s? What possible political, economic, social, and personal factors may prompt artists to change their artistic styles?” Along with posing such questions, we can assist learners in searching for visual clues that help them perceive, at a deeper level, the unique characteristics, surroundings, and contextual meanings that the artworks convey.

We believe that both collective memories and personal experiences shape how one perceives the past, present, and future, and becomes a mechanism for examining hidden social and cultural contexts with purposes of hidden social and cultural commentary. It is through the conversations that life stories become collective memories, which eventually merge into and mold with one’s pre-existing sense of identity. Because life stories are organic and diverse, it is vital to view a past event as a *living force* in collective memory (Goldberg et al., 2008).

Both Kuo’s life and art reflect an existence in an in-between world, a hybrid of reality and imagination. His art was a negotiation between ideology and identity, as well as a map for him to navigate between shifting political powers. Within his paintings are the threads of stories, stories that collectively create a narrative explaining how Kuo reshaped and rediscovered an identity that ultimately has been associated with Taiwan.



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Appendix 1

Activity/Worksheet on Festival on South Street (Dadaocheng). Designed by Ying-Ching Wu.  
Translated by the authors. Use with permission

Class:  
Name:

Teacher: I-Ching WU

**Festival on South Street (Da-dao-cheng)**  
**Worksheet**

A. Historical Background (please select proper answers from the table below and fill in the blanks):

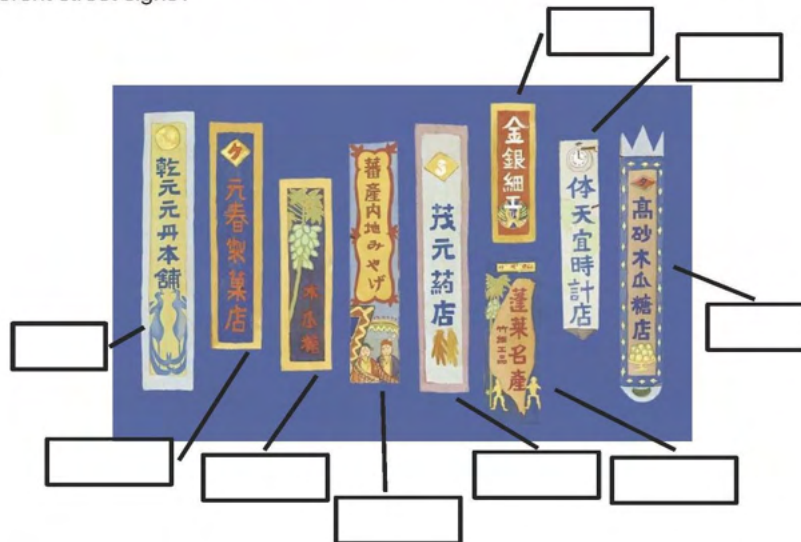
"The Festival on South Street" pictures the bustling crowds and the busy traffic in the southern section of the \_\_\_\_\_ Street in Taipei City. The first two Chinese characters of the title [殷賑 (yin zheng)] comes from an ancient saying describing the \_\_\_\_\_. This work depicts the prosperous scene of the \_\_\_\_\_ in the Cheng-huang Temple neighborhood or calls the Da-dao-cheng district. In order to create a busy street scenery, Kuo did not \_\_\_\_\_. Kuo also added \_\_\_\_\_ more floor to the actual \_\_\_\_\_-floors buildings to show the busy street scene. The main colors of this work are \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_, and \_\_\_\_\_, which were the best ways to present the local Taiwanese culture.

Busy industry	Chong-qin Street	1、2、3、4 (pick 2 numbers)	kept the upper portion of the picture blank	Ghost festival
Prosperous business	People	red、orange、yellow、green、blue、purple、light brown (select 4 colors)	Family reunion during the mid-autumn festival	Di-hua Street

B. What objects shown in the picture represent the local Taiwanese culture?

- b-1. Goods:
- b-2. Images/figures:
- b-3. Others:

C. Would you be able to identify what kinds of the business were painted by Kuo through different street signs?





CHAPTER 12

**Teaching About Historical Atrocities in China and Taiwan  
Through Works of Art**

Jaehan Bae  
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

**Abstract**

In this chapter, I explain how I used one artwork by a Chinese artist and one by a Taiwanese artist to introduce non-art major undergraduates to a project called the Forgotten History Hexagon. These artworks were deeply connected to two historical atrocities: China's Nanking Massacre (1937 – 1938) and Taiwan's 228 Incident (1947). Although the two events are highly significant in the modern histories of Japan, China, and Taiwan, most people in the Western world know little, if anything, about them. In this chapter, I describe how I integrated forgotten history with visual arts teaching and learning in order to enhance the historical, political, and social awareness of my students, thus promoting their critical thinking, cultural tolerance, civic education, and social justice.

*Keywords:* Nanking Massacre, Taiwan's 228 Incident, cultural tolerance, civic education, Huang Rong-can [黃榮燦], Li Hu [胡漂]



## Introduction

Knowledge of history is integral to understanding a country's culture, people, and society (Bae, 2012; Stearns, 1998). In fact, historical events often lie beneath the behaviors, customs, and lifestyles of the people of a country (Donahue & Drouin, 2014). Koreans, for instance, are known to be highly competitive with Japanese, a predisposition rooted in Japan's invasion of Korea in 1592 and illegal occupation of Korea from 1910 to 1945, during which time Japan enacted deeply inhumane laws and systems (Cooney & Scarbrough, 2008). Students who learn about relationships between historical and current events are in a better position to understand, then, why Koreans do not like losing anything to the Japanese, even something as simple as a game of rock-paper-scissors (Kim, 2019). The underlying purpose of this art project, then, was to show the importance of historical context in understanding art, international relationships, and peace in the present day.

Recent increases in economic, military, diplomatic, and political tensions between the governments of the United States and China (Wong, 2019) first stimulated my interest in creating this visual arts unit I called The Forgotten History Hexagon Project. In addition, I wanted to see how my students might learn history in more meaningful ways through art. Many times I have heard them say that history is a boring subject because it merely focuses on rote memorization of facts. Yet, in art we offer a different way by which students can learn about difficult and controversial historical events and reflect on their relationship to current social issues (Marshall, 2019). Art enables students to interact with history, and even difficult historical topics, with greater interest. In fact, over the project's two-week period, I witnessed how motivated my students became when they were asked to use visual art research and creation to learn about and process their responses to harsh and controversial historical topics.

I designed The Forgotten History Hexagon Project for non-art majors at a mid-size Wisconsin university, most of whom were students in the College of Education. I noted that most of these students lacked the historical understandings that would provide a broader context for artworks, particularly in regard to Asian art and history, but I believed I could use the art itself as a vehicle for supplementing their knowledge (Desai et al., 2010). Because most people in the United States and other Western countries know little to nothing about China's Nanking Massacre and Taiwan's 228 Incident, I believed that my Forgotten History Hexagon unit could show how these catastrophic historical events, all of which occurred between 1932 and 1947, are still relevant to the relationships between China, Japan, and Taiwan today.

### The Forgotten History Hexagon Project

I designed The Forgotten History Hexagon Project for the course Art 203 - Concepts, Creations, and Children. The class was designed to teach various art techniques to non-art majors who intended to work with children in the future, mainly as teachers. To introduce the project, I identified two difficult and provocative historical events: the atrocities committed by the Japanese Imperial Army in Nanking, China, in 1938 and the Chinese Kuomintang (KMT) in Taiwan in 1947. I focused on these two particular events, known as the Nanking Massacre or Rape of Nanking, and the 228 Incident, respectively, to help the students realize how past history continues to affect people's lives, beliefs, cultures, and societies in the present. I chose a hexagon template for the project and artwork inspired by these two historical events as exemplars. I then asked each student

to choose two other significant historical events that they believed had been largely ignored or neglected for political, racial, social, ethnic, or religious reasons, which they could use to create their hexagons. I asked them to research their topics and create their hexagon art based on what they learned and their responses to it.

I structured The Forgotten History Hexagon Project around the use of 9 x 9-inch hexagon templates which the students would use to illustrate their forgotten historical events.<sup>1</sup> I used this size of hexagons as the primary tool for the project because my students shared with me that they had not participated in art classes since they were in the fifth grade. They were intimidated by the prospect of creating an artwork on a 12 x 18-inch piece of white construction paper due to its size. Once I explained that the paper would contain several hexagon templates, they realized they would be appropriate for accommodating the significant amount of content that would result from their research. In addition, I asked each student to meaningfully connect each of the templates he or she created. Importantly, in constructing their own hexagons the students were able to see how they might employ such a project in their own elementary classrooms one day.

### Introducing Two Artworks about Forgotten Historical Events

The hexagon project used two works of art—*The Rape of Nanking* (2005) (see Figure 1) and *The Horrifying Inspection* (1947)—to explore difficult historical events in the 20th-century history of China, Taiwan, and Japan. Although these two works refer to historical atrocities that are little known to many in the Western world, they nevertheless provide material that can broaden student understandings of current geopolitical relationships. In addition, they speak to universal issues in the past and present, i.e., issues of violence, injustice, and courage.

#### Figure 1

Li Hu, *The Rape of Nanking*, 2005. Mixed media. 208 inches long x 48 inches wide.



Note. Ningbo Museum of Art in Ningbo near Nanking, China. Courtesy of Li Hu

The first artwork I used in The Forgotten History Hexagon Project was *The Rape of Nanking* (see Figure 1), by Chinese American artist Li Hu (1950 – 2016). Hu was a University of Wisconsin Oshkosh Emeritus Art Professor who was born into a family of artists on September 16, 1950, in Shanghai, China. His artwork *The Rape of Nanking* was inspired by a book by Iris

<sup>1</sup> [Hexagonproject.org](http://Hexagonproject.org) is an excellent website that provides a variety of information, including various student hexagon works and resources for educators interested in conducting a hexagon art project.



Chang<sup>2</sup> (1997), *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*.

**Figure 2**  
*Enlarged and cropped middle section of The Rape of Nanking*



### ***The Rape of Nanking Artwork and The Historical Events Surrounding***

The attack on Nanking began on December 13, 1937, in the midst of the Second Sino-Japanese War, when the Japanese Imperial Army swept into the ancient port city of Nanking, China. Knowing the Japanese were approaching the then-capital city of Nanking, the ruling Kuomintang government of China took its elite military and fled without evacuating the city, essentially abandoning the defenseless civilians, poor farmers, and peasants who were left behind (Penny, 2008). In the ensuing six weeks, the Japanese army looted and burned the city, disarmed the remaining soldiers, and tortured and murdered more than 300,000 Chinese, both military and civilian. Moreover, the Japanese army raped between 20,000 and 80,000 Chinese women and girls of all ages (Chang, 1997). In creating *The Rape of Nanking*, Hu used evidence from the news media and the testimonies of survivors, including foreign missionaries and medical personnel who had witnessed and documented these events.

Figure 3 shows an enlarged section of *The Rape of Nanking* that portrays Chinese women and girls being raped by Japanese troops during the massacre. Some women were violated in front of their children and husbands, and one young woman was gang-raped 37 times by Japanese soldiers (Zhu, 2008). Japanese troops raped children, teens, elders, and pregnant women, and killed most victims afterwards (Chang, 1997; Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation, 2005). Using grey monotonous tones to depict the scene, Hu based the horrifically bestial images in the work on the eyewitness testimonies of survivors, including the written testimony and documentary evidence of an American priest living in Nanking at the time who had observed the atrocities (Li Hu, personal communication, April 14, 2014).

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<sup>2</sup> Iris Chang (1968 – 2004) was an American journalist and writer. Her parents emigrated from Taiwan to the United States. Her book, *The Rape of Nanking: The Forgotten Holocaust of World War II*, was motivated by her grandparents' story of escaping the Nanking Massacre. After publishing her book, Chang was threatened by many Japanese extreme right-wing group members. Moreover, her book drew virulent criticism from Japanese mass media and historians, possibly causing her serious depression, overuse of medication, and eventual suicide.



**Figure 3**

*Enlarged and cropped images of the right section of The Rape of Nanking*



Hu noticed that very few his students and friends in Wisconsin knew about the Nanking Massacre despite its historical importance. He wanted to educate them about the event and illustrate how imperialism and colonialism had ruined the lives of innocent people in China, just as it has in so many other places in the world. Like Chang, Hu had learned of the Nanking Massacre from his grandparents, who had told him horrifying stories<sup>3</sup> of the brutality. After the publication of *The Rape of Nanking* (1997), Hu decided to transform the accounts into a visual narrative. He traveled to the Memorial Hall of the Victims in the Nanking Massacre by Japanese Invaders ([www.19371213.com.cn/en/about/](http://www.19371213.com.cn/en/about/)) in order to investigate its extensive visual and written collections. The address of this website was intended to recognize the month (December), day (13), and year (1937) that the Nanking Massacre began, though people in China never forget this date.

In the course of his research, Hu learned that the Japanese soldiers who killed unarmed Chinese civilians and prisoners of war thought of them as dogs and pigs, not as humans. The Japanese troops used vicious techniques to kill the Chinese: burning or burying them alive, drilling them with bayonets, and conducting mass beatings in order to save ammunition (Chen & Hughes, 2019). To make matters worse, in the aftermath of the massacre, the Tokyo *Mainichi News of Japan* (now known as the *Mainichi News*) described the behavior of the Japanese Imperial Army as courageous. One article reported that two Japanese officers, Mukai Toshiaki and Noda Takeshi, had carried out a killing contest to see who could behead 100 Chinese in the shortest time (Chang, 1997; Munhwa Broadcasting Corporation, 2005). Later, in 1947, the Nanjing (Nanking) Tribunal convicted these soldiers of war crimes and sentenced them to death (Chang, 1997; Zhu 2008).

While conducting a lecture at a gallery, Hu compared Nazi Germany's killing of millions of Jews and others through executions, poison gas, and forced labor to the Japanese military's massacre of the people of Nanking through rape, plunder, fire, and other violent atrocities (Zhu, 2008). Hu noted that the two genocides share an important commonality—racism and ethnic superiority were at the core of each. Through hatred and dehumanization of others, Hu maintained,

<sup>3</sup> Li Hu, e-mail message to the author, April 14, 2014.

individual soldiers were able to justify the killing of innocent people. Like Hu, I conveyed the similarities between the Holocaust and Nanking Massacre to my students.

### *The Horrifying Inspection Artwork and The Historical Events Surrounding*

The second artwork I used in the Forgotten History Hexagon activity was a woodcut print, *The Horrifying Inspection* (see Figure 4), by Huang Rong-can [黃榮燦] (1920 – 1952). Huang, who was a professor in the Fine Arts Department at the National Taiwan Normal University, completed this woodcut piece based on oral accounts of the initial events that triggered Taiwan's 228 Incident in 1947 (Zhang, 2016).

#### **Figure 4**

*Huang Rong-can, 1947. The Horrifying Inspection by Huang Rong-can, 1947. Woodcut. Image credit: Wikipedia Commons*



*The Horrifying Inspection* was inspired by an atrocity in Taiwan that is often referred to as the 228 Incident. The event was preceded by the 1945 defeat of the Japanese in WWII, when the Allies took Taiwan away from the Japanese and turned it over to the Chinese Nationalist Party, the Kuomintang (KMT). In China, a civil war between the KMT, led by Chiang Kai-shek (1887 – 1975), and the Communist Party of China, led by Mao Zedong (1893 – 1976), was underway, but in Taiwan, it fell to the KMT to enforce new policies. Many Taiwanese were disgruntled by the discrimination and corruption of the KMT, as well as rampant food shortages and illegal seizures of property. The KMT government in Taiwan was sending natural and synthetic resources from Taiwan to mainland China, where Chinese Nationalist leader Chiang Kai-shek was directing KMT soldiers in a fight against the Chinese Communist Party (Everington, 2017).

On the evening of February 27, 1947, Chinese Tobacco Monopoly agents accosted 40-year-old widow Ling Jiang-mai, who was selling black-market cigarettes in downtown Taipei. The police took her goods and struck her in the head with a rifle butt, outraging witnesses and leading to widespread panic after an officer fired on the crowd and killed an innocent bystander, Chen Wen-shi (Hartnett, Dodge, & Keränen, 2019). An anti-government uprising ensued and was violently suppressed by the KMT government (Everington, 2017), which subsequently killed an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 Taiwanese. Some of Taiwan's most influential intellectuals and members of the elite were among those who perished or disappeared (Fleischauer, 2007).

At the time of the incident, Huang was running a bookstore at Taipei National University. He already had introduced the woodcut prints of Kathe Kollwitz (1867 – 1945) in Taiwan, curated many print exhibitions, and taught history and painting to students (Tsai & Chen, 2015) when he heard about the 228 Incident from a friend. In search of justice, he began collecting information from witnesses. Two months later, in April 1947, Huang completed *The Horrifying Inspection* woodcut based on these oral accounts, although he had to keep the work secret because the KMT did not want information about the event to travel outside of Taipei (Tsai & Chen, 2015). The woodcut piece is a rare visual representation of the 228 Incident from that time, depicting the seizure by the authorities of the widow who was selling untaxed cigarettes and the ensuing scuffle and shooting of a bystander by a bureaucrat (Zhang, 2016). Despite the efforts of the government to suppress it, Huang's woodcut print was rapidly disseminated throughout Taiwan and even published in the Shanghai-based *Wenhui Daily* newspaper two months after its completion (Zhang, 2016). Before long, the piece became an iconic symbol of the 228 Incident for the people of Taiwan (Tsai & Chen, 2015).

On December 1, 1951, Huang was arrested in the staffroom of the Teacher's College at Taiwan Normal University (Huang Rong-can, n.d.). He was accused of engaging in propaganda, treason, and spying for the Chinese Communists, and put in jail. The KMT alleged that one of his prints, *Orchid Island*, contained information used by the Communist Party when it was planning the landing of their troops in Taipei prior to the 228 Incident (Huang Rong-can, n.d.). Huang was accused of participating in a criminal artists organization and charged with "disseminating false culture and producing reactionary propaganda" (Chang, 2019, para. 34). He was executed at gunpoint in 1952 and is buried in the first section of the memorial park in Taipei (Huang Rong-can, n.d.).

Given the difficulty and danger of expressing political sentiments in their artworks, many artists left Taiwan after the death of Huang Rong-can, the first victim of the White Terror. In the context of Taiwan, the White Terror generally refers to the period of martial law that began after the 228 Incident in 1949 and lasted until 1987. During this time it was common for civilians to be tried in military courts on charges of civil unrest and foreign aggression. Individuals on both the left and the right were persecuted, and many cases based on fabricated charges and mistaken convictions occurred.

### **Creating the Forgotten History Hexagons**

In the next phase of The Forgotten History Hexagon Project I asked my students to divide into groups to help each other brainstorm possible topics for their projects. Each student chose two



possible topics for his or her research and hexagon creation. I provided worksheets to assist each student in researching their two choices, and suggested resources such as, *A People's History of the United States* (Zinn, 2015) and *The Untold History of the United States* (Stone, 2012). During the brainstorming session, I used the Nanking Massacre and the 228 Incident as examples of “forgotten” or little-known historical events. I suggested that the students use some aspect of these historical events for their project since they, like many in the United States, knew little to nothing about them.

When I introduced the Nanking Massacre to my students I compared it to the historical events in Nazi Germany surrounding Oskar Schindler, the subject of the film *Schindler's List* (Spielberg, 1994), based on my assumption that the European Holocaust would be more familiar to most American students than the atrocities in China and Taiwan. I compared Schindler to John Rabe, a German businessperson (who was, ironically, a Nazi party member) who was living in Nanking at the time of the massacre and saved thousands of Chinese civilians, just as Schindler had saved 1,200 Jews though he too was a member of the Nazi Party. To illustrate this history further, I showed the students a trailer for the eponymous film *John Rabe*<sup>4</sup> (Gallernberger, 2007).

After brainstorming in groups, the students shared their individual choices of historical topics for their art project. One student chose the sexual slavery of “comfort women” in Asia under the direction of Prince Yasuhiko Asaka<sup>5</sup> (1887 – 1981) of the Japanese Imperial Army. On her worksheet she wrote, “It was never heard of in my history classes and [is] still relevant today with all the sex trafficking.” Among the news articles she found were: “The History of ‘Comfort Women’: A WWII Tragedy We Can’t Forget” (Brooks, 2017), “Who are the ‘Comfort Women,’ and Why are U.S.-based Memorials for them Controversial?” (Constante, 2019), and “The Brutal History of Japan’s ‘Comfort Women’” (Blakmore, 2019). After making a few initial sketches for her project, this student added a QR code in one of her hexagons to provide a shortcut to relevant materials, such as a YouTube video or other news articles on her topic. The so-called ‘comfort women’ were essentially sex slaves for the Imperial Japanese Army during World War II. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comfort\\_women\\_](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Comfort_women_))

Figure 5 shows the student’s hexagons and images from her research. One shows the *Girl Statue of Peace*, located in front of the Japanese Embassy in Seoul, in the Republic of Korea. The statue depicts a Korean woman forced into sexual slavery by the Japanese army, which occupied Korea between 1938 and 1945 (Blackmore, 2019). The statue also symbolizes the women’s rights movement in Korea. Since 1992, any individuals have gathered in Seoul every Wednesday to protest the Japanese government’s lack of an official apology to the comfort women. Importantly,

<sup>4</sup> The *John Rabe* official movie trailer can be found at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FGNHWTZYhBA>

<sup>5</sup> Three key persons were closely related to the Rape of Nanking: Emperor Shōwa (1901 – 1989), General Prince Yasuhiko Asaka (1887 – 1981), and General Iwane Matsui (1878 – 1948). All violated the Geneva Convention regarding treatment of prisoners of war. Prince Yasuhiko Asaka was the chief commander, though he was not charged as a war criminal because he belonged to the Japanese royal family. There is a Japanese official imperial rectangular seal that represents approval for killing Chinese including unarmed civilians and prisoners of war. General Iwane Matsui (standing near the right edge in Figure 2) was the supreme commander of the attack of Nanking who, despite being aware of the savage acts, did nothing to prevent them from happening nor punish the culprits. Finally, the International Military Tribunal for the Far East judged, in its final verdict, that Iwane Matsui was the principal and chief culprit of the Nanking Massacre; he was sentenced to death by hanging (Zhu, 2008).

this student came to see the relationship between the Nanking Massacre and the Japanese Army's later sexual slavery of women. She wrote:

During the Nanking Massacre, the Japanese army raped thousands of Chinese girls and women. This event horrified the world. The Japanese King, Hirohito, made an order to develop the military sexual slavery system because he was worried about the bad reputation of his army.

The Japanese military purposefully exploited these “comfort women” in order to reduce the random rapes of local women, contain sexually transmitted diseases, and reward soldiers (Blackmore, 2019). Many of the women died from disease or murder by Japanese soldiers, and those who survived suffered a lifetime of shame and isolation, sterility, or ruined health, and often were not able to return to their homeland (Brooks, 2017). In her artist statement, the student who created this project wrote, “The Comfort Women can teach us that it is important to stand up for injustices because these women have been fighting for acknowledgement and apologies for what happened to them for decades” (Student A, personal communication, October 16, 2019).

### Figure 5

*Japanese Army Sexual Slavery Women hexagons, the Girl Statue for Peace in Seoul, South Korea, and the QR code. Image courtesy of the student and photo by Jaehan Bae with permission*



In another case, a student chose Agent Orange, a deoxyribonucleic acid chemical used during the Vietnam War, as the focus of her forgotten history (see Figure 6). Despite its known dangers, the pesticide Agent Orange was widely used to deforest tropical jungles during the Vietnam War (Nguyen & Hughes, 2017). Exposure to Agent Orange damages cells and caused a



variety of cancers, diseases, and birth defects among many Vietnamese and U.S. soldiers, as well as their families (Ornstein et al., 2016). During my art class, this student and I had a dialogue about our family members. She said that her grandfather was a Vietnam War veteran who suffered and died from lung cancer, most likely due to Agent Orange. I then shared my family story: my father-in-law served as a Marine and fought for the Republic of Korea during the Vietnam War. Like my student's grandfather, my father-in-law was a Vietnam veteran who developed cancer, in this case, kidney cancer, due to his exposure to Agent Orange, requiring the removal of one of his kidneys. Thus, the student's project gave us the opportunity to share past and present family experiences related to a part of history that is not well known—the use of Agent Orange during the Vietnam War.

### Figure 6

*Agent Orange hexagons and the QR code for a YouTube video on Agent Orange. Image courtesy of the student and photo by Jaehan Bae with permission*



The Forgotten History Hexagon Project enabled students to learn about forgotten historical events associated with personal, social, political, and racial issues in the United States and internationally, and to share their knowledge with others in the class. Many students re-imagined controversial issues related to the Vietnam War from a critical perspective, focusing on topics such as Agent Orange, Hmong Americans, the My Lai Massacre, and the Catonsville Nine. Some students dived into human rights and social justice events in United States history, such as the Lawrence Textile Strike, the Los Angeles Riots, McCarthyism, the Wounded Knee Massacre, or little-known history of other countries, such as Nazi Germany's White Rose group or Myanmar's Rohingya refugee crisis. No students chose to investigate any historical events that occurred in Japan, China, or Taiwan, perhaps because they knew little of the history of these countries or found other topics more personally meaningful. Nevertheless, I believe it was useful to incorporate the Nanking Massacre and the 228 Incident in the preparation for this project. The stories of these gruesome episodes illustrated how even major historical events may be forgotten or unknown, and they motivated students to want to discover more about the past. One Hmong American student (see Figure 7), for example, told the story of how her family escaped from Laos and landed in the United States. She described her discovery process:



Doing this project also made me realize that so many things that had happened in our history always go forgotten. The Hmong people immigrating to the U.S. period was never known in the U.S. There was never a great celebration, or it was hardly ever taught in class, so it was a topic that was easily forgotten. (Student C, personal communication, December 6, 2019)

As this student noted, history classes in the United States tend to focus on European American history (Lee, 2017) to the exclusion of other countries and cultures. In addition, as Sleeter (2005) argued, it is not uncommon for textbooks to contain ethnic distortions, stereotypes, omissions, and misinformation. The e-book in which this chapter appears represents a significant pedagogical resource for teachers wanting to educate their students about the forgotten histories of China and Taiwan and other countries, but in an innovative way—through art and culture.

### Figure 7

*The Hmong American Hexagons and the QR code for the Hmong Americans. Image courtesy of the student and photo by Jaehan Bae used with permission*



### Reflective Thoughts

I recognize that teaching harsh topics such as the Nanking Massacre and the 228 Incident may not be easy for teachers to do. I used a number of strategies to address the challenge of working with these difficult topics as part of the hexagon project. I created a positive and respectful class learning environment by encouraging my students to freely share their own opinions. At the same time, I made it clear that each of us would need to respect the opinions of others in both small group and whole class discussions. The goal, as I explained, was to allow each other to form positions on historical events based on evidence we gathered through close reading and discussion of news articles, archives, images, and artworks. In addition, I advised my students ahead of time about the violent and disturbing nature of the images and stories depicted in the artworks I would present, and I encouraged them to express their feelings about the images and only glance at them if they felt uneasy. Art and other instructors may wish to encourage students to look at social events and issues in the United States and abroad that concern more recent history. One salient example is the case of Kyle Rittenhouse, a 17-year-old white boy who killed two black men in August 2020 in Kenosha, Wisconsin during a protest demanding justice after a police

officer shot local resident Jacob Blake seven times in the back while his children watched from his car (Wise, 2020).

Increasingly, teachers will be called upon to address race-based discrimination and injustice and ethnic/white supremacy with their students, who are becoming ever more aware of its roots in U.S. history and its impact on our daily lives. They will be called on to lead their students in learning about local and global political, social, and value systems and conflicts. Such issues recur in time and space, leading to my strong belief that difficult historical events will always be a part of our lives and the stories of human beings. Indeed, teachers, like students, should not ignore or overlook challenging topics but rather appropriately address them in order to help their students learn and prevent their recurrence. I believe that teaching is sometimes emotional and takes courage. It calls on us to teach difficult historical topics without fear, because students must have such knowledge if they are going to be able to change our world and make it a better place for themselves and others. Using art to help students explore the complexity of historical events gives us a better chance of engaging and preparing them to become critical, participating adult citizens and reflective human beings (Mattson, 2010).

In this chapter I have explored two works of art and the artists who were inspired to create them. Each deals with an historical atrocity: China's Nanking Massacre (1937 – 1938) and Taiwan's 228 Incident (1947). Such strategically selected artworks allow students to see how historical events may be instructive in the present. I maintain that a sense of history helps us gain a wider context for understanding cultures, peoples, and societies in the present. More historical knowledge provides a wider context for the tolerance, social justice, and peace most of us seek.

In sharing my experience of the hexagon art lesson in my course for non-art major undergraduates in education, I hope to offer a simple means by which teachers can employ art to explore historical events and relationships. In my class, the students reported gaining knowledge about historical events they knew little of from their prior schooling. Further, because art is symbolic and indirect, it is quite useful for this purpose, because it helps students feel more comfortable exploring harsh and even distressing historical events.

It is my hope that readers will gain greater historical, political, and social awareness of China and Taiwan through their study of the two artworks I have presented in this chapter. As art teachers, we are obliged to support our students in learning about history. Only with such knowledge can societies correct wrongs and serve as role models for peaceful co-existence for the next generation. As a Chinese judge at a 1946 Tokyo trial stated, "I am not a revenge seeker. I do not intend to blame the atrocities committed by the Japanese imperialists on the Japanese people. However, I do believe that forgetting past suffering may result in future disaster" (Ma, 2015, para 2).

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## CHAPTER 13

### **Reinventing Tradition: Taiwanese Glove Puppetry Art**

Yiwen Wei  
Virginia Commonwealth University

#### **Abstract**

Taiwanese glove puppetry, also called hand puppetry, is a type of traditional Chinese folk art. As conventional puppetry has been losing its audiences to new forms of entertainment, many contemporary Taiwanese glove puppetry troupes are innovating ways to attract and retain audiences. They have embraced pop culture, visual culture, the latest technologies, and modern marketing strategies to rebrand the tradition. This chapter introduces the context and development of glove puppetry in Taiwan and its implications for art classes. The proposed art project encourages art teachers to employ cross-cultural pedagogies, draw examples from their context, and take Taiwanese puppetry as an example to address the collective effort in cherishing and reinventing a cultural tradition and heritage.

*Keywords:* Chinese folk art, Taiwanese glove puppetry, reinventing tradition, art for life

*It was a hot and humid summer night in Taiwan. My parents and I attended a vast temple festival in our agricultural village. Every family respectfully placed ample food and flowers on a round table to express their gratitude to the spirits. These countless tables lined up in what looked like infinite lines. As the loud music and lighting heated the festival, I noticed a huge crowd gathering around an elaborately decorated stage. My dad urged, "Let's watch the glove puppet show over there!" My mom chimed in and recalled, "When I was a little girl, I used to carry a stool and walk miles just to watch a glove puppet show." That was my first time hearing of glove puppets. —My memoir*

## Introduction

Chinese puppetry consists of five genres: rod, marionette, glove, wire, and shadow (Yeung, 2007). Glove puppetry is referred to as hand puppetry or palm puppetry because it is manipulated by a puppeteer's fingers inside a puppet. There are various styles of glove puppetry around the world, including the Bunraku in Japan, the *Punch and Judy Show* in England, and *Sesame Street* and *The Muppet Show* in the United States, to name a few. This chapter introduces the developments and innovations of Taiwanese glove puppetry and its implications for art classes. I will use the term "glove puppetry" throughout the chapter for consistency.

### The Context and Development of Glove Puppetry in Taiwan

Taiwanese glove puppetry is rooted in Chinese puppetry. The earliest record of Chinese glove puppetry dates back to the Southern Song period (1129 – 1138 AD) (Yeung, 2007). Traditional Chinese glove puppetry gained popularity around the seventeenth century in Fujian, a southern province of China. With the influx of Chinese immigrants from Fujian to Taiwan, puppeteers brought the heritage with them and passed it down through apprenticeships (Hsieh, 1991). Taiwanese apprentices have continued developing the legacy into various forms and styles. Their performances and storytelling echo the rhythm of life, customs, values, and beliefs in Taiwan (Yang, 2012).

Chinese glove puppetry profoundly influenced everyday folklife in the agrarian society of the past, serving spiritual and moral purposes. Chinese glove puppetry shows were initially intended to entertain and motivate appreciation for deities and spirits (see Figure 1). Through storytelling and performance, they often disseminated moralities and social order as a vital mediation between people's ordinary lives and their beliefs in supernatural powers. For example, good characters always win over evil characters, and those committing wrongdoing always experience consequences and punishment.

However, since the agrarian society shifted to an industrial one, traditional glove puppetry has faced challenges in preserving its heritage, such as a shortage of trainees, audiences, and funding (Yang, 1992). Increasing numbers of people have moved from rural areas to live and work in cities. My family was one of them. Living in a small business town in the late '80s, I rarely saw puppet shows. Occasionally, a small-scale, neon-painted, mobile glove puppet theatre popped up along the roadside or in front of a temple that was said to house the deity of the land. It was clear that very few people were standing watching the show, with its pre-recorded electronic music and dialogue playing loudly through old speakers.



**Figure 1**  
*Traditional Chinese Glove Puppet Characters*



*Note.* Traditional Chinese glove puppet characters resemble Chinese folk religion and mythology (left) and legends from classic literature (right). These puppets are the collections of Yunlin Palm Puppets Museum in Taiwan (photograph courtesy of Jeng-Chuan Chiu)

Fortunately, modern Taiwanese glove puppet troupes have responded to mass audiences' tastes by incorporating contemporary music, lights, and exquisite lifelike props into their performances. They are committed to reviving the tradition in order to attract younger generations. For example, the Shinerogy Puppet Show Troupe, founded in Taichung, Taiwan, has innovatively integrated laser lights, digital screen panels, and bilingual subtitles in their stage to attract and retain audiences (Welcome Yunlin, 2020).

In addition, the company Pili International Media is known for their enlarged glove puppets (see Figure 2). While many standard features remain, the enlarged Taiwanese glove puppets allow puppeteers to mimic detailed body movements and facial expressions. For example, a puppeteer can manipulate an enlarged puppet to blink its eyes or open its mouth through mechanical controls (Trending Taiwan, 2019). Furthermore, the troupe has expanded its puppet repertoires by integrating martial art and fantasy into their storylines. Together, they have turned traditional Chinese glove puppetry from a sacred medium for religious ceremonies into an elaborate performing art (Chen, 2020; Silvio, 2019). These new troupes disseminate and promote traditional glove puppetry's legacy through live performances at international puppetry festivals and online streaming. They also produce an astounding range of creative merchandise, such as life-sized reproductions of puppets, toys, magazines, and office supplies, to attract new domestic and international audiences.

**Figure 2**  
*New Forms of Taiwanese Glove Puppets*



*Note.* The contemporary Taiwanese glove puppets created by Pili International Multimedia are larger, with detailed mechanical designs and beautiful lifelike props. Their facial features, costumes, and even dialogue are now very different from traditional styles and norms. These puppets were exhibited in the Pier-2 Art Center, Kaohsiung, Taiwan (photograph courtesy of Jeng-Chuan Chiu).

### **Appreciation for Taiwanese Glove Puppetry**

#### **Character Design**

There are six typical character roles in traditional Chinese puppetry: Sheng [生] (the male role), Dan [旦] (the female role), Jing [淨] (a character with a painted face and vivid personality), Mo [末] (an elder male), Chou [丑] (a clown), and Za [雜] (a monster) (Discover Taipei, 2013; Tu, 2004). Each character's facial expressions, makeup, costumes, props, and gestures expressively represent their traits (see Figure 3). For example, Sheng's delicate facial features and elegant clothing indicate that he is a decent young male scholar. Jing's bold, painted face shows his personality as a confident and courageous warrior who can take risks. In a traditional glove puppetry show, such archetypal designs and attributes were crucial because they allowed audiences to quickly identify each puppet's role in a plot. As their scope and complexity have grown, modern glove puppetry characters have developed diverse personalities.



**Figure 3**  
*Six Typical Roles in Traditional Puppetry*



*Note.* The upper row of photos from left to right are Sheng [生], Dan [旦], and Jing [淨]; the lower row of photos from left to right are Mo [末], Chou [丑], and Za [雜] (photograph courtesy of Jeng-Chuan Chiu).

Crafting a puppet's head and embroidering costumes is time-consuming (The Overseas Community Affairs Council, 2016). Traditionally, a glove puppet's head, palms, and feet were made of wood. A master puppeteer would carefully carve a woodblock into a hollow human-head shape before refining and polishing it. The embroidered costumes and exquisite props are usually made of cloth and silk and decorated with colorful tassels, beads, pearls, and feathers. The fine craftsmanship involved in Chinese glove puppetry often fascinates audiences (Hsieh, 1991). Now that puppet shows are often filmed and digitally recorded; many puppet artists are more attentive to the details of facial features and costumes to ensure the most effective presentation in close-up scenes (Chen, 2020).

When teaching glove puppetry art, I guided my students to observe and compare different puppets' distinctive appearances and aesthetic features. To expand the project, teachers can include glove puppetry from different cultures and introduce their distinct contexts, characteristics, and functions, such as the innovative puppet design for broadcasts on television. For example, the famous American puppet shows *Sesame Street* and *The Muppet Show* were broadcast on television



to educate children and entertain families (Sickler-Voigt, 2020). These shows enjoyed a good reputation and popularity worldwide. The puppeteer Jim Henson created numerous imaginative and animal-like puppet characters, different from the Taiwanese adult-like glove puppets. Teachers can encourage students to design puppet characters with unique facial traits to indicate their puppets' personalities and status.

### **Teamwork**

Chinese puppetry requires thoughtful coordination between team members, such as in timing and switching positions. In general, a traditional Chinese puppet troupe consists of six members: a puppet master, an assistant to the puppet master, and four instrumentalists (Yang, 1992). A master puppeteer is the soul of a puppet troupe and usually wears multiple hats as director, scriptwriter, performer, and vocal narrator. With an assistant's help, a master puppeteer can switch puppets readily throughout a performance. The responsibility of the orchestra is to complement the scene and narratives impromptu. However, a smaller-scale puppet troupe often eliminates the orchestra and plays prerecorded music and dialogue tapes throughout the show. A larger troupe may retain the orchestra and create their own music.

To facilitate script writing and performing processes, I assigned each student to a defined role in a group, such as director, puppeteer, narrator, instrumentalist, or prop assistant. The students learned to discuss their responsibilities on the team and collaborate with each other on their performance. For example, if a student is a good narrator, they can help to tell the story and create smooth transitions. If a student is good at rhythm, they can play music during the performance. If a student is a good facilitator, they can help to pass props or coordinate the teamwork.

Overall, my students enjoyed the collaboration and performing processes. Sometimes they collided with each other when switching their positions behind the scenes, and everyone burst out laughing. Most importantly, they knew that everyone was important because everyone contributed to a successful performance.

### **Performing Art**

Chinese glove puppetry encompasses visual art, performing art, music, classic literature, and folklore (Bohme, 1971). The narratives of a puppet show often consist of a series of dialogues and songs in local dialects. A skilled puppeteer can even alter their voice to express the varying ages, genders, and emotions among different roles. In traditional Chinese glove puppetry shows, there was a preference for folk legends, heroic stories, and romances, while modern Taiwanese glove puppetry looks to fantasy for inspiration. A puppeteer brings puppets to life by dexterously manipulating their movements and gestures. To operate a puppet, the puppeteer puts their forefinger into the hollow center of the puppet's head, with the thumb controlling the puppet's one hand and the other three fingers holding the puppet's other hand. Hence, the puppeteer can control a puppet to open a fan, pour water into a teacup, or sit on a chair. Puppet stage design has gone through a dramatic evolution as well. In contrast to the traditional exquisite wood-carved stages, modern stages are made of panels with digital LED lights and screens (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4**  
*Glove Puppet Stages*



*Note.* The photo on the left is of a traditional, delicate wood-carved glove puppet stage (photograph courtesy of Jeng-Chuan Chiu). The image on the right is one example of modern settings (photograph courtesy of Chiung-Hsieh Chiou)

Teachers can integrate literature, social study, or music learning into a glove puppetry project. I used to have my students create a short story relating to their Chinese literature study for the puppetry performance. Because of glove puppetry's interdisciplinary nature, art teachers can collaborate with teachers of other school subjects, such as literature, music, and technology, to create a compressive and holistic curriculum. Teachers may encourage students to utilize puppetry as a medium to address contemporary social issues, such as human relationships in a digital world or environmental issues. Art teachers can also encourage students to integrate their music preferences into performing.

### **Conceptual Framework of Art Instruction**

Learning about art and culture that differ from our own enhances cultural exchange, appreciation, and mutual respect (Delacruz, 2012; Han, 2019). Art teachers can nurture students' visual literacy and creativity by comparing different expressions based on a common theme (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005; Sowell, 2016). Rather than simply duplicating an art form, art teachers can guide students to explore universal human needs and meanings. Ultimately, the goal is to empower students to create their own works and make their own choices instead of reproducing teachers' pre-designed, homogenized, one-size-fits-all final products. This chapter encourages art teachers to draw examples from their context and use Taiwanese puppetry as an example to address the collective effort to cherish and re-invent a cultural tradition and heritage.

### **Art for Life**

Art education evolves as society changes (Stankiewicz, 2000). Many art educators once emphasized children's innate creativity in opposition to adult interventions (Lowenfeld & Brittain, 1987). Then, scholars advocated for an academic art curriculum encompassing studio art, art



history, art criticism, and aesthetics (Eisner, 2002; Greer, 1984). Building upon their predecessors' contributions, Anderson and Milbrandt (2005) proposed that art is rooted in its particular context, and art education should make authentic and meaningful connections to students' daily lives. Through a thematic approach to art education, this fundamental concept and belief underlying the instructional design of art education aims to cultivate students' intellectual, physical, socio-emotional, and artistic abilities. While teaching art and culture that differ from our own contributes to students' understanding of societal formations, customs, and values in various contexts, Han (2019) has acknowledged that introducing art and cultures different from our own adds another layer of complexity and concern regarding cultural appropriation and appreciation. It is therefore crucial to learn how human beings resonate through art despite different languages and cultures. Thus, a cross-cultural curriculum takes into consideration the content, context, and meanings of art.

### **Thematic Approach**

The thematic approach to art education intends to connect the arts with the students' life experiences through a big idea or a universal theme (Anderson & Milbrandt, 2005). Such an approach encourages students to explore their personal relationships with their surroundings. As suggested in this chapter, designing a cross-cultural art project with a big idea helps students understand how humans respond to a common theme or issue through art in various ways (Han, 2019; Sowell, 2016). The main idea or theme of this puppetry art project is "reinventing tradition." In particular, artists create their works by building upon tradition as well as opposing conventional approaches. Similarly, this Taiwanese puppetry art project encourages students to join the collaborative effort in creating and reinventing glove puppetry by incorporating creative ideas, new materials, and innovative technologies. I particularly agree with the definition provided by Ross Douthat, an opinion columnist for *The New York Times*, as follows:

[Reinventing a tradition] treats the element of invention in cultural traditionalism as a necessary way to bridge the gulf of years and keep the past alive. To invent or reinvent a tradition, in this sense, is not to craft a falsehood; it is to add your own bit of labor to a larger inheritance, which your heirs may renew and reinvent in their own turn. (Douthat, 2019)

His statement raises the vital point of reviving cultural heritage by embracing the past in the present to create the future. As glove puppetry has a long-developed history in various countries and cultural contexts, many children may have played with glove puppets or watched puppet shows when they were small. Therefore, art teachers can connect Taiwanese glove puppetry to students' experiences with puppets in other regions. By presenting the novelty and innovation of Taiwanese puppetry over time, teachers can highlight the big idea and instruct students in reinventing tradition through a collective and unconventional effort.

### **Taiwanese Glove Puppetry Art Project**

My puppetry art project focused on puppet character design and performance. Besides a series of lesson plans and detailed instructions, I included worksheets and assessment strategies in the appendices as supplementary resources. These resources provide art teachers with ideas and



procedures to create a cross-cultural unit by integrating various glove puppetry styles into art lessons. Art teachers can also refer to Crystal Hui-Shu Yang's (2012) article for further inspiration. Additionally, Sickler-Voigt (2020) integrated textile design with puppet productions and performances.

### **National Core Arts Standards**

This project is recommended for fifth graders and above due to the required sewing techniques and sculpting skills needed. While the project adapts the National Core Arts Standards guidelines, art teachers may also include each state and local government's standards and requirements. The following are the individual standards used in the art project for fifth graders (State Education Agency, 2014):

- **Creating:**
  - Cr 1.1.5: Combine ideas to generate an innovative idea for art-making.
  - Cr 2.1.5: Experiment and develop skills in multiple art-making techniques and approaches through practice.
  - Cr 2.2.5: Demonstrate quality craftsmanship through care for and use of materials, tools, and equipment.
- **Responding:**
  - Re 7.2.5: Identify and analyze cultural associations suggested by visual imagery.
  - Re 8.1.5: Interpret art by analyzing characteristics of form and structure, contextual information, subject matter, visual elements, and use of media to identify ideas and mood conveyed.
  - Re 9.1.5: Recognize differences in criteria used to evaluate works of art depending on styles, genres, and media as well as historical and cultural contexts.
- **Connecting:**
  - Cn10.1.5: Apply formal and conceptual vocabularies of art and design to view surroundings in new ways through art-making.

### **Project Objectives**

The objectives outline students' cognitive, artistic, and social-emotional qualities after engaging in this project. Throughout the project, the students will be able to perform the following tasks:

- Describe the features and functions of Taiwanese glove puppetry from historical and societal perspectives
- Compare and contrast the qualities of glove puppetry from different cultures
- Brainstorm innovative ideas of puppet character design
- Integrate literature skills with script-writing and performance
- Participate in teamwork and build communication and collaboration skills

### Instruction and Pedagogy

This project requires a series of eight 40-minute sessions. I will comprehensively describe the instructional procedures and pedagogical implications of each lesson. The image below illustrates the entire process of making a glove puppet from scratch (see Figure 5).

**Figure 5**

*The Instructional Procedures for Glove Puppet Making (image courtesy of the author)*



### ***Day One: Introducing Taiwanese Puppetry***

Teachers can ask students to share their experiences with glove puppetry as a way to connect them to the project. If students have never seen glove puppets before, the teachers can ask them to share their doll play experiences. After this warm-up activity, teachers will introduce the historical context and craftsmanship of traditional Chinese puppetry by playing the video clip *Traditional Glove Puppetry (Budaixi)* (The Overseas Community Affairs Council, 2016).<sup>1</sup> This video, spoken in English with English subtitles, is excellent introductory material. After watching the video, the teachers will ask students to share their observations of the Chinese glove puppets' characters compared to those they have seen before. At this point, the teachers can introduce the six primary Chinese glove puppetry characters, including Sheng [生], Dan [旦], Jing [淨], Mo [末], Chou [丑], and Za [雜] (Discover Taipei, 2013; Tu, 2004).

To emphasize the concept of reinventing tradition, the teachers will then play a short clip of an animated Chinese puppetry music video, *Chai* [拆] (Chang and Lee, 2016).<sup>2</sup> The video's story is about a corrupt government demolishing residents' houses without their permission. In this video, the artists use glove puppetry to address social justice issues. After a short discussion of the video clip, the teachers will show other innovative puppetry from Pili International Multimedia,<sup>3</sup> the Shinergy Puppet Show,<sup>4</sup> and the Puppetry Art Center of Taipei<sup>5</sup> to the students for inspiration.

After watching the preceding examples, I had students identify the similarities and differences between the traditional and novel forms of Chinese and Taiwanese glove puppetry. I also discussed with the class the innovative ideas and technologies that these artists adapted into their creations. For instance, Chang and Lee (2016) employed traditional Chinese glove puppetry to address a contemporary issue in their animated music video. The Shinergy Puppet Show designed their stage with panels with digital LED lights and screens to show captions, unlike a traditional exquisitely wood-carved stage. As the scope and complexity of the puppet stories have grown, for example, the Pili International Multimedia has created characters with diverse personalities and enlarged the puppets for close-up video taking. Through the discussion, I reiterated the fundamental idea of *reinventing tradition*, leading to the subsequent phrases of creating a novel glove puppet character. Teachers can ask each student to choose a role from the six essential Chinese glove puppet characters (see Appendix A) or simply invent a unique one.

### ***Day Two: Cross-Cultural Comparison and Character Design***

Teachers will show various types of glove puppetry art from different contexts worldwide and ask the students to compare them with Taiwanese glove puppetry. For example, I presented the images and videos of the Bunraku, the *Punch and Judy* Show, and *Sesame Street* as examples of glove puppetry from different cultures. Then, I briefly introduced their context and development,

<sup>1</sup> The video of *Traditional Glove Puppetry (Budaixi)*: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7QLUTXU8oEo>

<sup>2</sup> The video of *Chai* [拆]: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NGVxKxm-hmw>

<sup>3</sup> The website of Pili International Multimedia: <https://home.pili.com.tw/english/>

<sup>4</sup> The website of the Shinergy Puppet Show: <http://www.shinergypuppetshow.com/>

<sup>5</sup> The website of the Puppetry Art Center of Taipei: <https://www.pact.taipei/include/N1.html>



focusing on their adaptation and adjustment to society and new technologies. Again, this process emphasizes the big idea and prompts students to brainstorm ideas for their puppet character designs, including hairstyles, accessories, and clothing. After brainstorming and discussing the students' chosen puppet characters, the teachers will demonstrate how to shape a puppet's head using air-drying clay on a clean eggshell (or other materials molded into a head shape with a hollow center). Next, each student will create their puppet's facial features using air-drying clay to express its characteristics. For example, a student may add a pair of sharp horns and eccentric eyes to a monster character or make a tiny pair of glasses and a computer tablet as props for a young scholar character. Finally, the clay needs to air dry before the next step of decorating the puppet.

### ***Day Three: Character Design***

Some students may begin coloring their puppet heads in this class, while some may continue shaping them. Besides yarn, plastic pearls, crystal beads, and thread, students can decorate the puppet heads with ordinary objects and materials, such as ribbons, candy wrappers, or stickers.

### ***Day Four and Day Five: Costume Design***

Once students complete their puppet heads, they can move on to designing costumes for them. The required materials are two pieces of pre-cut cloth, fabric, needles, thread, and other decorative materials. Teachers will demonstrate sewing and embroidery techniques and show students how to attach a costume to their puppet heads using hot glue. Being creative is always the rule of thumb.

### ***Day Six: Script-Writing***

Storytelling, performance, and teamwork are essential elements of Chinese and Taiwanese glove puppetry. Integrating literature and language learning, teachers can impart script-writing and storytelling skills. They can divide students into groups and assign a designated role to each student, such as director, narrator, actor, or music technician. Then, they provide the students with a four-framed story structure to generate ideas collaboratively (see Appendix B). For example, a group of my students created a story in which people worked together to defeat a monster's attack. Another group developed a romance in which two lovers tried to overcome obstacles to their marriage. Furthermore, teachers can encourage their students to create a song or rhythm for their puppet performance.

### ***Day Seven: Storytelling and Performance Practice***

*The teachers will set up a simple puppet stage using an adjustable clothing rack covered with a cloth or bedsheet. In this class, the students can continue developing their stories or practicing their plots. As an alternative project, they can create a stop-motion video of a puppet's movement. This extended project will allow the students to integrate new technologies into puppet performance and production. The teachers can inform them of the assessment procedures and award titles for their group performance in this class.*

### ***Day Eight: Glove Puppetry Show and Art Assessment***

Teachers will conduct an assessment on the last day of the project. Assessment is an integral and essential part of art instruction, consisting of formative and summative evaluation (Beattie, 1997). As art appreciation is subjective, using various assessment strategies to gather perspectives, feedback, and information benefits both teachers and students. This project's formative assessment strategies include observation, questioning strategies, group discussions, and worksheets (see Appendices A & B). The summative assessment strategies include performance activities and the rubrics shown on the self-assessment form (see Appendix C).

Assessment is an integral part of my entire teaching process. I made good use of the last day of a unit and designed activities that helped my students to appreciate, assess, and evaluate their works as well as their classmates'. I usually instructed and encouraged my students to address each group's strengths and to give positive feedback. The assessing process was fun and relaxing because the environment is friendly and supportive. For example, after my students performed their puppetry stories, I asked them to vote for each group based on the designated quality in accordance with the award titles, such as the most creative, the most delicate, the most comical, or the most collaborative team. The purpose of the voting activity is to emphasize the strength of each group instead of promoting competition.

In addition, I asked my students to fill out the self-assessment form (see Appendix C). This form helps them to reflect on their art-making efforts, knowledge, performance, and collaboration with their peers. If time allowed, I often invited students to share their works or share their peer's work that they liked the most. Before their sharing, most importantly, I instructed my students on how to provide positive and constructive feedback to their classmates. To conclude the project, teachers and students should revisit the essential idea of glove puppetry and discuss their innovative ideas.

### **Examples of Student Works**

As a form of folk art and craft in Taiwan, my Taiwanese students were familiar with glove puppetry. Their immediate responses and understanding of the content evidenced their prior experiences with traditional and contemporary puppet plays. In addition to their prior knowledge, my students brought their family histories and pop cultural experiences into their puppet design. For example, one student's puppet dressed in a mixed Chinese- and Korean-style garment, which reflected his previous experiences of living in Korea (see the middle image in the upper row of Figure 6). Another student integrated animation and computer games into creating a warrior (see the upper-left image in Figure 6). Another student, inspired by the classic Chinese novel *Journey to the West*, designed his puppet to resemble Sha Wujing, who helps the monk Tang Sanzang obtain sacred Buddhist texts (see the lower-left image in Figure 6). In addition to the tiny toys they found at home, the students creatively used candy wrapping paper, colorful ribbons, and beads for decoration. The following images showcase the puppets made by my Taiwanese students when they were in the fifth grade (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6**  
*Fifth-Grade Taiwanese Students' Works (photograph courtesy of the author)*



### Conclusion and Recommendation

This art project inspired by Taiwanese glove puppetry highlighted the major idea of reinventing tradition as a vantage point of teaching puppetry art and its innovative development. As discussed in the *Appreciation for Taiwanese Glove Puppetry* section, I emphasized the three essential principles throughout the glove puppetry art project: character design, teamwork, and performing art. I first instructed my students to shape their puppets' facial features and design their costumes using various materials and found objects. I then integrated literature study and scriptwriting into the learning process. Finally, my students learned to collaborate with their teammates and work together to create their puppetry shows.

This chapter has provided resources and pedagogies to help art teachers establish a meaningful connection to students' life experiences through a thematic approach to art education.



Teachers can also deepen this project by incorporating new technologies such as filmmaking, stop-motion, and coding into puppetry shows. Furthermore, teachers can integrate other forms of glove puppetry from different cultures into the lesson plans and encourage students to reinvent the art form and broaden the topics of glove puppetry performance.

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## Appendix A

### Your Glove Puppet Character

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Class Code: \_\_\_\_\_

1. Please draw lines to match the puppets with their roles.



Za [雜] (Monster)	Chou [丑] (Clown)	Dan [旦] (Female role)	Sheng [生] (Male role)	Jing [淨] (Painted face)	Mo [末] (Elder male)
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2. Please answer the following questions:

What is the role and what are the characteristics of your puppet? (Write at least five keywords or a short description about your puppet's features)

What are the new and creative ideas you used in your puppet character design?

## Appendix B

### Four-Framed Story Structure

#### Developing A Story for Your Puppet Show

- What is the story? (Write a short description)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- The Structure and Script of the Story:

Structure	Description	Script
Context (Introduction)		
Something Happens (Following the previous introduction)		
The Conflict		
Resolution/Ending		

## Appendix C

### Self-assessment Form

**My Name:** \_\_\_\_\_ **Class Code:** \_\_\_\_\_

Please assess your learning by circling the number below:

<b>Learning Objectives</b>	<i>Excellent</i>	<i>Satisfactory</i>	<i>Needs Work</i>
I can describe the context and innovations of Taiwanese glove puppetry art.	3	2	1
I can recognize the similarities and differences between the forms and meanings of glove puppetry arts from different cultures.	3	2	1
I incorporated modern elements and techniques to create my puppet character.	3	2	1
I brainstormed with my group members in developing a story.	3	2	1
I participated and helped others with performance.	3	2	1

1. What were the difficulties you experienced when making your puppet? How did you solve the problem? (Write a short description)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. What does the big idea of “reinventing tradition” mean to you? (Write a short description)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
3. Which group’s puppet performance did you like the most? Why? (Give at least one reason)





## CHAPTER 14

### **Teaching Chinese Papercutting: Lessons on Contemporary Artists and Cultural Connections**

EunJung Chang  
Francis Marion University

#### **Abstract**

Chinese art has great potential for engaging students and expanding their understanding of multicultural art education in this age of globalization. This chapter investigates not only the origin and history of traditional Chinese papercutting but also the variations and techniques of contemporary papercutting by Chinese artists Qiao Xiaoguang [喬曉光] and Xin Song [宋昕]. It suggests that Chinese papercutting can be used as a cross-cultural resource to enhance secondary students' understanding of Chinese folk art and culture. This chapter also explores two practical lessons that are effective in integrating Chinese culture and tradition into the contemporary classroom for American secondary school students.<sup>1</sup>

*Keywords:* Chinese papercutting, Chinese folk art, contemporary artists, Qiao Xiaoguang, Xin Song, cultural connections, globalization

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<sup>1</sup> I would like to thank my former students Ms. Mary McKnight at Hartsville High School and Ms. Faith Graham at Walterboro Elementary School for sharing their practical lessons.

Chinese art has great potential for engaging students and expanding their understanding of multicultural art education in this age of globalization. A culturally inclusive art curriculum is responsive to all students living in an ethnically diverse society (Chung, 2012). Chinese art can be potentially empowering for students to recognize and appreciate different cultural traditions and values and allows them to acknowledge their own cultural identities and significance. This chapter investigates not only the origin and history of traditional Chinese papercutting but also the variations and techniques of this art by Chinese artists Qiao Xiaoguang and Xin Song. One of the main goals of the chapter is to offer exemplary lesson ideas on Chinese papercutting in American classrooms as inspired by these contemporary artists.

### **Chinese Culture, Folk Art, and Papercutting**

Chinese papercutting, *jianzhi*, is one of the oldest and the most popular folk arts in China. It is a traditional art that originated in China around the 6<sup>th</sup> century from the ancient worship of ancestors and gods. Archeological evidence suggests that it began as early as the Northern dynasties, 386 to 581 AD (Wu, 2014), before paper was invented, by Cai Lun in the Eastern Han dynasty (25 – 220 AD). Subsequently, other raw and relatively thin materials such as silver foils, leaves, and even leathers were used for papercutting.

Chinese folk art has the unique feature of deriving from ordinary people and offers a great lens through which to view and learn about the cultures of local communities. Li (2019) addressed the characteristics of Chinese folk art as “useful, being made according to traditional methods, with readily available natural materials, and often make use of simple techniques in production” (p. 46). Because folk artists can present traditional cultural legends to viewers, folk art can promote human communication and prompt emotional connections in contemporary viewers (Li, 2019).

Due to the large geographical region of China, Chinese folk art is extremely diverse between provinces, cities, and even towns. However, Chinese papercutting can be divided into southern and northern styles. The southern style features imaginative and beautiful patterns, delicate carvings, and interesting shapes, while the northern style features vigorous and diverse patterns, vivid depictions, and exaggerated shapes (Yang, 2012).

Usually, the designs are cut out of red paper with scissors and pasted as decoration on wood-framed windows made of rice paper. Red papers are standard, as red is associated with luck and happiness in Chinese culture (see Figure 1). However, other colors are also used. Chinese people glue the papercuts to the exteriors of windows, so that light shines through the negative space of the cutouts. In other words, Chinese papercutting is mostly used for decorative purposes to adorn walls, columns, lamps, windows, and doors; for that reason, it is commonly known as *chuang hua*, which means ‘window flowers’ or ‘window papercuts’ (Chinese papercutting, 2021).

**Figure 1**  
*Traditional red papercut signifying “double happiness”*



Symbolism and Chinese characters are used to capture a wide range of themes in papercutting. Most papercutting images contain symbols such as snakes for warding off noxious influences, brooms for stopping excessive rain, and lotus flowers for fulfilling wishes for honor and wealth (Wu, 2014). The most popular characters in Chinese papercutting are “福” (lucky) and “囍” (double happiness). Chinese people love to hang papercuts of these two characters, specifically on special occasions, such as festivals, weddings, childbirths, and the Chinese New Year. For example, “福” is used to indicate people’s wishes for a lucky year during the Chinese New Year festivals, while “囍” can be seen in windows displayed for newlyweds. Later, the uses of Chinese papercutting expanded and began to be used for delivering political messages, revolutionary ideas, and the people’s support; they were therefore mass-produced in newspapers, stories, greeting cards, and even children’s movies under the control of the People’s Republic of China government (Wu, 2014; Yang, 2012).

Chinese papercutting techniques were usually passed down from mothers to daughters for many years (UNESCO, 2019); hence, papercutting was almost exclusively treated as a simple, time-honored traditional practice and a domestic feminine craft. Since the 1980s, however, papercuts have become the subject of folk culture studies not only as a kind of handicraft but also as a piece of artwork done by other genders (Wu, 2014). Today papercutting is considered a work of art with an increasing trend toward using larger papers rather than standard folding ones. They are mostly characterized by elaborate designs and artistic use of negative space. They include symmetrical designs that are usually created by someone folding over a proportional crease in a piece of paper and then cutting a shape. There are two methods: one uses scissors and the other uses knives. Several pieces of paper (up to eight) are fastened together for scissor cutting, while several layers of papers can be held vertically in knife cuttings (Yang, 2012). The ability to create dynamic works with negative and positive space is now being used by contemporary artists to transform these traditionally adorned pieces into more modern works with the ability to engage more complex, socially based modern issues. Contemporary papercutting has therefore developed



into an entirely new art form that has transformed into exotic, sophisticated, and even three-dimensional designs.

Contemporary artists also combine papercutting with other media and materials such as paint techniques, multi-media installations, or light boxes to create different visual effects. However, the images of the papercuts are still connected to the cultures, lives, language, and longings of the people in China (UNESCO, 2019; Wu, 2014). Contemporary artists are revitalizing this folk art, making it relevant to current society, and engaging viewers in modern culture. Contemporary artists, like Qiao Xiaoguang and Xin Song, have taken this skill and brought it to the forefront of the art world, creating an intersection of traditional techniques and modern themes as well as highlighting the significance of teaching heritage-based art forms in contemporary classrooms.

### **Qiao Xiaoguang (b.1957, Hebei)**

Qiao Xiaoguang is one of the leading papercutting artists who maintains Chinese heritage and folk-art disciplines (Wang, 2017). Qiao has devoted his life to restoring and preserving Chinese papercutting practices. During his college years, he became interested in the folk art of minority cultures and various belief systems in ancient Chinese art, such as Traces of Daoism, local gods, and local symbols. He has spent time with “28 of the 57 ethnic minorities in China” studying the various kinds of content and color the Chinese use in papercutting (Vitali & Qiu, 2015, para. 7). Minority cultures mostly cut using red or white paper with hope for good health and prosperity, but Qiao cuts in black because he believes that papercutting is like ink paintings (Cafa Art Info, 2013). In other words, papercutting is all about positive and negative spaces, which is also significant to the ink painting tradition – What is painted and what is left black. Similarly, the challenge of papercutting is in maintaining a good balance between what is cut and what is left intact. Qiao has used traditional techniques, but his works are also socially relatable and engaging with communities.

**Figure 2**  
*Fifteen panels of City Windows (2014)*



*City Windows* is a large installation piece created by Qiao in 2014 (see Figure 2) attempting to bridge the gap of time and culture between America and Asia, especially between Chicago and Beijing. Qiao believed that these two cities have much in common and began wondering how he



could promote the relationship between contemporary Chicago and burgeoning Beijing. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Chicago was the fastest growing city in the world, and he felt there were lessons to be learned for Chinese cities that are today the fastest growing ones in the world with huge challenges. According to Vitali and Qiu (2015), Chicago has very deep connections with China, and a very strong friendship with Beijing and China. For instance, Chicago's public schools teach more Chinese than any other school system in the United States.

This *City Windows*'s installation consists of fifteen panels, which were originally cut from paper, following the traditional style of papercutting but were then printed on vinyl films with an adhesive side and put on glass panels to make a better fit for display in Chicago's O'Hare International Airport (see Figure 3). This piece depicts significant and notable locations in Beijing and Chicago, both highly populated and industrial cities. Seven panels include imagery of Chicago such as the Wrigley Building, the Navy Pier, and Willis Tower. Seven panels depict Beijing monuments such as the Forbidden City and The Bird's Nest from the 2008 Olympics. A middle panel depicts images of the two cities merged (Karydes, 2015). It demonstrates the contemporary world by using intricate cuts and designs just as Chinese women did centuries ago, but this work opens a window into two modern cities, both highly representative of modern technology and social advancement. The focus on negative and positive space, as seen in these panels, is a recurring theme in most of Chinese culture, especially through calligraphy, the yin-yang symbolism, and Chinese papercutting.

**Figure 3**  
*City Windows at the Chicago O'Hare international airport*



### **Lesson Inspired by Qiao Xiaoguang**

Chinese papercutting can be an inclusive medium for multicultural education and a beneficial practice for students in the art classroom. This lesson was targeted at secondary students



because of its conceptual themes (see Figure 4). It consisted of three 90-minute sessions: 1) studying Chinese culture, folk art, and papercutting; 2) responding to the works of Qiao Xiaoguang; and 3) creating their own papercuts reflecting certain contemporary issues. The goal of this lesson was to integrate a traditional Chinese papercutting technique with a contemporary American classroom setting and make it more relatable to current American students. It was believed that the American students could connect with the idea that Qiao expressed Chinese culture and heritage through his work. The objectives of this lesson were: 1) to allow the students to create images of their modern life in a tactile process and 2) to give them the ability to represent their individual ideas of the world around them in a physical design. Having students create a traditional Chinese papercut expressing modern themes of their choice was an effective tool to integrate the traditional papercutting techniques that also connected them with the artist Qiao Xiaoguang. This lesson not only helped the students understand Qiao's works, but it also developed their understanding of the elements and principles of design, demonstrated the importance of craftsmanship, and enhanced their incision skills through hand-and-eye coordination work. It also allowed these students to develop an intrapersonal dialogue about Chinese culture and its significance while creating these pieces.

**Figure 4**  
*Student work inspired by Qiao Xiaoguang*



To begin the process, the students brainstormed about a variety of themes (ex. LGBTQ+, Black Lives Matter, etc.) that they felt personally connected to as their own concerns. Since papercutting practices require precision and attention to details, discussions about technique and possible technical errors would be beneficial before beginning their papercutting. The teachers explained essential tips, such as cutting out the larger areas first and leaving tabs to keep intricate designs attached to the paper. The students allotted sufficient time to think of several ideas; then selected their most developed sketch to convert into a final drawing for their piece. In their draft, they colored in the areas that were to be cut or removed from the paper; this technique served to



avoid confusion when cutting the pattern designs. After the students cut out their designs completely, matting or placing them on some type of board worked best to preserve the design and avoid tearing.

### **Xin Song (b. 1970, Beijing)**

The contemporary artist Xin Song has transformed traditional customs of Chinese papercutting into contemporary public installations. However, she adds a modern twist by using American advertisements and magazine pages (see Figure 5).

#### **Figure 5**

*Tree of Life - Law and Order* by Xin Song



Xin Song resides in Brooklyn, New York, and has taught residencies and workshops over the years with the goals of preserving traditional Chinese papercutting and supporting its development in America. While attending art school in China, she visited the countryside on the outskirts of Beijing to gain inspiration for a landscape project. She was amazed by how the residents still practiced the traditions of papercutting and shadow puppetry. She was also inspired by how they managed to keep old Chinese traditions alive, even though they were not being practiced in major cities. Song is well-known for her artworks in the New York City Transit installation areas, namely *Five Elements* (2013), located in the Broadway Plaza, and *Tree of Life* (2012), located in the Bay Parkway Landmark Station. But her most famous installation is *Grand Central* (2013), located in the lower level of Grand Central Station (see Figure 6).



**Figure 6**  
*Grand Central (2013) by Xin Song*



Xin Song's piece contains four different panels illuminated from behind to show the positive and negative space of the black paper cutouts. Song devised the idea of using four symbols: time, clock, gate, and light. Her first concept of time came from her idea of how people rush through the day and do not realize how quickly time passes. Her second concept was how the Grand Central Clock surrounded by Roman Gods creates a "timeless" piece. Her third concept was a gate with an oak and acorn pattern, which features the Roman God of travel and represents the Vanderbilt family motto "great oaks from little acorns grow" (Winn, 2013, p. 12). The fourth and final concept was light and how the transformations of sunlight and incandescent lights reminded her of the rise of New York City's iron industry during the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Song, 2013). The dim lighting in the lower level of Grand Central Station allows Song's illuminated installation to shine brightly in celebration of this historic site. Her Grand Central piece is a great example of how she studied Grand Central Station and represented it through symbols and the history that made the station what it is today.

Contemporary classrooms encourage students to consider cultures different from their own and immerse themselves in them in order to gain a better understanding of the world around them, just as Xin Song has throughout her artistic journey. This hybrid of traditional Chinese papercutting and the use of modern materials can be a beneficial way to start conversations in American classrooms about contemporary art ideas while using a traditional method.

### Lesson Inspired by Xin Song

This secondary art class lesson was developed to create a culturally integrated environment that would enhance students' appreciation of Chinese papercutting. Accessing and cultivating cultural awareness for students is easily attainable today, and educators should make sure their experience growth in their appreciation of the world around them through culturally integrated lessons (Lee, 2012). The goal of this project was to engage students by practicing traditional Chinese papercutting with a modern twist. It allowed the students to learn and preserve traditional Chinese papercutting, to enhance their craftsmanship and fine motor skills, and to become aware of their own ideas and beliefs. The students analyzed Song's style, technique, and theme (see Figure 7). During two 90-minute lessons, they constructed a traditional Chinese - inspired papercut that reflected their beliefs about social or political affairs, using magazines or recycled papers.

#### Figure 7

*Sex = Life series by Xin Song*



The teacher modeled how to use cutting tools and showed the students the correct ways to achieve the same effect as traditional Chinese papercuts. She also modeled how to make several types of cuts, and the students followed along, using a page from a magazine to practice cutting before they started their projects. Once the modeling was finished, the students decided on a theme by researching magazines to find something that reflected themselves and their ideas. After they had developed a theme, they got approval from their teacher, and began drawing the shapes and images of their desired product. The students did not just cut around images and figures from magazines but rather made intricate cutouts of things such as flowers, birds, trees, or other objects from their magazine pages using an Exacto knife to “draw” a picture out of a picture. In most magazine projects, the students cut out whole images, but this lesson was about cutting through the magazine pages to make an object out of an image. For instance, if students wanted to reflect



on the high beauty standards in America, they might cut out images of flowers from Botox advertisements rather than just cut out the word “Botox” for the whole part.

**Figure 8**  
*Student works (process & product) inspired by Xin Song*



Once the students cut out their pieces, they arranged them on their white paper and created a pleasing composition. For this project they used inspiration from Xin Song because they were practicing traditional Chinese papercutting with the use of materials from American magazines to portray a reflective message to their audience. In Figure 8, for example, the student used various images of Renaissance biblical figures to reflect on how society is labeled “One Nation Under God,” yet individuals are not allowed to speak their religious beliefs in government or politics. At the end of the unit, they wrote explanations for their purposes as well as identified certain symbols in their pieces that evoked the message of their work. The students could borrow various images from magazines in Western paper collages, but traditional Chinese papercutting requires basic drawing skills.

### Implications

Integrating traditional Chinese papercutting with the art curriculum can impact students by enhancing their understanding of multicultural art education. Through introducing art forms from various cultures into the classroom, teachers can help students become more knowledgeable and appreciative of cultures other than their own. The lessons on Chinese papercutting enhanced the students’ learning in terms of cultural awareness and appreciation, especially Chinese culture. Folk art is often considered a form of “low art” and has been cast aside with the notion that it employs either simple depictions of personal observations or utilitarian objects. However, in the modern field of art education, folk art can provide students paths to various cultures for multicultural conversations in the classroom (Congdon, 2015).

These lessons are just examples of how traditional Chinese papercutting was integrated into a contemporary classroom. By incorporating multicultural art forms such as papercuts, the students' creativity expanded beyond the usual American art classroom and "[empowered] school culture and social structure" (Chin, 2013, p. 5). Educators can attend workshops on Chinese papercutting or follow tutorials to ensure they are communicating accurate information about it to their students. Understanding the context is important when teaching multicultural curricula to ensure that a culture is being respected and well-represented. Such lessons promote students' respect for other cultures around them in the school setting and in the real world. By learning about other cultures, students can "engage in social action to improve the social circumstances of all people" (Banks & Banks, 2004, p. 55). Art is a communicative way to spread awareness about what is going on in the world and how people can come together as one human race rather than be divided by ethnicity. Students in rural areas benefit substantially from these instructional practices since they are not usually as exposed to other cultures as students who live in large cities or suburbs. The product of applying multicultural lessons in the 9-12 curriculum is creating more well-rounded students with a better understanding of the world around them.

### Conclusions

This chapter aimed to show how Chinese papercutting is an exemplary art form that is part of the wave of globalization currently engulfing art education. According to Abisheva Onal Tokkulovna (2013), "Globalization clearly contributes to the acceleration of the modernization process of art education" (p. 118). In other words, the expansion of international influence has allowed students to adapt to new cultures and customs in art education. Chinese papercutting can integrate the historical curriculum and cultural education in the American classroom, further enhancing the modernization of art education including papercutting. Although students are depicting modern imagery, they are following tradition, "fashioning elaborate patterns [with their] bare hands, and [learning] the creative use of positive and negative space" (Brittney, 2015, para. 6). This chapter has presented two lessons that could bring cultural diversity and understanding of Chinese papercutting into American classrooms by connecting students to contemporary artists who evoke modern ideas in their creative works.

Qiao Xiaoguang and Xin Song both strive to preserve this tradition of Chinese papercutting and aid in its metamorphosis into a culturally relevant art form that can engage American students in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Through these artists' efforts, this traditional folk art of papercutting has now become a vehicle for cultural education and a platform for reflection on social issues. Qiao provided a platform for people from China and the United States to talk about their similarities in prosperous industry and cultured cities in his public installation work *City Windows* (Vitali & Qiu, 2015). Song represented the concept of modern time by displaying various images in her traditional styles with her public installation work *Grand Central Station*. These two artists brought their cultural heritage and techniques into two of the largest modern architectural representations of social progress and movement, immortalizing this art form and enabling it to engage ordinary Americans. Although these artists' works use contemporary technologies and methods, many of their artistic practices are also based on the philosophical and historical foundations of traditional Chinese papercutting. Introducing these two artists into American classrooms can modernize papercutting and give American students the ability to engage with Chinese culture and techniques.



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## CHAPTER 15



### Teaching Images of Women in Chinese-Influenced Art: A Transnational Feminist Praxis

Alice Lai  
Empire State College  
State University of New York

Koon-Hwee Kan  
Kent State University

#### Abstract

Chinese-influenced transnational art offers opportunities for students to examine (a) the Chinese artistic and cultural references embedded in that artwork, (b) the Chinese and American contexts that shape the aesthetic thinking about and meaning of the artwork, and (c) transnational phenomena and issues. In this chapter, we propose a transnational feminist pedagogy to facilitate undergraduate students' inquiry into visual representations of Chinese women in transnational visual culture and art. First, we introduce Saidian and American Orientalism as a critical tool to examine the gendered gaze impacting the perception of Chinese women in the public imagination. Next, we elucidate transnational feminist pedagogical strategies. We rely on portrayals of the legendary Chinese woman Mulan and the art of Hung Liu to illuminate Chinese female agency and subjectivities in a transnational context. Finally, we propose critique-based and creative activities and provide instructions and examples of student artworks to facilitate the teaching of images of women in Chinese-influenced transnational art.

*Keywords:* Transnational art, transnational feminist pedagogy, Mulan, Hung Liu, Chinese female representation

## Introduction

North American universities and colleges have embraced global learning and promoted the inclusion of artistic expression from diverse cultures in arts and humanities offerings. As faculty members, we have contributed to this effort by providing our students the guidance and resources for their critical appreciation of what we have called in this chapter Chinese-influenced transnational art, especially artworks and aspects of visual culture that are imbued with Chinese visual and cultural elements, are influenced by Chinese aesthetic sensibilities, and depict Chinese subject matter. Informed by Guo's (2017) and Li's (2012) research, our examples of Chinese-influenced transnational art accentuate the Chinese content yet are nurtured in both Chinese and American artistic and cultural contexts.

In preparation for teaching such art, we have encountered several pedagogical challenges. First, in our multicultural art and art education classes, we embrace an inclusive curriculum that encompasses the learning of various Western and non-Western arts and cultures, which limits space for Chinese-themed teaching material. Adding to this constraint, we strive to sample material that is of exemplary quality yet accessible and engaging to a majority of students whose prior study of Chinese art and culture has been limited. Second, the recent worldwide gender justice-based social movement has made relevant the teaching of Chinese-influenced transnational art that portrays or investigates female agency and subjectivity. Unfortunately, we found a dismal amount of relevant literature in our field to help teach such content. Third, in teaching Chinese female subjectivity, we are cognizant of the perpetuation of the American Orientalist gaze at Asian women (Kim & Chung, 2005). Although we have adopted Davis' (2010) transnational feminist pedagogy to "engage students in a decolonizing process of learning" (p. 136) about the (mis)representation of Chinese women in transnational art, the lack of accounts of similar critical endeavors in the field necessitated an extended period of pedagogical experimentation to improve our classroom practice. Ultimately, we were concerned that these shortcomings might yield artistically, gender-, and race-alienated, stereotyped, and decontextualized curricula.

After a decade of attempts to overcome such challenges, we present in this chapter pedagogical and teaching resources that we believe can effectively augment students' critical, engaged, and contextualized learning about female images in Chinese-influenced transnational visual culture and art. First, we introduce Saidian and American Orientalism as a critical conceptual framework in which to raise awareness of the gendered and racial gaze impacting the perception of women from Eastern cultures in the public view. Next, we elucidate a transnational feminist pedagogy. In praxis, employing the portrayals of the beloved Mulan and the work of contemporary Chinese American artist Hung Liu as teaching resources, we provide instructions for critique-based and creative learning activities to prompt students to apply feminist, comparative, and transnational methods to investigate female subject matter in the selected teaching resources. Finally, we reflect on student learning and challenging aspects of our praxis and offer recommendations for teaching Chinese-influenced transnational art.

### Gender Matters in (American) Orientalism

Orientalism provides a critical framework for understanding ways in which the West distorts images of Eastern women and culture according to its own aesthetic, sociocultural, national,

and economic agendas. In his seminal text *Orientalism*, Said (1978) explicated Orientalism as a European construct that underscores established mythical imagery and assumptions developed by Western intellectuals about the “Orient.” He maintained that the Orientalist project relates “more to the culture that produced it than to its putative object, which was also produced by the West” (p. 22). For example, in Ingres’ *La Grande Odalisque* (1814), the title and the female nude surrounded by a hookah and other miscellaneous ethnic paraphernalia primarily express the French fantasy and artistic rendition of a submissive and voluptuous Eastern-like woman. Indeed, Adams (2010) noted: “Ingres’ knowledge of the Orient was gleaned from published accounts by travelers” (p. 88).

Said (1978) argued that the Orientalist imagination objectifies the East in not only antiquated and fictional ways as “a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (p. 1) but also as a conceptual mechanism that can be ideologically invented and controlled by the West. Although the Saidian definition of Orientalism is still useful for interrogating the imbalanced power relationships between the West and the East and the misrepresentation of Eastern people, scholars (MacKenzie, 2013; Pouillion & Vatin, 2015) have noted that Said’s thesis may have actually perpetuated gender and racial dichotomous, essentialist, and universalist thinking that collapses gender, race, and the Western European world into a unified entity and victimizes Easterners as lacking agency to speak for themselves. Such binary propositions risk neglecting the intersections, acculturation, and cross-fertilization of the West and East and the internal diversity in their respective hemispheres.

The Saidian premise of Orientalism has been appropriated in studies about women and race beyond its original Western Europe–Middle East scope. Researchers (Kim & Chung, 2005; Lee, 2001; Veitch, 2019) have adopted it to analyze and critique Asian female subject matter and symbolism depicted in the arts. Calling it American Orientalism, Kim and Chung (2005) asserted that the American mass media has a “long history of cultivating insidious stereotypes of Asian/Americans for the visual consumption of the White American public” (p. 74). To illustrate, they identified numerous derogatory images and labels of Chinese immigrants including the Yellow Peril, the Dragon Lady, the gook, the China doll, and the passive model minority in advertisements and Hollywood films. Uncovering references to the “time-old themes of Oriental feminine exoticism” (p. 80), Kim and Chung speculated that akin to their odalisque counterparts, Chinese women are “sexually objectified, culturally misrepresented, and visually consumed” in contemporary American visual culture (p. 88). Inspecting visual representations of Chinatown in San Francisco, Lee (2001) described paintings and photographs embodying Orientalist tactics, used to produce “a suitable image” (p. 9) of working-class and immigrant women living in Chinatown according to the needs, desires, and assumptions of the artists, most of whom were neither Chinese nor residents of Chinatown. Assessing Millie Chen’s subversive intervening of Orientalism, Veitch (2019) detected the artist’s attempt to erase or disrupt gender and racially stereotyped illustrations embedded in the patterns of historical Chinoiserie wallpaper, which were still replicated and manufactured by a U.S. company.

In 2015 the Costume Institute at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, mounted a curated exhibition entitled *China: Through the Looking Glass*, emphasizing that “the show really [wa]sn’t about China per se, it [was] about an image of China that exists in the Western imagination. The exhibition showed the impact of Chinese aesthetics on Western fashion.” Cheng (2019) argued



that the show exemplified the dogma and justification of Orientalism in the U.S. museum world. Ideologically and imaginatively projecting Chinese women along with their garments and accessories as the cultural and gender ‘Other’ in a disinterested and static manner, American Orientalism paved the way for Western onlookers and the makers of the images of Eastern women to retain racial, gender, and cultural distance and supremacy.

### **Transnational Feminist Pedagogy**

Art educators critical of teaching art in a global context have advocated for the inclusion of transnational art and artists in the curriculum (Delacruz et al., 2009; Guo, 2017; Jones, 2009; Li, 2012). They have asserted that transnational art is created by artists who work across multiple real and imagined border spaces conditioned by shared and conflicting national, ethnic, cultural, political, historical, and economic interests among others. Transnational artists often possess an intimate knowledge of and experience with their native, newly adopted American, and in-between lands. Their acts of border-crossing thus produce new aesthetics, innovative ways to infuse artistic materials from dissimilar cultures, reappropriation and reinterpretation of the artist’s native and American cultural symbols, and reclamation of the artist’s transnational identity. Furthermore, art educators have maintained that Chinese-influenced transnational art offers a rich pedagogical site for students to learn about (a) the Chinese aesthetics, culture, and history referenced in the artwork; (b) Chinese and American contexts and contextual transformation grounding the artmaking and meaning-making processes; and (c) border-crossing phenomena and related issues (Green, 2006; Guo, 2017; Li, 2012; Yin, 2011).

Teaching transnational art concerning Chinese female subject matter necessitates a pedagogy that is not only critical and gender responsive but also highlights border-crossing art and female empowerment. We hereby propose a transnational feminist pedagogy to accomplish such requirements. Unlike the global or international feminism that gravitates toward being Western centrist by taking the apolitical stance of universal sisterhood that tends to gloss over inequalities and differences among women, transnational feminism nurtures the self–Other relationship by studying and recognizing the roles, experiences, and oppression of the female Other in a given locality on their own cultural terms (Davis, 2010). Fernandes (2013) argued that transnational feminism opposes a presentist kind of “skewed” approach that centers on a view of the world held in the United States, treating women elsewhere as “a homogenized group of victims devoid of agency and subjectivity” (p. 116). Likewise, examining the syllabi emanating from transnational feminist praxis, Alexander and Mohanty (2010) criticized the “paradox of foregrounding subjects of color as agents while reproducing a white Eurocentric center” in an uncritical, normative transnational curriculum (p. 34).

Furthermore, Fernandes (2013) discerned that increasingly transnational feminist teaching is geared toward the interrogation of visible sites, such as popular culture, films, and advertising images, where border-crossing narratives and issues enter the public consciousness. As she contended, transnational visual study should focus on “differences between women, the quandaries of cross-cultural analysis, and the problems of Western representations of women” (p. 161). Noël Carroll (2007), renowned philosopher of art, maintained that to appreciate transnational art, one does not merely acknowledge the adaptation of the artistic style or form from one culture to another as seen in the art of Chinoiserie, Japonisme, and primitivism. Instead, all artists and makers

knowingly or unknowingly participating in the transnational art making need to be studied and welcomed to the conversation about art. Davis (2010) observed that her American students tended to locate the gender ideologies and imagery mirroring American ways of thinking and perceiving cultural differences from a tourist standpoint, rendering the female Other and their distinctiveness as objects of curiosity. To counteract this, Davis incorporated contemporary feminist art into her teaching to facilitate students' questioning of their gaze and tendency to place self over self-Other relationships.

Succinctly, transnational feminist pedagogy employs a critical and contextualized comparative and decolonizing process of learning about women. In praxis, when teaching the visual representation of Chinese women in transnational art, students must be encouraged to examine (a) their own perception of art and gender in the U.S. context, (b) the artist's experience with or thoughts about women's lives and other related gender matters in the Chinese context, and (c) Chinese artistic elements manifested in the work. Properly enlightened, students can then contemplate gender inequalities, gendered culture, and women's welfare in and between the respective cultures. They can also analyze how the intersection of gender, race, and nationality and cross-fertilization of artistic traditions have enriched the aesthetic merit. This complex process of knowledge construction enables students to acquire transnational knowledge of women through art in an informed, nonuniversalist, and nonhomogenized way.

### **Chinese-Influenced Transnational Art**

In this section we introduce the iconic Chinese woman Mulan and the work of prominent Chinese American artist Hung Liu as content examples for teaching female subjectivity in Chinese-influenced transnational art. These examples were selected for the abundance of scholarly resources readily available to art educators and college students. To accentuate transnational feminist aspects, we describe the Chinese and American influences on two examples.

#### **Cultural Representation of Mulan**

In a multivolume collection of documents and studies related to Mulan written in Chinese from the fifth to 21<sup>st</sup> centuries, Zhang (2015) compiled the tales and interpretations of this woman in various Chinese classic and contemporary arts and in visual culture. The legend of Mulan was told in *The Ballad of Mulan*, an approximately 400-character anonymous poem dated around the fifth century AD. The ballad chronicled Mulan's decision to join the army, journey to the battlefield, her triumphant meeting with the emperor, and festive homecoming. Light-heartedly, the ballad ends with the scene in which she changes back into a woman after 12 years of military life disguised as a man, utterly astounding her male compatriots in arms. Researchers affirmed that representations of Mulan predominantly emphasize Chinese cultural beliefs in female virtues of filial piety, family loyalty, and modest femininity (Edwards, 2010; Hsieh & Matoush, 2012; Johnston Laing, 2015). Her joining the Imperial army help her father and family fulfill conscription obligations. The only emotion expressed in the ballad involves her repeated concerns about and yearning for her parents. The crux of the Mulan legend underscores her feminine, domestic, and daughterly behavior in terms of the representation of her image.

Surveying illustrations of Mulan in Chinese books and prints, Johnston Laing (2015) asserted that in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century Mulan was an example of female beauty, typically portrayed “with an oval face, small lips and lustrous hair” (p. 212). Although wearing armor and carrying a lance next to her horse, she maintains a reticent nonthreatening-looking position that suggests neither the emotions nor the manners associated with a warrior or masculinity. In the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century, Edwards (2010) conjectured that a “modern and strong China required citizens who engaged with the state and not with local family lineages” (p. 194). Mulan’s battle story and cross-dressing as a man took center stage, transforming her into a model of radical woman warrior, heroine, and patriot. Meanwhile, Johnston Laing (2015) discerned that the depictions of Mulan in Chinese popular culture also suggested her as a feminist advocate for gender equality in serving the country and having a romantic interest in her army comrade.

The Walt Disney animated feature film *Mulan* (Coats, 1998) can be analyzed as an example of transnational visual culture because the plot was based on the classic Chinese tale and the Disney team derived the art styles and landscape rendition from the well-recognized Chinese texts and art (Kurtti, 1998). Produced primarily for American audiences, however, the female protagonist represented gender ideologies in an American cultural context. Yin (2011) argued that the Disney animation amplified individual freedom, self-discovery, and gender empowerment. For example, Mulan joined the army in part to free herself from the potentially failed womanhood signaled by her disastrous interview with a matchmaker, longed to prove her self-worth, and as a young inexperienced female soldier was able to creatively and freely overcome the enemy’s attacks through impromptu schemes.

American Orientalism can be detected from several new elements added to Disney’s *Mulan* (Dundes & Steriff, 2016; Yin, 2011). The animation portrayed the matchmaker as a large and hideous woman and Mulan’s father as a stubborn patriot, both pejoratively depicting Chinese authority figures as repulsive, fearsome, and irrational. The matchmaking ritual did not exist in the classic Chinese version of the story (Yin, 2011; Zhang, 2015). The dragon, an esteemed symbol of China among Chinese, was turned into *Mushu*, a miniature lizard who chaperoned Mulan and served as her magical companion and mentor. These invented elements reinforced the image of Chinese women living in an exotic and mythical land inhabited by irrational and superstitious Easterners.

### **Hung Liu and Female Subjectivity**

Hung Liu [刘虹] (1948 – 2021) was a Chinese American female artist well-recognized in the US and China since the late 1980s. Her website (<http://www.hungliu.com/>) showcases numerous artworks portraying diverse imagery of Chinese and Chinese American women. Liu was born in 1948 in Changchun, China, where she experienced the Communist regime and the Cultural Revolution, lived in metropolitan cities, worked as a field laborer in the countryside following Mao Zedong’s proletarian re-education, and eventually attended and taught at a prestigious art school in Beijing. In 1986, she earned a Master of Fine Arts degree from the University of California, San Diego, and was a professor emeritus at Mills College in California. A prolific artist traveling back and forth between China and the United States, Liu sought artistic and cultural inspiration and conducted research on women’s lives and subjectivity in the two cultures. Her artworks are in the permanent collections of several major U.S. museums.



As a transnational artist, Liu directly incorporates Chinese cultural symbolism and Chinese female images into her art. She then employed the methodological and conceptual “reprocess[ing]” of Chinese images “within contemporary western materials, processes, and modes of display” (Liu as cited in Lippard, 2000, p. 144). Two notable examples illustrate her transnational approach. First, Liu stated that her painting *Odalisque* (1992) resulted from her unearthing of a box of old photographs of high-class Chinese prostitutes when undertaking research on historic photographs in China (Moser, 2011). Those young women had posed in a studio surrounded by various European-themed artifacts and scenery. In reprocessing the concept and reality of the Chinese odalisque on a large antique architectural panel, Liu painted a Chinese woman donning a dress from the Chinese Qing dynasty (1644 – 1912), slightly exposing bound feet and posing in a Western fashion resembling the reclining woman with her gaze directed at the viewer in Orientalist paintings. The panel was displayed on a red wooden shelf decorated with various Chinese paraphernalia to look like an altar. Liu’s *Odalisque* returned the Chinese woman to her cultural realm yet subversively subjugated her as an offering through the Western photographic and Orientalist ritual.

Second, Liu’s painting *The Ocean is the Dragon’s World* (1995) methodologically reprocesses an image of the powerful Chinese female monarch, Empress Dowager Ci Xi, who governed the late Qing dynasty for 47 years, using the Western photographic portraiture style. Conceptually, the work represents Liu’s transnational feminist critique of gender oppression in a patriarchal society (Arieff, 1996; De Nigris, 2016; Jennison, 2012). Liu shows an awareness of Western feminism, which has given her additional perspective to contemplate Chinese women’s agency (Moser, 2011). A Western image of female empowerment praises women’s ability to achieve high official status in society. In the painting, Liu emphasizes this view by aggrandizing Ci Xi’s empress robe, intensifying the design and color of the robe, and glorifying her jewelry—all signifying the absolute authority and wealth she possessed. To reflect Chinese culture and history, however, Liu lightened Ci Xi’s face, making her look less discernible, fading into the background. Holding a birdcage, she is enveloped in feminine and floral decorations. Such visual manipulation casts Ci Xi as a puppet-like doll and a stereotyped fragile, insignificant, and obedient Chinese woman confined by a patriarchal society regardless of her position of power. The conflicting interpretation of female agency has created a transnational space for the viewer to engage with “a double process of deconstruction and interpretation” (De Nigris, 2016, p. 205) of Chinese female subjectivity.

### Sample Learning Activities

Using Mulan and Liu’s work as pedagogical subjects, we propose critique-based and creative learning activities aimed at broadening undergraduate students’ critical inquiry into female images in Chinese-influenced transnational visual culture and art. Following a transnational feminist pedagogy, these activities foster (a) a contextual understanding of Chinese women and culture, (b) a cross-cultural comparison of gender ideologies in the respective cultures, (c) an appreciation of border-crossing phenomena and their impact on the ways Chinese women are represented in visual culture and art, and (d) a critique of gender issues.

The instructor can incorporate into the activities a list of relevant scholarly resources to initiate students' content investigation of the Chinese and Disney *Mulan*. These include Dundes and Steriff (2016), Edwards (2010), Hsieh and Matoush (2012), Johnston Laing (2015), Kurtti, (1998), and Yin (2011). The Disney version of *Mulan* (Coats, 1998) along with Johnston Laing's (2015) and Kurtti's (1998) texts is particularly helpful for inspecting the art of *Mulan* in Chinese and Disney productions. To facilitate our students' appreciation of Liu's work, we suggest the following scholarly texts, which contain in-depth analyses of her art and interview with the artist: Arieff (1996), De Nigris (2016), Jennison (2012), and Moser (2011). Myriad works by Liu can be viewed in these texts and on the artist's website. Students can adopt additional texts to advance their critical inquiry into the gendered and racial connotations and Asian stereotypes in transnational art, such as those of Kim and Chung (2005), Lee (2001), Said (1978), and Veitch (2019).

### **Activity 1: Critique of *Mulan*'s and Liu's Work**

The following prompts can be used to facilitate students' close reading and discussion of the selected texts, critique of female subjectivities as represented in *Mulan* and Liu's work, and cross-cultural comparison of aesthetics, gender ideologies, and other gender matters experienced by the students.

#### **Chinese and Disney Versions of *Mulan*.**

- What are the conceptual and aesthetic disparities in the Chinese and Disney portrayals of *Mulan*? What might such disparities reveal about women's subjectivities in each culture?
- What gender ideologies and feminist thinking are revealed in Disney's reinterpretation of *Mulan*? How well can you relate to such ideologies?
- What gender ideologies and cultural symbolism are depicted in Disney's animation that are decontextualized from or contradictory to Chinese women's culture? What is your view of such cultural (mis)appropriation?

#### **Chinese Women in Liu's Work.**

- What Chinese gender ideologies, cultural symbolism, and aesthetics are disclosed in Liu's artworks?
- How have Liu's border-crossing experiences and transnational identity influenced her artworks?
- What transnational artistic approaches did Liu employ to create art?
- Liu's *Odalisque* (1992) has been compared to Ingres' *La Grande Odalisque* (1814). What are the conceptual and aesthetic differences and similarities in the two works?

### **Activity 2: Critique of Images of Asian Women**

In another activity students engage in visual interpretation and creative representation to critically assess 10 images of Asian women they locate in print and online media, using various search engines, including those popular in China, such as baidu [百度], sohu [搜狐], and

xinlanwang [新浪网]. The following questions can guide the students in analyzing the images of Chinese women and in probing their gendered gaze.

- How do your 10 images represent Asian women and Asian femininity? Consider explicit Asian and gender signifiers and implied ones, such as a feminine color hue and design patterns.
- How is the idea of femininity represented in your own culture?
- How might your interpretation of Asian women and femininity reflect your gender and race-based assumptions about them?

### Activity 3: Creative Projects

We suggest two creative projects in which Liu's transnational artmaking approaches can be used to reinterpret Chinese female subjectivity. One requires the students to survey visual representations of Mulan in the Chinese context in historical and contemporary periods. The students can canvass artistic illustrations in the form of Chinese woodcut prints, ink-wash paintings, movie posters, and product advertisements. Referencing Liu's methods of reprocessing a Chinese image, using contemporary Western materials, processes, and modes of display, students then create a transnational image of Mulan representing their own interpretation of this legendary woman. In the studio critique, students can ponder these questions:

- What did the images of Mulan you've surveyed say about women's lives in Chinese society?
- What cultural and gender motifs have you employed to create your own image of Mulan?
- What Western materials, processes, and modes of display did you choose to create your transnational work?
- What are the artistic and conceptual challenges you have encountered in your transnational artmaking process?
- What does your creation of Mulan represent?

Another creative project is a digital photo collage illustrating the students' own reflections of female agency and subjectivity. The students review how Liu appropriated certain gender and cultural symbolism and ideologies to represent Chinese women's (dis)empowerment. Similarly, using photo collage they can create a self-portrait or a portrait of a prominent woman from their culture. The students should be encouraged to embed symbols and metaphors to convey literal and nonliteral messages in their portraits. *Scan Me* (see Figure 1) can serve as an instructional example illustrating the artist's concern about the objectification and commodification of the female body and her Chinese culture. In the studio critique, students can ponder the following questions:

- How did you express female subjectivity and (dis)empowerment in the portrait?
- Which of the visual elements you employed represent gender ideologies in your culture?
- What does your portrait say about your view of gender ideologies in your culture?



**Figure 1**  
*Koon-Hwee Kan. Scan Me. 2020. Digital Photocollage*



### Discussion of Student Learning

In this section we highlight our students' learning outcomes and the challenges involved in teaching them Chinese-influenced transnational art. The examples of Mulan and Hung Liu's work along with the suggested texts are highly engaging and have enriched the students' contextual understanding of Chinese art, culture, history, and female subjectivity. Using the discussion prompts listed in Activity 1, the students readily engaged in the discussion, via an asynchronous online forum, demonstrating a nuanced and contextualized understanding of Mulan and Liu's work. This paved the way for them to further undertake the transnational feminist critique of female subjectivity in art and gain new knowledge about Chinese and Chinese American women's border-crossing narratives. One student put it this way: "Very little is spoken about slavery and Chinese immigrants in history books. I did not even know that some Chinese [women] were slaves in [the] United States until I read about Hung Liu's *Dangling [painting]* last week" (personal communication, October 16, 2020).

Activity 2 resulted in students identifying American Orientalism embedded in popular visual culture that they had not noticed prior to the activity. One student uncovered the tactic of the use of "Yellow Faces" employed in American films while others pointed out the stereotyped or Orientalist portrayals of Asian women in the advertisements of two leading cosmetic companies. Yet another student concluded: "After reading this module's coursework, it was really eye opening to watch the animated version [of *Mulan*] and see the American Orientalism and disregard for another culture so clearly!" (personal communication, October 15, 2020).

In Activity 3, employing Liu's transnational artmaking method, the students presented their interpretation of Chinese female subjectivity. For example, Mulan's experiences with two versions of life reflecting feminine and masculine traits and norms and two renditions of Mulan representing

the Eastern and Western gender ideologies inspired Terry (pseudonym) to compose a digital collage entitled *The Two Sides of Mulan* (see Figure 2). Terry learned that Liu often uses flowers to signify femininity and the circle and cycle to convey a Buddhist concept of life. She inserted a cherry blossom as featured in Disney's *Mulan*. Adopting Liu's method, Terry purposefully identified the online presentation and the Phototastic Collage app as contemporary Western modes of display and material through which she reprocessed Chinese female imagery.

**Figure 2**

Terry. *The two sides of Mulan: The retelling of Mulan. 2020. Digital Collage*



Jody's (pseudonym) *Depiction of Hua Mulan* (see Figure 3) captured her fascination with the Chinese women's border-crossing narratives. She took cues and the name Hua Mulan directly from the Chinese *Ballad of Mulan* and stated: "I chose to replace the two dots [in the yin yang] with the hares to represent my interpretation of the last line in *The Ballad of Mulan*, 'Two hares running side by side close to the ground. How can they tell if I am he or she?'" (personal communication, October 22, 2020). Notably, Jody was an art student and selected Adobe Illustrator and formalist graphics as the Western apparatus and aesthetic mode to reprocess the Chinese image of Mulan; furthermore, her art conceptualization process echoed that of Liu's, both artists seeking inspiration from the original Chinese sources.



**Figure 3**  
*Jody. Depiction of Hua Mulan. 2020. Digital Art*



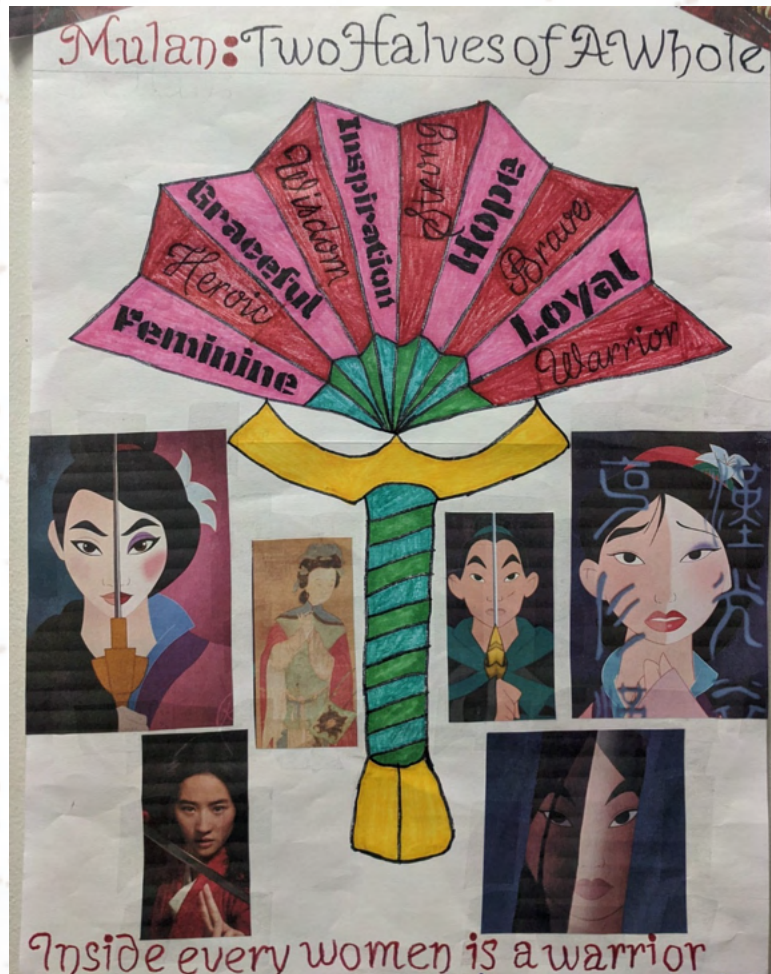
Finley, a non-art major, took the challenge to hand draw a “fan-sword” (see Figure 4) illustrating her vision of Chinese culture as depicted in the original story of Mulan. She explained: “These two items [the fan and sword] were typically used through China’s history with the women typically holding the fans while the men typically used the sword.” Experimenting with Liu’s artmaking method, Finley reprocessed gendered symbols in Chinese culture using contemporary American scrapbooking materials (e.g., markers, stencils, print media) and further affirmed that



“my creative work reveals that women are complex creatures possessing warrior-like and feminine qualities” (personal communication, October 19, 2020).

**Figure 4**

*Finley. Mulan: Two Halves of A Whole. 2020. Scrapbooking*



Reflecting on student learning, we reiterate that although the lessons on Mulan and Liu’s artworks appear to be inviting and achieve the pedagogical objectives, they are small samples and can offer only initial and partial pictures of Chinese culture. We have observed that some students hold a static view of Chinese women’s lives and culture. To avoid the perpetuation of racial and gender stereotypes, students’ feminist critiques of gender ideologies in a Chinese context need to be informed by scholarly resources. Selected readings (e.g., De Nigris, 2016; Johnston Laing, 2015; Moser, 2011) along with an in-depth study of Liu’s artist journey are thus useful in renewing students’ views.

In teaching Chinese art, we have noticed that some students enjoy analyzing and interpreting it based on what they see and Western aesthetic tenets. To appreciate a work of art from a transnational stance, one needs to study the artists from particular cultures along with their cultural and aesthetic traditions that shape the artwork in question (Carroll, 2007). Hence, students

must be encouraged to move beyond visual analysis to include cultural analysis. Doing so can lead to the transformative learning of art and artist. One student claimed: “Unfamiliar with Chinese culture, it was only until I connected with her strong bond with her Chinese heritage that I began to truly appreciate and respect Hung Liu as a great contemporary artist!” (personal communication, October 8, 2020). Finally, when conversing about female representation in Chinese-influenced transnational art, students sometimes uncritically develop a dichotomous and essentialist rhetoric, separating femininity from masculinity and East from West. To overcome this, they should be reminded to examine “transnational” and border-crossing aesthetics and narratives embedded in transnational art.

### **Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have enumerated ways to engage students in a robust inquiry of female agency and subjectivity in Chinese-influenced transnational art. First, in teaching such art to students who have a limited knowledge of Chinese art, culture, and history, we find it vital to select exemplary artworks that are engaging, accessible, and relevant to students. The image and story of the Chinese female warrior Mulan made into a Disney animated film are highly effective in enticing students to investigate the character in her original Chinese content and context. Liu’s border-transcending work narrates Chinese women’s lives in a thought-provoking and aesthetically stimulating way. We contend that both examples, imbued with Chinese and U.S. gender and cultural symbolism and artistic styles, created a site where transnational knowledge about Chinese women that defies the Orientalist gaze can be enriched.

Second, we proposed implementation of a transnational feminist pedagogy to facilitate a critical, contextualized, comparative-based, gender-responsive, and female-empowered learning process. Scholars (Davis, 2010; Fernandes, 2013) have argued that transnational feminist pedagogy emphasizes the importance of studying women’s agency and subjectivity on their own cultural terms, recognition of differences in gender ideologies in the respective culture, and the critique of personal gaze directed toward female Others. Third, we suggested transnational feminist critique and creative projects to enhance undergraduate students’ exploration of Chinese gender ideologies, Chinese cultural symbols, cultural appropriation, and transnational art methods. These activities also provide students opportunities to deliberate personal gender views rooted in their culture as well as personal gender and cultural assumptions about the female Other.

Inspecting Asian female images in visual culture and art, researchers have uncovered decontextualized, distorted, and disinterested representations of Asian women (Kim & Chung, 2005; Lee, 2001; Veitch, 2019). Such representation renders Asian women as objects to be conceptually and visually controlled and consumed according to the pleasure of the maker of the image. Applying transnational feminist pedagogy to teach Chinese-influenced transnational art and equipping students with knowledge of Mulan and Liu’s art can steer students toward a content, contextual, and gender-responsive appreciation of Asian women.



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CHAPTER 16

**Exploring Visual Narratives of Self and Society  
Through Chinese Contemporary Art in China**

Ahran Koo  
California State University, Fresno

**Abstract**

Ideological and political perspectives have over time been the causes for conflicts, struggles, and critical stepping stones for evolution in modern society. Thus, during the mid-twentieth century, China experienced major social changes, and saw the influx of Western culture, which significantly influenced its art and culture. Exploring the historical, cultural, and political contexts of China during those periods, this chapter introduces the unique visual narratives of three prominent active Chinese contemporary artists in China: Zhang Xiaogang [張曉剛], Zeng Fanzhi [曾梵志], and Ai Weiwei [艾未未]. These narratives, focusing on people's social and cultural identities, can be used as effective instructional materials by art educators. While examining these artists' works, students have the opportunity to learn about the social changes in China and reflect on self and society. With references to the Chinese contemporary artists' artworks, pedagogical examples based on the United States' K-12 Visual Arts standards are presented.

*Keywords:* Chinese contemporary art in China, identity exploration, social issues, visual narratives, pedagogy

### Introduction

It has been several decades since Chinese contemporary art in China seized the art world's attention. Numerous Chinese contemporary artworks have been highlighted in international events including the renowned Venice Biennale, Kassel Documenta (in Germany), and Art Basel (in Switzerland and Miami Beach). Chinese artworks have kept breaking sales price records at highly recognized auctions such as Christie's and Sotheby's, and the media have kept focusing on the growing values of contemporary art in China (Chiu, 2008; Gladston, 2014). Although Westerners and collectors realized the uniqueness of contemporary art in China at the beginning of the twenty-first century, its history dates back to the late 1980s (Vine, 2008).

To understand the historical contexts of Chinese contemporary art in China, the political dynamics of the country in the late twentieth century need to be explored. China experienced many political reforms based on the various agendas of former leaders, especially from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping in the 1970s (Chiu, 2008). Those changes strongly impacted artists' ideologies, methodologies, and the subjects of their art. Artists received a certain education based on the political regime, and adopted the ideas and styles of that time for their artistic practices.

The era of Mao, the founder of the People's Republic of China, who governed from 1949 to 1976, was deeply rooted in Chinese communism. Artists were influenced by social realism and encouraged to promote communist ideologies through their art. In particular, the failures of The Great Leap Forward policy to create a communist society by Mao Zedong led him to launch the Cultural Revolution, a sociopolitical movement that began in 1966 and ended in 1976, to propagate his regime (Vine, 2008). During that period, China's young generations formed The Red Guard, which were involved in destroying the Chinese historical artifacts and remains that were considered outdated. Eliminating "all the old ideas, old culture, old customs and old habits" was the main goal of the movement, but people later realized that was a tragedy for the nation (Jiehong, 2007, p. 3).

In contrast, under Deng Xiaoping's leadership, The Open Door Policy was promoted in the political, economic, and cultural stages of the late 1970s (Chiu, 2008). Through his cultural and social reform, new cultures and perspectives were introduced in China. Many young artists were influenced by Western art movements and styles until the government blocked access to them after the Tiananmen Square protest and massacre in Beijing in 1989 (Vine, 2008).

During the era of cultural liberalization under Deng, groups of young artists, including the '85 New Wave and the Stars explored new Western avant-garde styles while examining their identity, culture, and society (Vine, 2008). The '85 New Wave created a movement to experiment with new art forms and styles while the Stars challenged the boundaries of freedom of expression (Chiu, 2008). Both groups of artists held different perspectives on the social and cultural traditions of China (Jiehong, 2007).

Among many living Chinese contemporary artists who went through those cultural revolutionary periods, three prominent artists in China, Zhang Xiaogang, Zeng Fanzhi, and Ai Weiwei, will be discussed in this chapter. These artists were either a key member of the '85 New Wave or the Stars, or highly influenced by the young artists groups. They were selected based on



their diverse approaches to cultural and societal identities and their international recognition. They have been highly acclaimed beyond China along with Yue Minjun and Fang Lijun, key figures of Cynical Realism, and Wang Guangyi, the leading artist of Political Pop, which is well known in Western society (Chiu, 2008; Vine, 2008). Zhang Xiaogang is one of the top selling Chinese painters and had a reputation of being the most “expensive” living artist until Zeng Fanzhi broke his record in 2013 (Sotheby’s, 2012). Both of their artworks were sold in international auctions with record-breaking prices and the media kept broadcasting their success and popularity in global markets (Chiu, 2008). Meanwhile, Ai Weiwei’s work has been highlighted and recognized by his activist approaches and documentaries focusing on social and political issues inside and outside of China, including *Never Sorry* (2012), *Human Flow* (2017), *Yours Truly* (2019), and *Coronation* (2020).

As artists, Zhang Xiaogang, Zeng Fanzhi, and Ai Weiwei have contemplated the relationships between self and society in the transnational contexts of Western and Chinese cultural influences but voiced their opinions through their visual languages differently. Zhang focused on individual and collective memories of Chinese history, culture, and society whereas Zeng highlighted the transitional identities of self and the nation. Ai further pursued social changes through his artwork on the basis of his personal experiences and beliefs. Needless to say, all three artists greatly influenced the direction of current Chinese contemporary art and beyond.

### Exploration of Identity and Society

Zhang Xiaogang, one of the main artists of the ’85 New Wave movement, explored personal and communal identities, woven throughout the social changes in China (Chiu, 2008). Born in Kunming, Yunnan Province in 1958, Zhang studied oil painting at the Sichuan Academy of Fine Arts where revolutionary realism idealizing Mao’s regime was taught. Despite the Soviet Union’s influence on Chinese education, Zhang became more interested in Western art history and philosophy.

Zhang revealed that his three-month trip to Germany in 1992 changed his approach to art (Sotheby’s, 2012). Exposed to Western art and culture, Zhang’s perspective on Chinese culture, society, and identity changed. He began to ponder what makes the Chinese Chinese, and how he could depict those traits as a Chinese artist (Sotheby’s, 2012).

Zhang’s artworks illustrate how the Chinese people and China suffered through a period of turbulence in the mid-twentieth century. By portraying himself, his family members, and others, Zhang examined the contexts of modern China with deep contemplation (Zhang, 2007). It is worth noting that the sense and concept of “family” played a pivotal role in the identity of Chinese culture, which is naturally reflected in Zhang’s artwork (Jiehong, 2007). Zhang stated that people in China greatly value their family and rely on each other, but also see themselves as part of the larger family, the Chinese nation (Zhang, 2007). This attitude underlies the Chinese people’s mindset.

Zhang portrayed Chinese people who went through the Cultural Revolution including his parents and brothers in his *Bloodline - Big Family* portrait series (1993 – present). Inspired by traditional family photos, this series explores Chinese identities during the political turmoil (see Figure 1). The figures, wearing Mao’s badges and typical uniforms such as Mao’s suit or Red Guard outfit, are connected through a “bloodline” (Chiu, 2008). These elements represent the

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stories of China's past. These figures also symbolize "the powerlessness of the individual against the vicissitudes of history," which was a way for Zhang to present Chinese cultural and historical contexts (Sotheby's, 2012).

#### Figure 1

Zhang Xiaogang, *Bloodline - Big Family, No.3, 1995, oil on canvas, 179 x 229 cm*



His Tiananmen series is one of Zhang's rare artworks in which he used a political landscape to depict the identity of the Chinese people and the nation. With a dark and monotonous color scheme in contrast to the yellow tower in the center of the piece, Zhang illustrated his feelings and the nation's history in the series (see Figure 2). His recreation of Chinese past history using Tiananmen and Tiananmen Square symbolizes the collective memory, Chinese political power and its transition. Through this series, Zhang further depicted his perception of the relationship between the individual and society (Jiehong, 2007).

Zeng Fanzhi, known for setting a new record for the most expensive Asian contemporary artwork by selling his painting *The Last Supper* for USD\$23.3 million at Sotheby's Hong Kong auction in 2013, expanded his investigation of Chinese identities in the context of societal transformation. Zeng, born in 1964 in Wuhan, Hubei Province, attended the Hubei Academy of Fine Arts. Influenced by the '85 New Wave Movement, he further experimented with the concepts



of Western and Eastern traditions and cultures (Chiu, 2008). Similar to Zhang Xiaogang, Zeng used Western influenced expressionistic approaches to depict Chinese history, including the era after the Cultural Revolution in the 1990s. According to his statements about his observations of the transforming nation, Zeng's figures in his paintings are "both threatening and vulnerable" (Jiehong, 2007, p. 75).

**Figure 2**

*Zhang Xiaogang, Tiananmen No.1, 1993, oil on canvas, 98.6 x 128 cm*



In his *Hospital* and *Mask* series, Zeng conveyed people's reactions to social changes. The societal shifts and cultural discomforts in the 1990s that Zeng and other Chinese people experienced, were portrayed in these artworks. In particular, his *Mask* series paintings highlight the anxieties of the Chinese trying to adapt to new cultural changes (see Figure 3). Rather than disguise them, the figures wearing white masks emphasize the feeling of cultural depravity (Jiehong, 2007) and the confusion and instability of contemporary life (Vine, 2008; Chiu, 2008). Zeng asserted that people tried to get accustomed to Western lifestyles, but the result was superficial and deceptive relative to their actual feelings (Kolesnikov-Jessop, *New York Times*, 2007). Therefore, the themes of isolation and solitude were pervasive in Zeng's paintings, through hidden, subtle, or obvious metaphors.



**Figure 3**

*Zeng Fanzhi, Mask Series No.1, 1996, oil on canvas, 200 x 180 cm*



Zeng's painting *The Last Supper* exemplifies his critical perspectives of Chinese society (see Figure 4). Inspired by Leonardo da Vinci's painting of this subject, Zeng substituted a Chinese youth group wearing white masks for all the figures in the original painting. They are eating watermelon instead of bread, wearing white uniforms and red scarves which represent Chinese traditions. In contrast to these Chinese metaphoric elements, the "Judas" figure wears a yellow tie which symbolizes Western capitalism and its influence on Chinese society. Zeng explored the discomfort and instability of the Chinese in their rapidly changing environment in China.

**Figure 4**

Zeng Fanzhi, *The Last Supper*, 2001, oil on canvas, 220 x 395 cm



Ai Weiwei, a prominent Chinese artist and art activist well-known in Western society, openly voices his criticisms of social, cultural, and political issues through his artwork. Born in 1957, Ai was the son of Ai Qing, a famous poet in China. The Chinese government purged numerous intellectuals who criticized Mao's regime at that time. As one such intellectual, Ai Qing was denounced and his family was exiled to a remote area. They were allowed to go back to Beijing after the end of the Cultural Revolution and Mao's death in 1976 (Ai, 2018b).

As a key member of the Stars, one of the earliest avant-garde artists group in China, Ai Weiwei repeatedly challenged the Chinese government (Chiu, 2008). *Remembering*, Ai's monumental work that honors the victims of the Sichuan earthquake in 2008, reveals his activist standpoint. Through an investigation led by Ai and other citizens, he concluded that "The Chinese government censored and controlled all the information about the earthquake, so people didn't know the details of what really happened" (Ai, 2018c, para. 3). After a yearlong inquiry, Ai Weiwei created an installation piece with students' backpacks, based on the statement of one of the victims' mother who lost her daughter, "All I want is to let the world remember she had been living happily for seven years" (Wilcox, 2018, para. 2; see Figure 5).



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**Figure 5**

*Ai Weiwei, Remembering, 2009, backpacks and metal armature, 925 x 10605 x 10 cm*



Ai's documentary photos and films criticize the Chinese government's censorship and power, sparking dialogues among national and international communities (Gladstone, 2014). The critical standpoints and movements toward traditional authority led the contemporary world to reconsider traditional Chinese modes of thought and production. Due to his critical commentaries and actions regarding government policy, which were framed as transgressions, Ai came under surveillance and was even detained (Gladston, 2014).

Ai expanded his realms of investigation beyond China, calling international communities' attention to the social and political issues of global refugees and migrant crises (Ai, 2018a). He represented his concern with a temporary installation of 14,000 life vests wrapping the columns of the Konzerthaus Berlin Concert Hall (Cunningham, 2016; see Figure 6). Similarly, he released a documentary about international refugees, *Human Flow*, in 2017. Observing, researching, and documenting refugees for two years in 23 countries and over 40 refugee camps from Syria to Myanmar, Ai focused on raising social awareness of human responsibilities (Ai, 2018b). As a child refugee himself, he wants to create a better society for all human beings, and uses his art as a means for raising people's social awareness (Ai, 2018a).



**Figure 6**

*Ai Weiwei, Berlin's Konzerthaus installation of discarded refugee life jackets, 2016*



To promote his causes, Ai utilizes social media and people's participation as a platform for activism in order to connect people with contemporary social issues. For example, in response to an appeal that he made in his blog in 2007, seeking participants for a project in Kassel, Germany, 3,000 people applied (Thompson, 2012). Ai finally selected 1,001 to be part of the project and collected their input through a questionnaire. In another instance, Ai recruited volunteers for the investigation of the Sichuan earthquake in 2008 through his online blog, and shared information the government did not release, including the number and names of the student casualties, using the same medium.

### **Visual Narratives of Self and Society in the Art Classroom**

Visual narratives allow people to understand themselves and society and to connect with one another. Many artists use these narratives to examine their identity and surroundings in various ways, and to communicate them to others. As Zeng Fanzhi stated, "Creation is a tool of mine, it is the way I connect with the world. As an artist under the influences of different cultures, my hope is that my art reflects the social and aesthetic experience of an individual in the present time" (Phillips Catalog, 2004, para. 1). Nowadays, as individuals are more and more exposed to diverse

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cultures and cultural transitions, they can reflect on who they are accordingly. Similar to artists, through visual narratives, individuals can express their understandings of how they perceive themselves, what is important to them, and what influenced them. In conjunction with that self-examination, they can also analyze their environments and how society impacts their way of thinking and living. Articulation of these understandings in visual language presents the ongoing experiences and histories of current society.

For more than 15 years, I have taught multiple lessons to K-16 students focusing on identity, culture, and social issues. I have introduced various artists' visual narratives of self and society to inspire students' own identity explorations in multiple social contexts. These lessons have been effective in engaging students in meaningful dialogues and fostering analytical, critical and creative thinking. While analyzing artists' approaches, students explored their own and others' identities and have been exposed to multiple perspectives and social problems. Following the analysis of artists' work, they were able to creatively voice their own viewpoints through impactful visual and written languages. While relating them to various social, cultural, and historical contexts, students reflected on how they perceived their own identities and social issues, which led to their self- and social awareness. Ultimately, those lessons helped students deepen and synthesize their understanding of their own identities and society (Koo, 2015).

In the following section, I will outline some art lessons based on the three Chinese contemporary artists introduced in this chapter. I will then provide examples of students' artworks that were completed in previous lessons that I taught to illustrate possible applications and outcomes of the proposed lessons. While learning about Chinese historical and cultural changes through the work of artists, students will gain a cultural understanding of China and related artistic techniques. Understanding how the artists responded to the historical, societal, and political changes that greatly impacted their lives, students will make connections between art and society, and between themselves and their peers, then learn ways to voice their opinion effectively using visual narratives. This idea can be developed using many instructional approaches in diverse settings, including secondary school, higher education, and community settings.

#### **Lessons with Chinese Contemporary Artists in China**

By exploring Chinese contemporary art and artists in China, such as those discussed in the previous section, students can further reflect on their identity and cultural background in the art classroom. Although the lessons can be adapted for various K-16 classroom settings, some examples of a pedagogical structure for studying the concepts of these contemporary Chinese artists are presented below for two grade levels, middle and high school. The examples also include the Visual Arts standards of the U.S. National Core Arts Standards revised in 2014 for art teachers to use if they are applicable.

For the middle school level, the two Visual Arts standards, “VA:Cn11.1.8a Distinguish different ways art is used to represent, establish, reinforce, and reflect group identity” and “VA:Cn11.1.7a Analyze how response to art is influenced by understanding the time and place in which it was created, the available resources, and cultural uses” (State Education Agency, 2014, p. 8) can be addressed using a Chinese contemporary art project/lesson. Students can identify the diverse methods used by Chinese artists to depict their Chinese identities throughout the cultural,

historical, and political transitions of China, then reflect on their own identity and create an artwork and artist statement. The following objectives can guide this lesson: a) Students will identify and interpret the different styles and approaches of Chinese contemporary art in China which reflects on cultural/historical group identity; b) Students will create an artwork to present their own cultural or societal identities using meaningful figures, metaphors, and materials; and c) Students will develop an artist statement which describes their view about how their identity is connected to their cultural, social, and political backgrounds.

As for high school's "Proficient" or "Accomplished" level classes, art educators might address other standards for their lessons, "VA:Cn11.1.Ia Describe how knowledge of culture, traditions, and history may influence personal responses to art" and/or "VA:Cn11.1.Iia Compare uses of art in a variety of societal, cultural, and historical contexts and make connections to uses of art in contemporary and local contexts" (State Education Agency, 2014, p. 8). While exploring Chinese contemporary art in China, students can relate their perspectives of social issues to the artists' practices, and further investigate them by creating their own works of art. In this lesson, the students synthesize their understanding of Chinese contemporary art and their personal responses to social, cultural, and political issues. The following lesson objectives can support this process: a) Students will identify cultural and political transitions in China and their impact on Chinese art and artists; b) Students will create an artwork addressing a social, cultural, and/or political issue; and c) Students will develop an artist statement which describes their critical perspectives on their chosen social, cultural, and/or political issue.

After interpreting and analyzing the artworks of Zhang Xiaogang and Zeng Fanzhi, students can distinguish how these artists investigated their cultural and societal identities by creating portraits. That knowledge may help the students consider the themes of conflict between reality and ideals or past and present/future while creating their artworks. Elements in the students' artwork may represent cultural or generational aspects of their identity while outfits, objects, and backgrounds may add hidden meaning to their artwork.

Similar to Zhang and Zeng's artwork, the students can identify several symbolic objects to use as their image(s) to express their cultural and/or social identities. By identifying objects and metaphors in Zhang's and Zeng's paintings, the students will learn how to utilize visual elements in their work of art. The students could be guided to select two or three personal items meaningful to them, which represent who they are and where they belong, to use in their artwork. They might explore the values and expectations set by their family and/or society, or ongoing inquiries of identity according to different cultural backgrounds.

By learning about Chinese contemporary artists such as Ai Weiwei, students can further develop their identity exploration through their analysis of social, cultural, and/or political issues. Each student can select a social issue that will represent their generation, culture, or society, and share it with three or four classmates as a group. While presenting the social issues to their group members, students will have the opportunity to retrospectively reflect on the issues with critical perspectives. They should be required to research their topic in order to get a thorough understanding of it and be critical. Based on their gained knowledge, the students can create their own visual narrative which could promote new ways of thinking about our society. They can further develop their art project by gathering public opinions about our contemporary culture. For



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instance, the students can post a survey questionnaire online and collect general opinions similarly to Ai Weiwei's approach.

#### Students' Artworks

To illustrate possible outcomes of the lessons described previously, I will introduce several students' visual narratives which focused on their identity and related social contexts. Their review will help art educators set expectations and gain a better understanding of how they can utilize and apply the three Chinese artists' artworks and approaches in their own classroom settings.

Similar to Zhang Xiaogang, a student in my undergraduate non-art major course was exposed to cultural transitions and changes resulting in his identity exploration in his artwork. The student visually examined his emotional conflict regarding his future in the context of these cultural expectations (see Figure 7). He stated, "I have come a long way to the United States . . . . Now I am in a quite confusing state: [M]y past [was] bright, but my future is unknown. I can foresee nothing except my passion for movies. I am wondering if I should choose movies as my future career, which could be quite challenging" (Student 01, personal communication, September 14, 2015). Being Chinese, the student indicated that some career paths, such as becoming a doctor or lawyer, are desired and expected by his parents and relatives. However, he hopes to become a movie director, an occupation that has been considered unstable financially according to his cultural background. In his artwork this student presented the cultural values and expectations connected to his concept of family "bloodline," the metaphor frequently used by Zhang. With a dark color tone and a depressed figure shadowed by his father holding his shoulders, the student's hesitation and depression prevail in the artwork, characterizing his emotions and struggles in relation to the cultural expectations for his future.

#### Figure 7

*A student example of an identity portrait, 2015, digital image. Used with permission*



Additionally, this student used multiple visual metaphors in the style of Zeng Fanzhi. For example, he used the image of a hallway with multiple doors as the background for his artwork. As he stated, "All the doors in the hallway . . . imply the choices and decisions I could have made

- some of them . . . could have led me to a brighter present” (Student 01, personal communication, September 14, 2015). Similar to Zeng’s figures who were wearing white masks in his Mask series, the main character in this artwork, the student himself, expresses anxiety and isolation, even though he depicted many possible paths for himself, symbolized by the multiple open doors. The student’s visual reflection on his own identity related to family and cultural expectations, and his confusion and struggles through the cultural transition are effectively presented in his artwork.

Another student actively applied several symbolic objects to his image (see Figure 8) in the same way that Zeng did in *The Last Supper*. Depicting the Statue of Liberty, the American and South Korean flags, a glass jar filled with folded-paper cranes, and a military shoulder mark, the student referenced key elements that influenced his life and personified what he became. He revealed that his portrait “truly describes who [he] is” and all those elements that “made [him] who [he is] today” (Student 02, personal communication, September 15, 2015). Also, he reflected on his past experiences and his relationships by stating, “I will always keep them near and dear to my heart, especially the friends and fellow Marines that are no longer with us today.” Each symbol represents an important aspect of his identity and culture. Cultural and social circumstances and other people’s influences and opinions have greatly influenced these two students’ identities, and both of their artworks portray them effectively (see Figure 7 and 8).

**Figure 8**

*A student example of an identity portrait, 2015, digital image. Used with permission*





## CHAPTER 16

### Exploring Visual Narratives of Self and Society

In another undergraduate non-art major course, a student criticized a social stereotype about gender that our society imposes on children. Inspired by Ai Weiwei who advocates social awareness and changes, this student conveyed her own opinion in her artwork while promoting social change (see Figure 9). She warned that “when purchasing toys for kids you have to be careful. You don’t want to get a toy for a boy that will make him feminine and you don’t want to get a little girl a toy that will make her masculine” (Student 03, personal communication, October 30, 2017). She criticized the social perception of underlying predefined classifications differentiating males and females. Similar to Ai Weiwei’s installations with students’ backpacks and refugee life jackets (see Figures 5 & 6), in her artwork this student presented her nephew as a victim of a social problem, wearing a rainbow colored t-shirt and playing with pink colored toys and a Barbie doll to symbolize the social issue of classifying gender. She also inserted the pink colored word “BARBIE” with the phrase, “The doll designed for younger girls,” which sparked critical dialogues, similar to the statement of Ai’s *Remembering*. The student questioned “Who the hell decided this?” By presenting the cases of her two-year-old daughter and seven-year-old nephew, she argued that people should reconsider their ways of thinking and not place children into separated designated “little boxes.” She asserted that both kids do not fit into the “normal” gender box. The boy in the artwork loved “Barbie dolls, baby dolls, and especially princess dolls” since the day he could select his own toys. They are “all he [has] ever ask[ed] for,” she said, asking, “Why does society tell him he is wrong? Why does he feel the need to hide his toys when his friends come over? Why must he ask my sister to have boy toys nearby so when his friends come he can pretend none of those dolls are his?” She concluded that “this is what society has done to our children. Society makes kids feel ashamed for liking toys not meant for them.”

#### Figure 9

*A student example of a social poster, 2017, digital image. Used with permission*



These three examples are just a few possible outcomes that show how K-16 students might conceive of their own unique visual narratives after learning about the three Chinese artists’ exploration of self and society. As stated, those contemporary artists bring various cultural and societal contexts into their identity exploration, a process that can be applied to any other cultural, historical, and social contexts.



### Chinese Contemporary Art and Beyond

A notable evolution of Chinese art in China was precipitated by social and political changes in the mid-1990s. During Mao's era, art was used to promote communist ideas. Artists were forced to promote the regime as their freedom of expression was controlled. Deng opened Chinese society to the Western nations during the post-Cultural Revolution (Vine, 2008). While experiencing the political turmoil and the influx of Western art and culture during this liberalization process, Chinese artists started to reflect on their identity in relation to society. Art then became a tool for expression, reflection, and attention.

By analyzing the works of Zhang Xiaogang, Zeng Fanzhi, and Ai Weiwei, three active influential Chinese contemporary artists in China, students can gain a better understanding of Chinese art and culture. They will realize how Chinese society has evolved and how the historical and cultural changes have affected individuals' and the nation's identities. Students will also learn how the artists represented the Chinese cultural transformation in their artistic practices and how they have shared those perspectives with their audience.

Furthermore, students can examine multiple approaches of experimental and challenging ways of thinking by being exposed to the artists' works. They can translate and apply concepts and ideas from Chinese contemporary artists in China to their own visual artworks. The analysis of one's identity and social issues would expand the students' understanding of their own cultural background. By voicing their opinions through deep contemplation and utilizing art as a communication tool, students can provoke new ways of thinking. Through art projects about self and society, students can challenge prejudices about themselves, family, peers, and social pressures, and initiate critical dialogues among viewers. Visual language plays a key role in making connections between cultural and social influences and artistic expression.

While exploring narratives of self and social issues in a visual format, people reconsider and question how they see themselves and their surroundings. Ai Weiwei says that "art can reveal the deep inner voice of every individual" (Ai, 2018a, p. 39) and "has to be involved with moral, philosophical, and intellectual conversations" (p. 94). Visual narratives initiate meaningful conversations when people contemplate their perspectives and express them with critical thinking.

Reflecting on self and society is critical in art education. In contemporary societies where ideological conflicts between and within countries prevail, individuals often get confused by who they are and why they exist. As political power and social pressure control people's perspectives, the general public often surrenders and adopts common biases. Although people can be connected to others through diverse channels, including internet platforms, they often get isolated and perceive themselves and society with shallow and superficial ways of thinking. Exploring their own identity and social issues surrounding and impacting them can expand their way of thinking with critical perspectives, and help them reconnect with themselves.

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CHAPTER 17

**Transpiring Sounds and Visuals:  
Teaching and Learning Through Contemporary Chinese Art in Taiwan**

Lilly Lu  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Hung-Min Chang  
Hsuan Chuang University

**Abstract**

Contemporary art consists of a dynamic combination of materials, methods, concepts, and subjects that challenges traditional boundaries and defines artists' changing cultural identities, values, and beliefs. Thus, teaching and learning through contemporary art has gained validity as a powerful and effective pedagogy for art education practice. This chapter begins with an introduction to contemporary art and a brief history of its development in Taiwan. Next, it features three contemporary Chinese art pieces by Taiwanese artist teams in the exhibit "Where Have All the Flowers Gone" at the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei (MOCATaipei) in 2019. By experiencing blended sounds (sonic fragments, songs, music, live recordings, etc.) and inter/transmedia, audiences are invited to use senses of hearing and sight to re-locate, re-interpret, and re-imagine the hidden, fading, floating, and fluidly visual memories triggered or presented by these contemporary art pieces, activating individual stories and collective community experiences. Following this, we propose a rhizomatic pedagogy to teach and learn through contemporary Chinese art and culture. Examples of students' personal reflections and responses to their selected contemporary art pieces are presented. Challenges and recommendations for teaching and learning through contemporary art in rhizomatic methods are recommended.

*Keywords:* contemporary art, inter/transmedia art, rhizomatic learning, Chinese art



Learning, teaching, and communicating through contemporary art have gained validity as a new pedagogy in art education practice (Graziano, 2015; Irwin & O'Dounoghue, 2012; Jove & Farrero, 2017; O'Donoghue, 2015; Romanski, 2019; Venäläinen, 2012). Contemporary art that combines diverse materials, forms, methods, concepts, and subjects provides artists a voice to challenge traditional boundaries and social norms or respond to changing cultural identities, values, and beliefs in a globally, culturally, and technologically advancing world (Art21, 2019). Artists' collaboration, inter/transdisciplinary, inter/transmedia, audience contribution/reflection/participatory performance/interaction with art, and sounds are recent emerging features of contemporary art practices (Dumbadze & Hudson, 2013). Thus, contemporary art provides new and different possibilities for thinking about art, learning, and education (Allan, 2008; O'Sullivan, 2006; Jove & Farrero, 2018).

In response to these trends in contemporary art, many Taiwanese artists, operating without a predetermined model, have challenged themselves by expanding their artistic creations into various fields, focus on everyday culture and create synergy through numerous methods of interaction among various sensory experiences. Through art installations, these artists strive to trigger an audience's fading or frozen memories about places, people, and events in time; they invite the audience to reflect on what is important in the past and now. Furthermore, the collaboration of multi-disciplinary creators (not limited to artists, audiences, and curators) has become an increasingly common phenomenon in the development of Taiwanese art today.

This chapter begins with an introduction to contemporary art and a brief history of its development in Taiwan. Next, it features three contemporary Chinese art pieces by Taiwanese artist teams in the exhibit *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei (MOCA Taipei) in 2019. By experiencing blended sounds (sonic fragments, songs, music, live recordings, etc.) and inter/transmedia, audiences are invited to use the senses of hearing and sight to re-locate, re-interpret, and re-imagine the hidden, fading, floating, and fluidly visual memories triggered or presented by these contemporary art pieces, which activate individual stories and collective community experiences. Last, we showcase art and design graduate students' reflections on their rhizomatic wandering of their selected art pieces and discuss the potential implementation of teaching and learning through contemporary Chinese art and culture in art classrooms.

### **Recent Trends and Themes of Contemporary Art**

Since the 1980s, the world has been rapidly changing, with many trends and movements providing important stimulation, fertilization, and contexts for artists to shape, challenge, enrich, and expand the art world. Today, artists are often fluent in several media, including traditional and new media, and freely mix them in innovative ways to meet their art intents. Beyond a desire to express personal emotions and visions or display a mastery of media and techniques, some active contemporary artists are motivated to create content that responds to political events, social issues, science, technology, mass media, popular culture, everyday life, built environments...etc. Thus, contemporary art is "a vast arena of diverse styles, techniques, materials, subjects, forms, purposes, and aesthetic tradition" (Robertson & McDaniel, 2017, p. 7). Robertson and McDaniel (2017) recognize eight recurring themes in contemporary art during recent decades: identity, the body, time, memory, place, language, science, and spirituality. Artists may not reflect ideas on these

themes consciously but embed them in their work. In their work, artists may convey one or more of these themes by investigating a subject with emotionally meaningful significance or implying their beliefs and values. In practice, viewers can consider each theme as an interpretive lens for exploring various levels of meaning that contemporary artworks embody. In addition to analyzing materials, techniques, and form by using this theme-based framework, viewers can also approach and examine an artwork's meaning from different perspectives; they can make sense of complex ideas and multiple layers of meanings expressed in artwork during the process of interpretation. These eight themes are broad and multi-level, intersecting in numerous ways. A majority of artworks can be viewed from a perspective of more than one theme. In this chapter, we focus on time, memory, place, and language (sound), as these themes are relevant and frequently used as interpretive lenses to examine the three Taiwanese contemporary artists' collaborative work in this chapter.

### **Contemporary Chinese Art in Taiwan**

In the 1950s and 1960s, Western modernization has become an ideology accepted by the people of Taiwan. In the 1970s, Taiwanese contemporary art highlighted the coexistence of tradition and modernity. Contemporary Taiwanese artists have begun to show their avant-garde character, producing works both critical of and echoing kitsch culture (Liu et al., 2009). Contemporary art in Taiwan started flourishing especially after the martial law was lifted in 1987.

While surveying contemporary (1980 – 2000) art in Taiwan, Hsieh (2003) emphasized the trend of Taiwan's contemporary art towards multiple forms of production. He states that most contemporary Taiwanese artists are influenced by Western art but the values or contents of their arts are very local. In the late 1980s, as alternative exhibition space emerged, avant-garde art—especially installation, photographic and video art—jumped into the mainstream of Taiwanese art. In addition to the rise of substitute spaces, the modernization of society and support from official organizations caused avant-garde artists in Taiwan to introduce new concepts and advocate new ways of exhibition. As Hsieh (2003) explained, “the changes in the physical life after the 1990's provided the best resources for ready-made creations, including the reflections on materialization of the society as well as the multidimensional and high tech development of creation materials” (p. 76). The theme of environmental care triggered by the current world environmental crisis is also reflected in works of Taiwan's contemporary art of this era. Taiwanese artists began to exert their social influence and call attention to the environmental crisis in their works in 1990s (Chiu, 2003).

International art historians' perspectives on contemporary art, artists' collaboration, inter/transdisciplinary and inter/transmedia with art, and sounds are new emerging components in contemporary art practice (Dumbadze & Hudson, 2013). In Taiwan, while artists have explored multidimensional and high tech materials, sound art has become another experimental artistic approach. Around 2000, the term “sound art” began to be used in Taiwan, allowing the possibility of sound creation to be continuously expanded and practiced in various ways. Whether it is familiar music such as pop, electronics, folk songs, or even sound experiments and creations, Taiwan's artists re-listened to the cultural and political significance of these sounds in different contexts. Artists attempted to rediscover the trajectory of “localization” of sounds, thinking about the possibility of sound being transformed again by their art (Ho et al., 2015; Hsieh, 2003).

## Where Have All the Flowers Gone—These Flowers. Musical Memory & Art Exhibition in Taiwan

We focus on three sets of contemporary artwork created by teams of Taiwanese musicians/songwriters and artists in a recent contemporary art exhibit “*Where Have All the Flowers Gone*” [小花計畫]: *These Flowers. Musical Memory & Art Exhibition* at the Museum of Contemporary Art Taipei in 2019. The purpose of the *These Flowers* project was to “portray each other’s memories, using popular music to recreate the lost rhythm and to recall the melodies buried in our reminiscence” (Fang, 2019, p. 8). Several musicians/song-writers and visual artists teamed up and presented their work via intermedia presentations (mixed media installations and music) in unique ways—the sense of hearing/music or sound art materializes the bone structure of memory; the sense of seeing/visuals visualizes the details of memory. Their multisensory art pieces are “relational, inviting viewers to interact with the works that help to trigger individuals’ recollection of memory” (Robertson & McDaniel, 2017, p. 193). As the curator and artist Joe Fang (2019) stated,

Gradually, we realize that *time* is a tender killer. As we chase after time, we have slowly forgotten everything we used to cherish. Those moments that we thought to be carefully preserved in our minds have lost their luster along with the course of seasonal cycles (p. 8).

By capturing warm memories with imagery and accompanying these with nostalgic music, the artist teams hope to stimulate in the audience an awareness of personal memories they wish to hold on to in life, and to generate active recollection of memories and affection for home and the land through the artists’ work.

### *XiaoDingDang in My Dreams* [我夢見了小叮噹]<sup>1</sup>

This interactive multimedia installation was created by the artist Cowper Wang to respond to the message carried out in the song composed by the band EggPlantEgg. In their nostalgia for childhood cartoon animations, EggPlantEgg expressed in the song that “childhood cartoons [in memory] are always more enjoyable [rather than current ones]!” This idea inspired the artist Wang in his work that enables one to “see the world from a fun-inducing perspective and become aware that time never turns back.” (Fang, 2019, p. 16).

To show the fluidity and pervasiveness of memory, the current moment when an audience is present is integrated into the exhibit space and incorporated into the flow of time with other audience consciously and unconsciously. Artist Cowper Wang views “the space as a gigantic scanner, for which he installs a house door that ironically cannot be opened, symbolizing that time is always moving forward in one direction and only allows exiting but not entering” (Fang, 2019,

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<sup>1</sup> Art info:

<https://www.mocatapei.org.tw/tw/ExhibitionAndEvent/Info/%E6%9F%A5%E7%84%A1%E6%AD%A4%E4%BA%BA%E2%94%80%E5%B0%8F%E8%8A%B1%E8%A8%88%E7%95%AB%E5%B1%95/%E3%80%8A%E6%88%91%E5%A4%A2%E8%A6%8B%E4%BA%86%E5%B0%8F%E5%8F%AE%E5%99%B9%E3%80%8B>  
Video is also available: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/h25lok49x01eoyh/IMG\\_3845.MOV?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/h25lok49x01eoyh/IMG_3845.MOV?dl=0)



p. 16). He sets up a video camera secretly “looking through the peephole to view the crowd outside the door and documenting the traces created by people going through this space manifested as irregular layers. They sometimes form concrete images, and are sometimes showed as dispersing, disappearing traces . . . Projected into the space, the visible memories flee in all directions and create a surreal scene with their morphing, distorting, floating and fluid existence, outlining the connection between memories and emotions” (Fang, 2019, p. 16).

### *One Way* [有前無後]<sup>2</sup>

To transform cultural tradition and meanings with new interpretation in new media platforms, the mixed media installation was co-created by musician Ying-Hung Lee, the Hsin Hsin Joss Paper Culture organization, and fashion designers Hans Chiy and Lee Chia Chuan.

In modern society, traditional paper-mache crafts in Taiwan are often culturally used as tokens of physical object offerings (such as houses, cars, outfits, human figures, etc.) sent from a family to a dearly departed person; these family gifts create wealth to be enjoyed in his/her afterworld paradise. The key concept of the paper-mache installation is to send messages to the dead by burning paper offerings, expressing “both our need to communicate and our unwillingness to let go of what we have lost, providing hope for the future and denoting our refusal to forget” (Fang, 2019, p. 15).

Produced by the Hsin Hsin Joss Paper Culture organization, one piece adopts “the form of the Taiwanese style paper house (three two-story houses connected sideways) following the traditional methods and design of traditional paper house offerings. . . The architectural style of these paper house has also evolved from copying traditional temples, to Han peoples’ three-section residential compounds to modernized Taiwanese two-story houses, revealing the uniquely hybridized style of paper-mache art in Taiwan” (Fang, 2019, p. 18). The boy and girl attendants, as companions in the journey to the Western paradise, stand on cranes, which are “a symbol for longevity and auspice as well as a reference to the euphemism, the deceased rides the crane and returns to the West” (Fang, 2019, p. 18). Usually, a traditional paper house displays the front and leaves the back blank. This tradition represents a metaphor that the dead person is “moving forward without returning or leaving anything behind” (Fang, 2019, p.18).

The fashion designers reinterpreted this paper house tradition and transformed the time-honored craft to a real-time dance party by installing a mini disco light to create a retro dance club vibe and used luminescent lights to outline the external form of the house in a modern tone. They mixed old and new paper materials for the interior to echo decorative styles of different eras, such as flowery wallpaper and modern floral fabrics. For the music, Ying-Hung Lee combined music of different eras and adopted a diverse and mixed-music style to portray the cultural meaning of traditional paper-mache offering—the imagination of an afterworld paradise. He also transformed

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<sup>2</sup> Art info:

<https://www.mocataipei.org.tw/tw/ExhibitionAndEvent/Info/%E6%9F%A5%E7%84%A1%E6%AD%A4%E4%BA%BA%E2%94%80%E5%B0%8F%E8%8A%B1%E8%A8%88%E7%95%AB%E5%B1%95/%E3%80%8A%E6%9C%89%E5%89%8D%E7%84%A1%E5%BE%8C%E3%80%8B>

Video is also available: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/as6kspoi8ic4fga/IMG\\_3844.MOV?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/as6kspoi8ic4fga/IMG_3844.MOV?dl=0)

the mourning for the dearly departed into a dance party, providing a fresh interpretation of paper-mache offerings and their significance.

### *Incomplete Memories* [台灣是好所在]<sup>3</sup>

This panorama video installation was co-created by musicians Giong Lim and Point Hsu as well as artists Pang-Chuan Huang and Tsai Meng Chang to document the memories of disappeared home and childhood.

In their music, Lim and Hsu blend synthesized music and traditional Taiwanese folk melody of “Doumadio” to “portray the vibrant energies that connect the new and the old, ushering in a fresh music style through amalgamating or colliding different elements” (Fang, 2019, p. 5). In terms of the video installation, Huang, interprets disappearing time through imagery by “using frames of images to show a series of photographed figures, objects and scenes, unveiling fragments of life through whispering sounds. A quaint sentiment informed by the nostalgic feelings for one’s native home as well as a sense of familiarity can be perceived in the work” (Fang, 2019, p. 5). In addition, the five paintings of Chang feature his native home and respond to “the cherishment of land and the feeling of gratitude expressed in the lyrics of the song. The representation of tranquillity and time in the paintings materializes the artist’s emotion and documents the challenging journey of the older generations; at the same time, these paintings also preserve the artist’s memories of a disappeared home and childhood” (Fang, 2019, p. 5). These artists embark on a quest to provide a home for the spirit of this land and their personal understanding of life and its rhythm. Their work reflects on contemporary culture that “brings the environment and folk culture into focus” (Fang, 2019, p. 5).

### **A Pedagogical Model: Contemporary Art and Rhizomic Learning Theory**

Due to its multidimensional, multisensory, and complex nature, many art educators believe that contemporary art provides a great learning opportunity as a field of activities, a process, and a journey of creative actions that involves both the artist creating the piece and the person experiencing it in art classrooms (Venäläinen, 2012). They consider contemporary artworks as sites of artistic knowledge and learning environments where audiences can perceive, interpret, and reflect on their art experiences to construct meaningful connections and develop self-knowledge.

Some art educators have considered or implemented rhizomatic learning when teaching and learning about and through contemporary art (Garoiian, 2012; Irwin et al., 2006; Jove & Farrero, 2018; O’Sullivan, 2006; Poling et al., 2012; Shin & Bae, 2019; Wilson, 2003; Wiebe et al., 2007). The rhizome learning theory is a contemporary mode of knowledge and a culture model based on the theoretical framework of French philosophers Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987). They used “rhizome,” such as ginger or crabgrass that extends horizontal stems and shoots from their nodes, as a metaphor to describe the organic nature of knowledge. The non-hierarchical knowledge

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<sup>3</sup> Art info:

<https://www.mocataipei.org.tw/tw/ExhibitionAndEvent/Info/%E6%9F%A5%E7%84%A1%E6%AD%A4%E4%BA%BA%E2%94%80%E5%B0%8F%E8%8A%B1%E8%A8%88%E7%95%AB%E5%B1%95/%E3%80%8A%E5%8F%B0%E7%81%A3%E6%98%AF%E5%A5%BD%E6%89%80%E5%9C%A8%E3%80%8B>  
Video is also available: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/x41f0u932j6vce8/IMG\\_3858.MOV?dl=0](https://www.dropbox.com/s/x41f0u932j6vce8/IMG_3858.MOV?dl=0)



networks can be accessed from multiple entry and exit points. Knowledge (research and thoughts) is interconnected but has no beginning and end or even particular pathways in the system. This framework focuses on the interactive relationships among a convergence of access points, such as elements, conditions, and forces in a given situation. Thus, this framework best represents and interprets knowledge as fluid, non-hierarchical, nonlinear, and decentred (Robertson & McDaniel, 2017) in contemporary times. One example of a rhizomatic model of knowledge in contemporary times is the Internet. Users navigate the Internet (knowledge networks) to find new and needed information. With advancing web technology, many educators in higher education have embraced rhizomatic learning in their practices. For example, Canadian open educator Dave Cormier (2010, 2012) challenged traditional hierarchical models of education by implementing experimental rhizomatic learning in massive open online courses that encourage self-directed learning. Another example is the artist Keith Tyson's contemporary art piece, *Large Field Array* (2006 – 2007, see Figure 1) that conceptualizes and visualizes the rhizomatic ways of accessing knowledge.

**Figure 1**  
*Keith Tyson's contemporary art, Large Field Array*



It assembles 300 sculptures into one cohesive installation and embodies a reconnoitering of reality from the diverse perspectives represented. The piece implies that no single field of knowledge can provide all the information or answers or frame the most probing questions.... Individual sculptures include appropriations from other artists...A visitor can move through the cubes on the floor via multiple pathways of his or her own choosing: forward, sideways, diagonally... Each visitor is responsible for imagining his or her own visual psychological, and philosophical connections and meanings among the disparate units. The artwork proposes that everything can be linked without the control or singularity of a hierarchical structure. (Robertson & McDaniel, 2017, p.38)



The whole installation, comprised of pieces of objects, represents a collection of knowledge. With autonomy, visitors can start with any particular piece (entry), continue to their next choices (connect), stop (break or exit), and continue the process (reconnect). At the end of the experience (exit), they derive individual insights or understanding as their new learning and knowledge construct meaning.

Cormier (2012) lists five features of rhizomatic learning for implementation. First, it can map in any direction from any starting point (not necessary to mandate a node as a start or connection). Second, it grows and spreads via experimentation within a context. Third, it grows, spreads, and stops regardless of breakage. Fourth, it fosters learning through uncertainty. Last, it is better suited for complex domains with no singular answer. Namely, rhizomatic learning can start, stop, and connect or reconnect to at any access point with no mandated structures. Such learning can grow and spread organically and freely, and its movements or breakages can be traced on a map.

Art educators Irwin and O'Donghue (2012) and Jove and Farrero (2018) launched rhizomatic wanderings through contemporary art in their art education practice. In their courses, preservice art teachers engaged in rhizomatic thinking and enjoyed the freedom to create knowledge and reshape their understanding of education. They assert that contemporary artworks can be sites of learning or places in process for students during rhizomatic wanderings that expand, challenge, and enrich their learning.

We agree that the “rhizome” concept with multiple access points metaphorically indicates the nature of artistic knowledge. We believe that the application of rhizomatic learning can match the features (multidimensional, multisensory, and naturally complex) of contemporary art. Viewers and students can respond to the components of contemporary art that trigger them according to their knowledge and experiences; they will follow the triggers and emerging components into the next new exploratory entry or exit points and so on. During each rhizomatic wandering, viewers can better perceive, interpret, understand, and respond to contemporary art in a reflective or meaningful manner that contributes to their learning, which is a unique construction of self-knowledge through confirmation, acquisition, and construction.

### **Rhizomatic Encounters with Contemporary Chinese /Taiwanese Inter/transmedia Art**

In this section, we present Chang’s rhizomatic approach to Contemporary Chinese art as created by Taiwanese artists’ teams.

During the 2019 spring semester at Hsuan Chuang University in Taiwan, Chang taught the elective course “Special Topics: Research Symposium.” The purpose of this course was to help graduate students explore and identify personal research interests and develop and apply research inquiry skills to produce and advance their knowledge in art and design-related fields. The class consisted of six art and design graduate students, all with different backgrounds related to art and design, including visual communication design, web design, beauty industry, elementary art education, and industrial design. One of the instructor’s instructional strategies was visiting an inter/transmedia art exhibit for students to understand, respond to, and discuss their experiences and learning artifacts.

Students visited the contemporary Chinese /Taiwanese art exhibit *Where Have All the Flowers Gone* that aimed to recall the audience's memories along with other themes, such as "place," "time," and "language/sound" identified by Robertson and McDaniel (2017). Combining popular music and interactive and interdisciplinary media in their works, the artist teams intended to trigger the stories and moments buried in viewers' memories as well as uncover what they value and reconnect them to the aspects of their lives they wish to maintain.

The instructor designed her activities for this course project based on rhizomatic learning, which included field trips to contemporary art exhibitions, presentations, and student reflections. For the scheduled field trips to contemporary art exhibits, the instructor provided the following guiding questions to launch students' rhizomatic wanderings with self-identified entry and exit points on one chosen art piece.

- 1) What are the rationales and purposes of the exhibit?
- 2) Based on your reflection and insights inspired from your chosen artwork,
  - a. What is the artist's intent in the art piece?
  - b. What are your responses to the art piece?
- 3) How will you integrate your responses, reflection, and insights into your future art practice, design, or research?

During their visits to the exhibition, students were free to look around the exhibition. With autonomy, they chose one art piece and determined their entry and exit points (what to observe, how to interact, and what information to contemplate) in the exhibition spaces, participating in rhizomatic knowledge acquisition and construction as well as generating research interests. In addition to the three guiding questions, students were told to document their experiences by taking notes and photos for later reflection. After visiting the exhibitions, students shared and discussed their learning artifacts of individual rhizomatic encounters as a collective knowledge construction in a group setting.

### **Students' Reflections on Rhizomatic Wanders with Chinese Inter/transmedia Art**

In this section, students' reflection examples are presented. First, students addressed the guiding question about the rationale and purposes of the exhibits. Second, they addressed the guiding question about their interpretation of the artist's intent and responses. For example, Student 1 states, "The artworks convey the concept of 'the last thing you want to let go' for audience to consider and reflect on something in memories." When commenting on *XiaoDingDang in My Dreams*, Student 4 explained her interpretation of the message and associated it with another work in the exhibit.

From another perspective, it's actually a bit scary, much like a human soul being taken away and devoured. I feel it perhaps echoes the installation work *One Way* on the opposite side. (Student 4, personal communication, June 3, 2019)

The mixed-media installation *One Way* [有前無後] (see Figure 2), which transforms mourning for the dearly departed into a dance party, actively triggered students' personal and collective experiences of burning paper offerings for the deceased (a cultural tradition). Student 1 reflected:

Among the artworks, my favorite piece is the traditional paper house offerings. It breaks the traditional established viewpoint and transforms the paper house form burned to the deceased into a happy and lively party event [with party upbeat rhythm and shining disco lights in the exhibit space]. (Student 1, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Student 1 recalled the Chinese traditional event (cultural objects, place, and time) from her memory, which is closely connected to place and time (Robertson & McDaniel, 2017). She noticed that the culturally “sad” and avoided event was hosted as a cheerful and inviting party event in the museum.

**Figure 2**

*One Way* (left and right). This Taiwanese-style papier-mache offering house used colored paper cuttings to decorate the exterior of the house. Photography courtesy of Student 1, 2019



Viewing the imagined after world paradise portrayed in *One Way* [有前無後] (see Figure 2), Student 2, in her reflection, described and examined the cultural taboo, commented on the new perspective (humor and a joyful moment in another world), and noted a new attitude to observe the traditional, forlorn event.

This work surprised me. In the daily life, most people usually avoid getting involved in the various sacrificial offerings in funerals [as cultural taboo], including the paper house burned to the deceased [except in the case of a family funeral]. The artists boldly pack traditional paper house offerings with humor and upbeat party music. Saying goodbye to the deceased is not necessarily sad. It is also a party-like and joyful [moment] in another world. (Student 2, personal communication, June 11, 2019)



**Figure 3**

*Audiences gathered in the disco light of One Way, put on headphones, and listened to upbeat party music. Photography courtesy of Student 2, 2019*



When interacting with the interactive installation work *XiaoDingDang in My Dreams* (see Figure 3), two students recalled their naïve childhoods and happy memories of watching the cartoon, *XiaoDingDang*. Student 3 wrote the following statement.

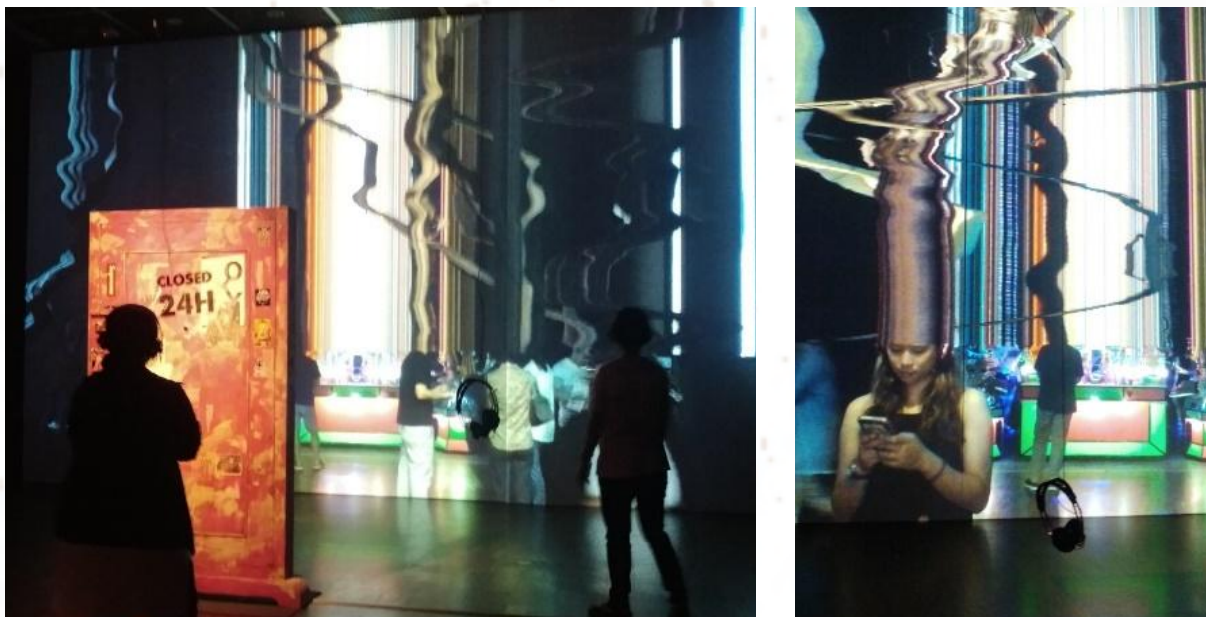
This installation work *XiaoDingDang in My Dreams* is linked to the childhood time. Using the universal memories of audience in Taiwan, artists make us relive the old dreams of childhood and return to the youthful time with toys/objects scattered on the floor to satisfy all kinds of wishes and dreams. (Student 3, personal communication, June 11, 2019)

Student 4 perceived the ideas of the passage of time and the anxiety of growth that the artists intend to convey. She noticed that the representation of distorted, human-shaped traces of time projected into the space referred to a viewer's blurry memory over time and interpreted that the passage of time can never flow backward.

This piece of work is very special. When you walk past, all visitors including me integrate into the work and interact with music and visuals. Your swing shows different curves, just like jumping notes in music. This makes me feel that childhood memories are becoming more and more blurred. The traces of time are visualized in space, and concurrently it makes people retrieve the childhood memory. (Student 3, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

**Figure 4**

*XiaoDingDang in My Dreams (left and right). The artist turned the magical door in the cartoon animation into a video camera that secretly recorded, traced, and projected visitors' movements on the big screen. Photography courtesy of Student 3, 2019*



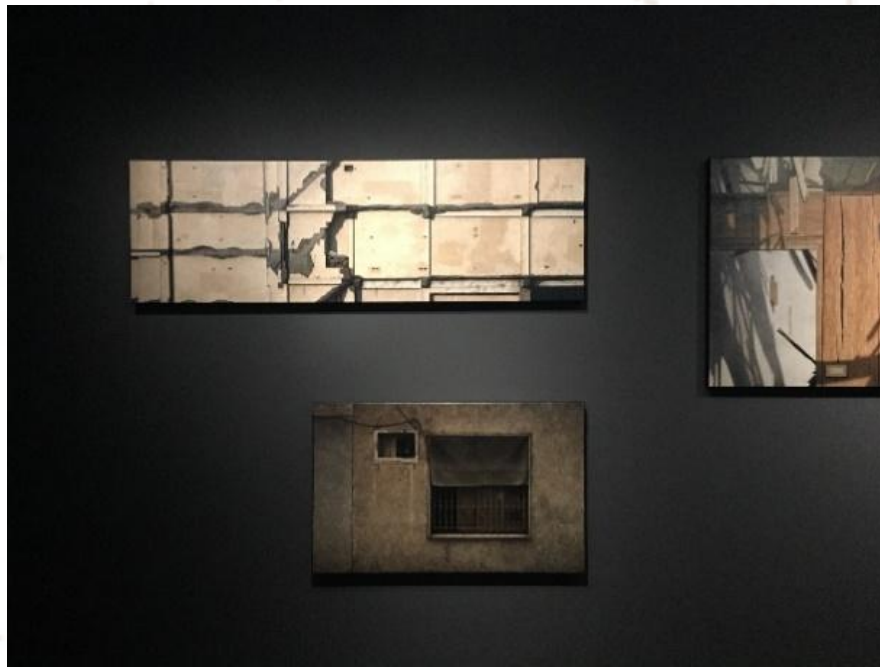
Student 5 commented on the use of music in “Incomplete Memories” (see Figures 4 and 5). The panoramic video installation played electronically synthesized music based on traditional Taiwanese folk tunes to indicate the fusion of contemporary and folk cultures. Student 5 perceived harmony while simultaneously observing visuals, sound recordings, and music in that art space. She wrote the following reflection.

Among all installations that combine music and visual works, the first thing that attracted me was a series of five paintings depicting the artist’s hometown. The oil paintings are based on the projection of light and shadow on various early old houses. They are full of flavors, evoking people's imagination of the nice old simple life. Then I noticed the video installation showing old pictures played frame by frame, describing people and things recorded in traditional photos. Playing frame-by-frame old-fashioned documentary film gives a sense of nostalgia. As for the music part, electronic music may only be enjoyed by certain young people. It is better to have [such] music [played from] traditional Chinese instruments, early record music styles, or general modern pop music. (Student 5, personal communication, June 11, 2019)



**Figure 5**

*Incomplete Memories. In the painting series, the old tiled wall (above) and old iron window (below) featured the artist's native home. Photography courtesy of Student 5, 2019*



**Figure 6**

*Incomplete Memories. Frames of images display a series of photographed figures of older generations in the panoramic video installation. Photography courtesy of Student 2, 2019*





Students moved beyond one rhizomatic wandering and further associated it with another artwork in the exhibit. For example, when commenting on *XiaoDingDang in My Dreams*,<sup>4</sup> Student 4 explained her interpretation of the message received from this artwork and compared it to another artwork in the exhibit.

[After interacting within the artwork *XiaoDingDang in My Dreams*], it's actually a bit scary, much like a human soul being taken away and devoured [from happy childhood memory to scary distorted human soul]. I feel it perhaps echoes the [another] installation work *One Way* in opposite [from sorrow mourning to cheerful and fun party]. (Student 4, personal communication, June 5, 2019)

Student 1, Student 2, and Student 4 associated memories evoked from their rhizomatic wanderings with their current practice or future research interests for the third guiding question. Student 1, specializing in visual communication design, is currently undertaking a project about college students learning computer graphics. Student 1 began to consider unconventional methods to help young people learn in a non-traditional way because of the insights she gained from *One Way*—the new interpretation of papier-mache offerings presented with upbeat music in a party-like event (see Figure 1). Inspired by “One Way” [有前無後] (see Figure 1), she made the following comment.

The artist brought the “taboo” paper house that was used to burn to the deceased in the traditional funeral to the art museum. The party dance music was used to echo people uploading information to the cloud and expressing various things that they did not want to forget. I have always been interested in how to inspire us, the young generations, to understand traditional folk customs in a way (such as digital platform) [that is] familiar to us. This work seems to show me the way. (Student 1, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Student 2, who was interested in using clay to convey Taiwanese customs, had an “aha” moment while listening to the party music and standing under disco light in front of the paper offering house in the media installation *One Way*. She elaborated and integrated her insights into her current art project.

It redefined the meaning of sacrifice. Paper house offering is a traditional Taiwanese craftsmanship. This has given me a lot of inspiration for the zodiac clay dolls I am creating. (Student 2, personal communication, June 10, 2019)

Student 2 identified the resemblance between sending messages to the dead by burning paper offerings and uploading information to the cloud. She also realized that humorously telling stories can convey messages more effectively.

Student 4, who is a beauty shop owner, was motivated by the work *XiaoDingDang in My Dreams*, (see Figure 3). She began planning how to create a relaxing and cheerful experience for customers in her shop. She explained:

This artwork intended to awaken the imagination that exists in our body [life] but is buried because of our “growth” [into adulthood]. I hope that I can keep the fun and novel attitude to see everything and the world. This piece also made me think about how to transform the current working space so that customers can enter my space [store] to release all the annoyances and connect with the most innocent self. (Student 4, personal communication, June 12, 2019)

These integrated insights and new knowledge are unique and meaningful. Students described their responses and addressed their takeaways and the applications to their work, profession, or personal lives. They shared and discussed their rhizomatic wanderings in the classroom as collective knowledge.

### **Challenges and Recommendations for Future Practice**

By experiencing blended sounds and inter/transmedia, students applied senses of hearing and sight to initiate their rhizomatic wanderings. They could re-locate, re-interpret, and re-imagine the hidden, fading, floating, and fluidly visual memories triggered or presented by these contemporary art pieces; this activated individual stories and collective community and cultural experiences. They could also discover the things they value and reconnect to the aspects of life they wish to presently maintain as new, emerging knowledge, insights, and meaning-making.

From our experience, many students completed the first and second inquiries—acknowledging the purpose of the exhibit and artists’ intentions for their chosen art pieces. Most students could also complete the third guiding inquiry—integrating their learning into their future practice or research interests. However, few students may have challenges benefiting from this rhizomatic learning model with contemporary art. Two possible causes may account for the challenges experienced by these students. They may not have been able to easily adapt to this rhizomatic method of learning because it requires students to freely decide their entry and exit points to construct self-knowledge and meaning-making during each art visit. This could prove to be a barrier for students who are accustomed to the typical, linear approaches of learning in traditional classrooms and have limited experience with the rhizomatic approach. Another possible cause could be their previous experience with contemporary art. If students had limited experience with contemporary art, they may have been overwhelmed by suddenly perceiving artwork from multiple access points (i.e., inter/transmedia, a mix of themes, and sometimes complex content). Thus, students who have limited experience with rhizomatic learning or contemporary art must take time to adapt to the approach.

To eliminate the challenges, an instructor can prepare students for a transition with some exercises or activities of either rhizomatic learning or contemporary art in class before their rhizomatic wanderings. This practice is recommended not only for art teachers in post-secondary institutions but also for upper elementary and secondary education. Prior experience with contemporary art and rhizomatic approaches of learning are the keys to helping students maximize learning through the proposed pedagogy in art classrooms.

## Conclusions

In this chapter, we provided a brief overview of the characteristics of contemporary art and rhizomatic learning theory. After providing historical context for contemporary Chinese art development in Taiwan, we featured three unique, contemporary Chinese art pieces from three Taiwanese artist teams in a 2019 exhibit. Transpiring through the intersection of sounds and visuals, these artworks transform into rich art spaces that provide visual, sonic, and thematic triggers. Audiences can perceive, recall, contemplate, and reflect upon their past and/or present moments to make meaningful connections and/or constructing personal and professional knowledge. After discussing the pedagogical model of rhizomatic learning and contemporary art, we presented learning artifacts from students' meaning-making and knowledge construction during their rhizomatic wanderings and addressed challenges and recommendations.

The practices of rhizomatic wanderings and contemporary art are open or indefinite in nature; they are diverse in content and form. A rhizomatic pedagogical model enables students to take ownership in establishing their relationships and dialogues with the artwork as well as creating personal knowledge and meaning. Thus, teaching and learning in rhizomatic approaches through contemporary art can generate personal reflection as the basis for further rich classroom discussion in the context of Chinese art and culture in contemporary art education praxis.



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## CHAPTER 18

### **Developing Pre-service Teachers' Cultural Competence Through an Art Curriculum Focusing on the Culture of Taiwan**

Li-Hsuan Hsu  
University of Wisconsin Oshkosh

#### **Abstract**

This chapter delineates and analyzes a culture-based and arts-integrated curriculum implemented in a course for non-art education pre-service teachers at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. The purpose of this curriculum was to a), prepare pre-service teachers to incorporate a new culture into their future teaching, b), develop students' abilities to reflect on how they conceptualize their own culture in order to develop pathways to learn about cultures other than their own, and c), connect this culturally-responsive awareness to the complexities of cultural nuances presented in our society today. This curriculum contains three parts: discovering a new culture, discovering historical and contemporary art and culture, and internalizing cultural understanding through artistic creation. The students were engaged in dialogues and artistic creation to develop cultural understanding and curiosity, which encouraged them to construct culture-based knowledge individually and collectively while exploring an unfamiliar culture through newly gained perspectives in a collaborative classroom environment.

*Keywords:* cultural competence, culture-based curriculum, arts-integrated curriculum, culturally responsive collaboration, Taiwanese culture



## Introduction

Culture-based curricula can generate rich, in-depth discussion between individual students and a class as a whole; exploring cultures collectively empowers them to appreciate and recognize cultural experiences. This curriculum was influenced by my own personal experience of pursuing a higher education in two culturally and philosophically different countries. Being able to recognize tangible and intangible similarities and differences and actively becoming interested in further discovery are essential for exploring a new culture.

Learning about any culture besides one's own requires active investigation of cultural nuances by oneself instead of passive reliance on insider knowledge from others. Students developed meaningful cultural connections when learning about a new, unfamiliar culture. According to White (2009), "New experiences provide the basis for our instinctive striving towards meaning" (p. 45). Dissanayake (1995) also emphasized the importance of comprehensiveness and explanatory power in the process of making our experiences special. Because I am originally from Taiwan, I selected the culture of the country of my origin for this curriculum. The intention of this chapter is to discuss the creation of a culturally responsive classroom and instructional strategies that generate students' motivation, active thinking, and ownership of new knowledge related to culture.

## Four Principles of this Curriculum

This curriculum guided students' self-reflections and built their social consciousness, which contributes to their awareness of inclusive practices as seen through the lens of culture. As pre-service teachers move into their professional careers in K-12 classrooms, the abilities and competencies they develop through this curriculum can help them remain open-minded and humble when approaching students of different cultural or ethnic backgrounds. According to Gay (2000), there are two directions for the transformative agenda of culturally responsive teaching:

One direction deals with confronting the transcending cultural hegemony nested in much of the curriculum content and classroom instruction of traditional education. The other develops social consciousness, intellectual critique, and political and personal efficiency in students so that they can combat prejudices, racism, and other forms of oppression and exploitation. (p. 37)

Our lives are intertwined with many unknown others due to the increasingly diverse population in the United States. Therefore, educators must teach students ways they can "relate better to people from different ethnic, racial, cultural, language, and gender backgrounds. These relational competencies must encompass knowing, valuing, doing, caring, and sharing power, resources, and responsibilities" (Gay, 2000, p. 21). Through having and reflecting on new cultural experiences, students discover differences and similarities between other cultures and their own, increasing their awareness of their own culture and their respect for others. In this curriculum, I have focused on the following four principles to promote culturally-responsive teaching.

### **To Help Students Learn about a New Culture with Respect and Confidence**

This curriculum engaged undergraduates in culturally-responsive discussions and activities, enhancing their abilities to ask questions and participate in conversations about a culture outside of their own, with respect and confidence. The open-endedness of this curriculum honored the students' choices, which played an important role because they developed their project ideas based on the emphases they chose and were inspired by learning about the culture of Taiwan. The diversity of students' projects demonstrated the evidence of individual students' cultural exploration and interests.

The arts were seen and recognized as expressive tools to construct meaning. Through this arts-integrated teaching approach, the students progressively developed ownership in the process of artmaking and generated values and meanings of their cultural discoveries. Marshall (2006) asserted that art practice promotes art education that “looks at art in an anthropological way – examining how art expresses cultural values and meanings” (p. 17-18). Studying a culture other than one's own can be challenging by itself. This curriculum directed my students to recall how they framed an understanding of their own culture (seems important to indicate the cultures of the students) as a starting point from which to form questions and seek answers about a new culture. During this process, the students became more confident by piecing together cultural discoveries, and also became more curious and respectful as they explored a new culture.

### **To Emphasize the Students' Roles as Artists, Researchers, and Cultural Interpreters**

This curriculum encompassed the elements of visual arts and cultural understanding and appreciation. It also emphasized the students' roles as artists, researchers, and cultural interpreters. Parsons (1998) argued that “to think is to make connections” (p. 110) and that the integration of knowledge lies “proximately in the curriculum plans of teachers and ultimately in the understanding of students” (p. 104). When engaged in the opportunity to study a new culture, the students demonstrated their understanding by executing self-directed rationales and creating visual artwork. These processes involved making connections and constructing meaning through individual research and personalized artistic creation. The students gained cultural knowledge through their individual interpretations. Their understanding of this knowledge was then shared as they were encouraged to transform their personal insights into artistic works that were understandable to others and meaningful to themselves (Barrett, 2011). Barrett (2011) emphasized that individuals' artwork is necessarily grounded in the context of their life histories, which was evident in the artwork created by these students. Desai (2000) reminded us that art educators should be open to the idea that students will receive our representations of culture from each of their social and historical locations with different readings.

In this class, the students were encouraged to consider ways they conceptualized their own cultures and utilized them when exploring a new culture. For example, while one Native American student was interested in an aboriginal culture in Taiwan, another was curious about different cuisines Taiwan has to offer. Both of the artworks created by these students will be discussed later in the chapter. The various aspects of culture that students explored in class were interconnected to form a new understanding of an unfamiliar culture through the students' collective contributions. More importantly, this multi-layered process of cultural exploration helped them

define techniques they can utilize when studying and analyzing new cultures in their future classrooms.

### **To Honor Individual and Collective Perspectives in Classrooms**

Both individual and collective knowledge and research were encouraged in this curriculum. This inspired the class to learn from their peers' perspectives while also recognizing and honoring individual ideas. The students learned how their classmates approached an unfamiliar culture and exchanged their personal cultural experiences. This cultural learning and exchange process enabled "growth of cultural understanding, identify, and self-esteem (Elliott & Clancy, 2017, p. 26)." This collaborative environment was built so "crosscultural and intercultural interactions" could be analyzed, discussed, and negotiated (Stuhr et al., 1992). Learning the culture of Taiwan through this curriculum expanded the possibility for students to creatively research and understand a different culture through art. It was my goal to help the students develop methods to activate their learning of cultures and articulate concepts and creation through a cultural lens. Sullivan (2010) indicated that studio art experiences include a variety of ideas and images that "inform individual, social, and cultural actions" (p. 72). For me, this is the important initial step to motivate students to explore this diverse, boundaryless world, feel empowered to actively engage in further cultural studies, and celebrate their cultural knowledge through artistic creation.

### **To Value Cultural Experiences as an Insider and an Outsider**

A question such as who is empowered and disempowered in educational processes challenges educators to reconsider and confront their cultural and social biases. Educators can challenge their own assumptions and biases by being open to participating in real communication about how others from different backgrounds view the world (Wasson et al., 1990). Chalmers (1981) also argued that art educators should emphasize art's function in society beyond decoration and enhancement. Furthermore, Chalmers (1981) highlighted the importance of art's role in communicating with its audience, which plays a key role in whether art maintains or changes cultures.

Buffington (2019) indicated that many cultural projects simplify cultures and are based on "shallow stereotypical understandings of culture" (p. 20), which are usually inspired by social media platforms such as Instagram. Smith (1994) explained that the values of various cultures are gathered together to form a more humane culture. In my classroom, students shared questions and curiosity regarding the culture of Taiwan while being encouraged to connect their understanding of a new culture and their own established cultural understanding. Bowman (2003) emphasized that it has become vital to develop a learning environment that embraces the multicultural reality of our generation. This speaks to the importance of developing pre-service teachers' abilities to recognize this need and apply it in order to create an inclusive classroom.

In the context of this curriculum focused on the culture of Taiwan, I was a cultural insider while my students were considered cultural outsiders. Despite our differing cultures, we never had a one-way exchange of knowledge. Through conversations and open discussions, we developed mutual respect and awareness of how each individual approached and experienced culture differently. Although I offered perspective on and authenticity of my personal cultural experience



in Taiwan as a cultural insider, students' questions, wonders, and curiosity as cultural outsiders certainly challenged me and other students to reflect upon our cultural exploration processes.

## Curriculum and Pedagogy

### Exploring a New Culture

Culture is a complex concept to define. Adejumo (2002) explained that culture entails human behavioral patterns and constructed environments. Members of a culture utilize symbols to communicate important ideas and emotions and categorize those symbols into material and non-material culture. Kuster (2006) defined culture as the process and product of a group of people bound together by a certain combination of common factors. Culture constantly changes "because it is influenced by factors that are dynamic in nature and multicultural competence causes students to better understand how each person within a society affects and is influenced by others, thus contributing to the on-going definition and the creation of culture" (Kuster, 2006, p. 33). Our learning about different cultures is also constantly changing as the experience of our own cultures and exposure to others' increase and evolve over time.

To unpack the complex concept of culture and allow students to explore its many definitions, this curriculum began with an open question: *What is culture?* Students were asked to individually search for different definitions of culture while considering the following sub-questions: a) *Which definition of culture do I find that resonates the most with me?* b) *What personal, cultural, educational, and social influences do you realize when you are filtering the different definitions?* Students shared which definition they chose and their reasons, which allowed the whole class to learn different perspectives of culture. The students were then asked *What is Taiwan?* This question was raised to encourage them to focus on and learn about a culture that is not their own and to empower them to discover cultural facts based on their personal interests and curiosity. Posting these initial questions set the foundation of this curriculum and led the students to get involved in processing culture as a complex, intangible concept that could be interpreted from many perspectives.

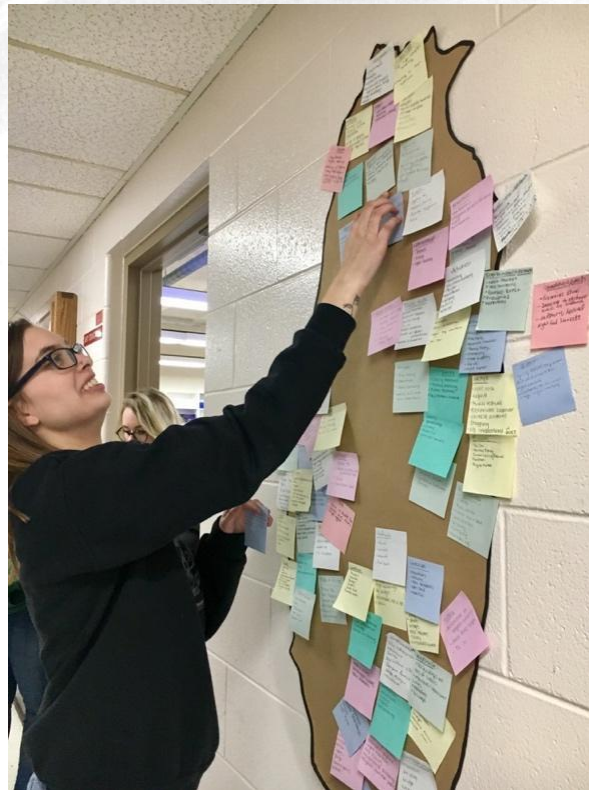
An effective culture-based curriculum empowers students in the educational process and utilizes their knowledge, experiences, values, and skills in the formation of teaching activities and learning (Stuhr et al., 1992). Students' discovery of culture and which aspects to focus on are influenced by their past experiences and learning. Encouraging them to study a new culture as the starting point of this curriculum served two purposes. First, it challenged the students to revisit their perceptions about cultures. Second, it provided them with new perspectives from others in the class. The students shared their findings about the culture of Taiwan, and as more students shared their discoveries, students built collective cultural learning experiences with one another.

The students collaboratively created a *Post-it Taiwan* display turning an empty slate into a concept map full of their newly-gained understandings of Taiwan, which was unfamiliar to everyone at the beginning of the class (see Figure 1). This activity encouraged them to be confident in their personal discoveries yet open to a critical dialogue. This openness to engage in dialogue was essential for the students to learn different perspectives from others and, thus, potentially widen their pathways for learning (White, 2009). I viewed my role as a facilitator instead of an

authority, generating an inquiry-based learning environment for my students to expand their perspectives with their cultural knowledge and lived experiences. I, as an insider, offered my personal insights about the culture of Taiwan, and I encouraged the students' independent explorations, and dialogues between me and their peers in the classroom. Thus, the students built an understanding of Taiwan not only from my experiences but also based on their self-directed research and collective learning.

**Figure 1**

*Displaying the students' discoveries as a collective Post-it Taiwan Poster that represented their collective understanding of the culture of Taiwan*



**Discovering Historical and Contemporary Art and Culture**

As an immigrant, I have discovered that learning new languages provides pathways to approaching new cultures. Language is connected to verbal communication. Learning both spoken and written languages expands our understanding of usable information about different communities and cultures. By expanding our understanding of a foreign language, we not only gain communication skills but also develop ways to comprehend the nuances between cultures. To aid my students in seeing connections between the Taiwanese and American cultures, I introduced the structure of Mandarin characters and the major Chinese calligraphy styles used throughout time. Chinese calligraphy demonstrates the history of the language and has been widely considered a significant art form that represents Chinese culture. Teaching students the basics of this calligraphy helped them see Chinese as a different language structure as well as its aesthetics and evolution.



While teaching the students how to write Chinese calligraphy, I introduced the basic elements and principles of writing Mandarin characters and helped them execute various strokes. To learn the structure of a new language and its writing system, the students needed to comprehend the principles of writing characters. To further their understanding, I had them practice creating multiple Chinese art forms using bamboo brushes, black ink, and water. The students carefully observed and painted an image of flowers in a vase and applied Chinese painting techniques such as adding different amounts of water to ink to create multiple elements of art (the range of light to dark) on rice paper (see Figures 2 and 3). I also introduced them to Chinese masterpieces created by Chang Dai-Chien and Chi Pai-Shih in order to examine and analyze different styles and brushwork. They were encouraged to select themes and compositions before finishing their artwork with a colophon. Each finished work included a meaningful term as its title, each student's name in Mandarin, and each student's English name in the form of *New English Chinese Calligraphy*.<sup>1</sup> Figure 4 shows the collection of students' finished artwork, featuring various styles in their use of ink, writings in calligraphy, and choices of theme.

**Figure 2**

*Students used bamboo brushes and black ink to practice Chinese painting and calligraphy*



<sup>1</sup> Although the presentation and demonstration both require experiences and abilities in Chinese painting and calligraphy, teachers who are interested in teaching this lesson can also focus on the *New English Chinese Calligraphy* created by Xu Bing, a Chinese American artist who integrates structures and methods of Chinese characters in written English. Students in this class were also introduced to this invention and asked to generate their English names and include them in their artwork followed by their names in Mandarin.



**Figure 3**  
*Students used ink and water to practice creating different shades in their paintings*



**Figure 4**  
*Examples of students' Chinese paintings and calligraphies*



During their critique of this project, the students viewed their classmates' artworks, discovered and compared the styles created by them, and made connections between the project they had completed and what they had learned about Chang Dai-Chien and Chi Pai-Shih.

One student reflected that “Chinese calligraphy is an extremely hard thing to do when you are learning it for the first time. I give so much respect to those that have the talent to be able to do it successfully especially because it is such a precise, beautiful thing” (Student # 1, personal communication, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019). By encouraging the students to learn about the Taiwanese culture through the act of creating Chinese calligraphy and paintings, I was able to witness their surprises about and appreciation for a culture that was new to them. In addition, when I guided the students to examine Chinese calligraphy and paintings from different periods in history, it was particularly important for them to see how art and culture have been practiced and transformed over time. This portion of the curriculum covered a great amount of historical context in Chinese culture, which helped one student discover the historical and contemporary connections in this culture:

When going through the calligraphy and painting, I could see the traditions passed down through artwork over time and that are still practiced today. I feel that art is one of the largest components of culture, as it shows free expression from certain time periods and the progression of the culture over time. (Student # 2, personal communication, October 5<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

During the next segment of this curriculum, a group project, I emphasized the contemporary living environment in Taiwan. Each group selected a modern style of architecture from Taiwan currently open for public visits and studied its history, design, function, and style. After identifying a specific architecture, the students collaborated with their peers to create a group artwork. The groups worked together to decide the composition, style, and medium for their designs and then created a representation of the architecture in a hallway showcase (See Figure 5).



**Figure 5**

*Group architecture project featuring the Taipei Public Library Beitou Branch, highlighting the architecture's greenhouse design and cohesive planning with its surrounding landscape*



I encouraged my students to use a variety of materials and media based on the group members' strengths and collective vision. I allowed more flexibility in their artmaking choices for this project, as my intention was to let them exchange ideas while they studied an unfamiliar cultural environment. Through these decision-making processes, the students recognized their own and their peers' strengths in artmaking. Through collective research and informal conversations with me, the students developed an understanding of their selected architecture and its connections to its surrounding environment in the community.

A three-step teamwork critique activity concluded the group project. This activity provided the students with opportunities to showcase their collective artwork, critique other groups' designs, and be inspired by various cultural creations in Taiwan. The students offered written feedback using a list of critique categories indicated in Step 2 in Figure 6, which corresponded with the expectations of this group project. They first completed the worksheet with their own group (see Figure 7). After each group completed their worksheet, the whole class participated in a show-and-tell session in which each group presented their architectural design while other groups raised questions and offered feedback (see Figure 8). This process required the students to interpret and



explain their work of art by making sense of their creative processes, learning that project descriptions, interpretations, and judgments are interrelated and interdependent (Barrett, 2012).

**Figure 6**

*Project critique worksheet. This worksheet was used to guide the students to summarize their own creative processes and provide critiques for their peer groups*

Cultural Studies: Architecture in Taiwan

**Three-Step Teamwork Critique Activity**

**Overview** || During this critique, you will work with your architecture group to complete the following tasks. There will be time designated to your group discussion before each group's presentation. Two primary tasks during this critique include *reflecting on your group work* and *offering feedbacks for another group*.

**Step 1: Presentation – Show and tell**

- \_\_\_\_\_  Ask everyone a question when the class gathers in front of your showcase
- \_\_\_\_\_  Tell us about your artwork and introduce the architecture you represent
- \_\_\_\_\_  What was our strength?
- \_\_\_\_\_  What was our challenge?
- \_\_\_\_\_  If we had the chance to do this project again, what would we do differently?

**Step 2: Providing your feedback for another group**

Pick three from the following list to share your feedbacks:

- | Composition | Creativity | Color Blending | Balance | Storyteller | Line |
- | Craftsmanship | Curiosity | Uniqueness | Background | Appreciation |

**Step 3: Personal Reflection – Unpack your teamwork experience**

**Figure 7**

*Students completed the critique worksheet with their group members*



**Figure 8**  
*The class participated in a show-and-tell session with group critiques*



### **Internalizing Cultural Understanding through Artistic Creation**

In the final assignment of this curriculum, the students developed a visual artwork that highlighted their individual discovery and fascination with the culture of Taiwan. They connected what they had learned so far with their prior cultural experiences to draft a piece of art unlike anyone else's. One student was a Native American, who was interested in exploring the aboriginal culture of Taiwan. She shared the following idea regarding her final work (See Figure 9):

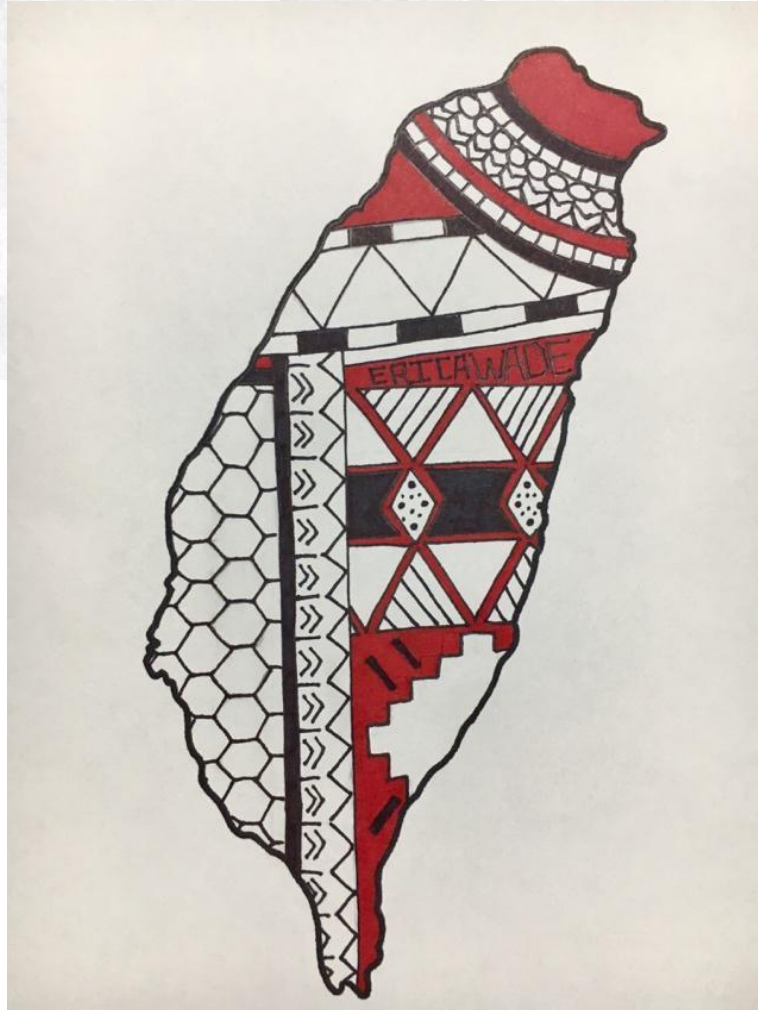
I was drawn to so many aspects of Taiwanese culture and the location in itself and what it has to offer, but I was truly intrigued by the aboriginal culture of Taiwan. All of the visual symbols I included in my artwork were taken directly from images of genuine and unique aboriginal tattoos I was able to find. While an entire tattoo is not represented by this work, I have stitched together nearly 10 tattoos to form a cohesive piece of art. I was able to hone in on what was unique to my interests. I feel this allowed each student in the classroom to relate to Taiwan on an individual level. I was not shown what is important to someone from Taiwan but what stands out as a whole. (Student # 3, personal communication, December 12<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

Barrett (2011) stated that knowing one's intent is a critically important part of the learning process. He also argued that thinking about what one wants to express is important to guide their creative process. By examining the rationale behind the students' choices, the class learned how personal cultural experience can be a thread woven into our curiosity and discovery when exploring a new culture.



**Figure 9**

*Example of one student's representation of visual symbols found in the aboriginal culture of Taiwan*



Another student was fascinated by the variety of cuisine in Taiwan and included several authentic Taiwanese food items in her poster (see Figure 10). She explained her creative process and design as follows:

I loved the open-endedness of this project and how I was able to research various foods in Taiwan because I believe that foods in various cultures tell a lot about the people. I selected elements of food because food says so much about the influences of an area and the resources that they have available. I also think it is imperative to try foods from different areas to get a better understanding of the people who live there. I selected the bubble tea as my background because it is the most popular and signature drink of Taiwan! Within the bubble tea I selected three other popular drinks, food, and dessert to represent the popular cuisine in Taiwan. (Student # 5, personal communication, November 19<sup>th</sup>, 2019)



**Figure 10**  
*Example of a student using cuisine to relate to the culture of Taiwan*



The students self-selected one cultural aspect that was meaningful to them as the concept for their artwork, which provided an opportunity for them to easily bridge cultural connections from their own familiar cultures to a new, unfamiliar one. Smith (1994) stated that the self-images of students can be improved by the study of their own ethnic heritages. When it comes to learning a new culture, I explained to my students the importance of not forgetting or waiving one's own cultural understanding. I also noted that exploring the connections between cultural experiences and interpretations should be applied across cultural studies, including the cultures of others and of oneself. The intention of this approach was to help the students recognize and honor their culturally- and socially-fostered knowledge, beliefs, and values (Wasson et al., 1990). By activating their own awareness when learning about new cultures, the students became more likely to be sensitive and aware of cultural nuances and diversity. It was inspiring to see them present their cultural perspectives and artistic creations. In addition, through this collective study of culture in Taiwan, the students respected and learned from various creations and concepts from other peer

students. This peer learning is an important part of the classroom dynamic to generate a positive learning environment. This aspect of the project corresponded with Adejumo's (2002) argument about positive experiences making students more likely to share what they learned with other members of their own culture through culturally and socially relevant experience in visual arts.

### **Conclusions**

By implementing this cultural-based art curriculum, I did not demonstrate my role as an authority to speak for Taiwan; instead, I shared my personal experiences and insights. Moreover, the students learned that one's personal experiences do not and should not generalize to others who share the same cultural heritage, because each of us carries an individualized point of view. Another essential element I asked my students to keep in mind is that each individual comprehends and processes cultural understanding in unique ways, and knowing part of a culture is not the same as knowing the whole. Therefore, learning about cultures, whether others' or our own, is an ongoing process, and most importantly, each individual culture and the overall human culture evolve over time.

My students' role in my classroom was not to passively learn from the cultural perspectives I shared, rather, to reflect on how they recognized and experienced their own culture. The students then used those processes of internalization to relate to the new culture they had learned about and form a cultural competence in a collective learning environment. To summarize--honest, democratic conversations and learning in cultural exploration demand space for one to not only recognize how they approach their own culture but also how they embrace, celebrate, collaborate, and co-exist with other cultures to transform the collective cultural experience.

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CHAPTER 19

**Teaching about Contemporary Chinese Artists in  
Ceramics, New Media, and Installation Art**

Maria Lim  
The University of North Carolina-Greensboro

Borim Song  
East Carolina University

Eunjung Chang  
Francis Marion University

**Abstract**

Today's art teachers are interested in introducing different cultures and artifacts in their classrooms to help students gain cultural sensitivity. The demands for teaching resources for Asian art and culture are growing at all levels in American public schools. However, to some extent, Asian art, culture, and philosophy have been underrepresented and misrepresented in American art classrooms. So why is teaching contemporary Chinese art especially relevant in the American classroom today? The purpose of this chapter is to feature six contemporary Chinese artists and their artworks to offer relevant lesson ideas and paradigms in order to explain why teaching Chinese art is relevant. This chapter highlights instructional resources for art educators who seek to expand their teaching strategies for non-Western art, especially Chinese art. We have provided three lesson segments in this chapter to help art teachers develop clear learning objectives and meaningful artmaking activities in order to broaden their students' understanding of Chinese art and their cultural horizons.

*Keywords:* contemporary Chinese artists, teaching about Chinese artists, Chinese artists in ceramics, Chinese artists in new media, Chinese artists in installation art.

## Introduction

The teaching and learning of Chinese art and culture is underrepresented with insufficient instructional resources could misrepresent Chinese art in American art classrooms (Shin et al., 2017), as well as rapidly generate stereotypical notions of Asian art and culture, as simply related to Chinese lanterns or Japanese fans. On the other hand, students will benefit from an inclusive educational experience when art educators encourage them to explore various cultural artifacts that convey historical narratives and principles. The students can deconstruct common stereotypes and reconstruct personal meanings by examining and interpreting artworks from other cultures. Teaching and learning about artists from various cultures can help teachers and students expand their global perspectives and understand international trends (Manifold et al., 2016; Young, 2011).

Why is teaching contemporary Chinese art especially relevant in the American classroom? As we struggle to address our challenges as a global community, learning about underrepresented art and artists from Asian countries, especially China, can create tremendous value in art education classrooms. Notable modern Chinese artists have contributed to various international art scenes for decades. Furthermore, contemporary Chinese art has already demonstrated its potential to communicate and engage with global audiences (Chung, 2012; Marshall, 2010). In this chapter, we offer ideas, methodologies, practices, voices, and styles of teaching contemporary Chinese art and artists. We carefully chose three different art forms as this chapter's topic because they have significantly influenced the international visual art field for decades. The artists we selected create art by experimenting with and exploring the relationship between historical knowledge and contemporary agendas in making art. This chapter features six contemporary Chinese artists and their artworks. The deconstruction and reconstruction methods in their artmaking process become vital tools for lesson activities. The central focus for student learning, the essential question for studio prompt, and guiding questions for class discussion are provided in this chapter to help art teachers develop vibrant learning activities to broaden their students' cultural horizons. We describe three different lesson segments (ceramic, digital art, and installation) in the following.

The first segment of this chapter presents two ceramic artists, Ming Bai [白明] (1965 –) and Hongyu Tan [譚紅宇] (1971 –). They create ceramic vessels and clay sculptures, exploring historical and artistic connotations through traditional techniques and modern perspectives. The second segment highlights two young media artists in the current Chinese art scene, Xiaoyi Chen [陳蕭伊] (1992 –) and Ying Miao [苗穎] (1985 –). Through their utilization of digital art, video, and photography, they seek to deepen our understanding of the world we now inhabit. Chen and Ying's artworks encourage us to reflect on our society and culture with a critical and artistic view. The third segment focuses on two installation artists: Xu Bing [徐冰] (1955 –) and Wenda Gu [古文達] (1955 –). These artists used deconstruction and reconstruction methods to examine and amplify the process of meaning-making, juxtaposing traditional objects and modern spaces. While conventional Chinese language is prevalent in much contemporary art, the appearance of the Chinese words and texts in Xu's and Gu's installation works becomes a considerable aspect of their creative performance--depicting culture, origin, sign, and identity.

Deconstruction is a form of criticism influenced by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in the 1970s. "A deconstructive approach to criticism involves discovering, recognizing and understanding the underlying and unspoken and implicit assumptions, ideas and frameworks of

cultural forms such as works of art” (TATE, n.d., para. 1). In the constructive artmaking practice, deconstruction is the process of understanding the historical and contextual information of artifacts or concepts, and reconstruction is finding the universal or individual meaning by critical analysis driven by the deconstructing process (Nardelli, 2017). Although the artists discussed in this chapter demonstrated contemporary ideas and practices in various art forms, the underlying philosophies and conceptual foundations of Chinese culture and social value significantly influenced their artistic inspirations. These artists are challenging their daily routines to deconstruct traditional understandings in artmaking and reconstruct new narratives and meanings through creative journeys and sophisticated artwork.

### Segment I: Ceramic Artists Ming Bai and Hongyu Tan

Chinese ceramics have continuously developed since the pre-dynastic period, and are one of the unique forms of Chinese art (Ceramic Studio Prague, n.d.). Chinese ceramics have inspired various civilizations and cultures in regard to the length of history and depth of knowledge. Even though contemporary Chinese artists often break with traditional paradigms, they generally find ways to connect their new artistic visions to their cultural heritage (Ceramic History, n.d.).

As many other contemporary ceramic artists do, Ming Bai investigates personal voice and the meaning-making processes in his ceramics by orchestrating traditional techniques and modern narratives. He is on a personal quest for authenticity in the art medium with his painting experimentation on a ceramic surfaces. Bai’s vessel *Perfection with Defects Series-Ink Poem* (see Figure 1) demonstrates such transformative and experimental practices with his skills and knowledge in clay, including wheel-throwing, glazing, and kiln-firing, rendering both modern and traditional approaches for seeking personal meanings. Ming Bai portrays images and patterns that engender calm and natural sentiments. On a vessel for his work *Lingering* (see Figure 2), Bai combines blue and white to create a pictorial painting in a delicate style, emphasizing the repeated design to elaborate on his passion and affection for his Chinese cultural roots. In his book, *Bai: The New Language of Porcelain in China* (2018), he describes his studio practice as conceptual experimentation, infused with deconstructing his cultural background and traditional ceramic knowledge and reconstructing his own artistic meanings in visualization. The patterns painted on *An Ode to Soft Lines* (see Figure 3) appear scrambled, reminiscent of pondering over one’s personal struggles or confusion, but Bai explains that the piece demonstrates “the desire to renew a connection between China’s past and China’s present by experimenting within a theoretical and material culture provided by the West” (Bai, 2018, p. 12). Felicity Aylieff at the Royal College of Art described Ming Bai’s artistic practice as the deliberative deconstructing and reconstructing process:

Bai introduces us to his thinking, deliberations, and contemplations through a series of themes or headings, exploring the different inquiries in his art. He begins by discussing clay, a material as old as the earth. Bai looks at how it can take on different states, be molded, manipulated, squeezed, stretched, and formed as it has been throughout millennia. He sees clay as having limitless expression. He talks about how it can bring life and meaning to objects. As a material, it bonds us with nature and is essential to humankind. (Bai, 2018, p. 7)



**Figure 1**

*Perfection with Defects Series-Ink Poem, diameter 56 cm, 2006*



**Figure 2**

*Lingering, diameter 29 cm, 1995*



**Figure 3**  
*An Ode to Soft Line, height 46 cm, 2012*



The second ceramics artist, Hongyu Tan, is the daughter of a traditional potter. Tan grew up in her father's pottery factory in Shiwan [石灣], where she gained extensive knowledge and skills in creating clay sculptures. Having been rooted in ceramics that encompassed traditional techniques and contemporary concepts, Tan embarked on her own expressive journey of global issues, such as human rights, gender, climate change, environment, and nature (Tan, n.d.). Tan presented sophisticated visual narratives that reflect a more profound indulgence in life and surroundings. As Jacques Kaufmann (2015), Vice-President of UNESCO, asserted:



Tan Hongyu's work is part of just such an effort and can be likened to anthropological work attempting to document techniques and ways of life that are in danger of disappearing. Informed by her own practice of ceramics and motivated by a real sense of urgency, Tan identifies aspects of ceramic practices that are rooted in issues such as rural life and local needs, the transmission of techniques handed down over generations, utilitarian and symbolic functions. (p. 6)

Hongyu Tan's ceramic installation *Cloud* (see Figure 4), exhibited at City Pavilions for the 10<sup>th</sup> Shanghai Biennale, symbolizes her homeland's serious and extensive pollution issues. To develop her concept, Tan used deconstruction and reconstruction methods to explore the issues she chose. As a result, *Cloud* became a poetic and introspective visual representation, depicting a critical feminist's perspective as a global citizen aware of today's environmental problems in China and the world.

According to Jacques Kaufmann (2015), "against a bygone rural background, Tan presents us with a world marked by the domestication of animals, the rhythms of small-scale agriculture, and the traditional songs that accompany periods of work and rest" (p. 5). Tan often used red terracotta clay to affirm her tenderness for the earth, people, and life (see Figure 5). Tan's clay piece *Figures* depicts human figures in abstract form and composition driven by reconstructing her own meaning of life. It conveys her visual curiosity, showing her appreciation of clay's historical and cultural values (see Figure 6). Her artistic perception and studio practice focused on deconstructing cultural and global issues and reconstructing them by expanding and connecting them with her personal interest and awareness of her heritage and the environment she came from (Tan, n.d.).

**Figure 4**  
*Cloud*, 2014





**Figure 5**  
*Untitled, 2012*



**Figure 6**  
*Figures, 2012*



## Classroom Connection

### Artist Examples: Ming Bai and Hongyu Tan

**Classroom Setting:** Appropriate for secondary to college students in the United States. Consists of five 90-minute lessons, including artist introductions, clay demonstration, cultural research, personal interest brainstorming, and ceramic studio-clay building, glazing, firing, and final critique.

**Central Focus:** Ming Bai and Hongyu Tan applied traditional techniques, cultural heritage, and personal interests to demonstrate their artistic concepts and ideas. This lesson's central focus is for students to understand how cultural background and personal interests impact artistic practice by deconstructing conventional knowledge and reconstructing personal values and meanings.

**Essential Question for Student Prompt:** How do traditional ceramic techniques, cultural understanding, and personal interests influence an artist's creativity?

### Guiding Questions for Class Discussion:

- What conventional ceramic methods and basic knowledge do you think the artists used to create their clay work?
- What cultural backgrounds and current personal interests do you think the artists convey in their artwork?
- How would you interpret and combine the findings from your cultural research and personal interests in contemporary visual representations?
- How are Ming Bai and Hongyu Tan's creative practices implemented by deconstructing traditional knowledge, techniques, and concepts and then reconstructing new meanings for a central element of their artmaking?
- What practice of deconstructing and reconstructing did you apply in your artmaking process?

**Lesson Activities and Tips:** Individual or group research projects will help students explore the relationship between their own cultural backgrounds and current topics of their choice. After being introduced to Chinese artists' deconstructing and reconstructing practices in artistic meaning-making, the students apply what they have learned, examining artifacts from their cultural heritage or historical clay artifacts from China. Then they research their chosen topic from the perspective of contemporary visual culture. With opening research, the instructor allows students to brainstorm and develop relevant concepts. Students can deconstruct their research information and combine two different visual representations from their own cultural history and contemporary visual culture. As learning outputs, students reconstruct new meanings by creating their own original clay work (see Figure 7). Art teachers can facilitate a group discussion using the guiding questions to engage students to initiate their studio practice.



**Figure 7**  
*Ceramics creations by American high school students*





## Segment II: New Media Artists Xiaoyi Chen and Ying Miao

China has many young artists who create new media art with the use of digital technology. Among them, this section introduces two female artists, Xiaoyi Chen and Ying Miao. We approach the digital art of contemporary artists who work with new media from the perspective of the digital humanities, which Burdick et al. (2012) defined as “a creative practice harnessing cultural, social, economic, and technological constraints to bring systems and objects into the world” (p. 13). Xiaoyi Chen and Ying Miao featured in this segment also employ the process of “digitization, classification, description and metadata, organization, and navigation” in their art practices, as other digital humanists do (Burdick et al., 2012, p. 17).

With her interest in a natural, oriental aesthetic, Chen’s artistic practice was influenced by a combination of Western abstract art and Eastern philosophy. Her series integrates photography, printmaking, video, installations, and even book art. She utilizes the actions of simplifying and abstracting to rediscover and reconstruct “spiritual awareness and intuition before entering the symbolic nature of what we view” (Chen, n.d.-a, para. 1).

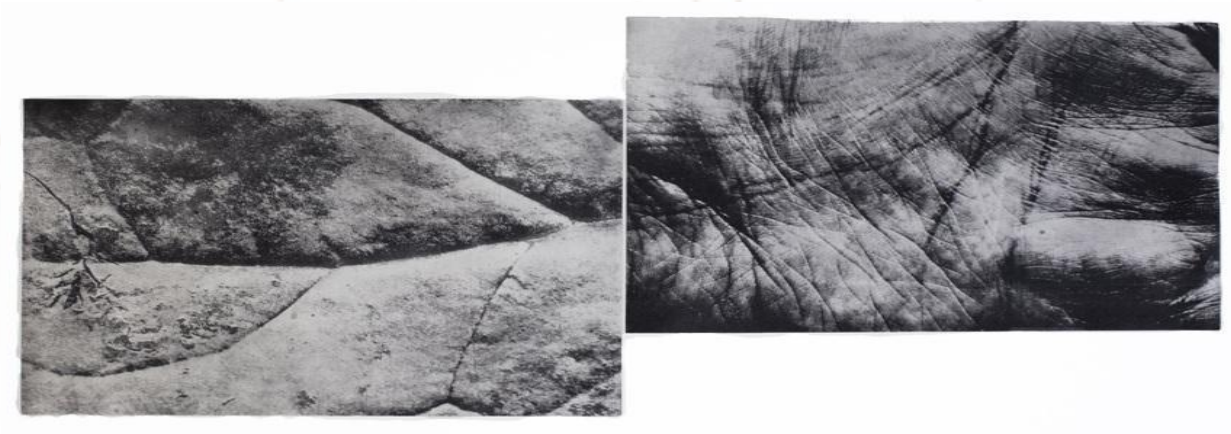
Arnold (2016) described Chen’s work as “[m]ining inspiration from the natural world and Eastern philosophies such as Tao and Zen” (para. 7). Photography serves as a personal tool for Chen’s interest in conceptual art, “used to question broad concepts that migrate from the personal to the philosophical realm” (Lensculture, n.d., para. 2). In her *Koan* series (see Figures 8 through 10), a collection of selected abstract landscape photographs, Chen incorporates a photo-etching technique with various traditional Japanese papers. Describing *Koan* as “imaginative and poetic” (Chen, n.d.-b, para 1), Chen, in a sense, uses this concept as her tool for the process of deconstructing how we perceive the physical world and reconstruction of new meanings and existence. Using only black ink, these works aim to present the atmosphere of melancholic desolation and the minimalism in ancient Chinese poetry and monochromatic ink painting. Chen attempts to artistically explain her interests in nature and geographical research and Eastern philosophy using the form of conceptual art.

### Figure 8

*Xiaoyi Chen, Koan, mixed media, 2014*



**Figure 9**  
*Xiaoyi Chen, Koan, mixed media, 2014*



**Figure 10**  
*Xiaoyi Chen, Koan, mixed media, 2014*





**Figure 11**  
*Xiaoyi Chen, The Stranger, media installation, 2018*



Another artist featured in this segment is Miao Ying (see Figures 12 and 13). In her digital work, she questions technology and its impact on our daily lives, particularly regarding issues around politics and people's reactions and responses in creative ways with digital use (Ying, n.d.). Using a thread of humor, Ying examines “her Stockholm Syndrome relationship with censorship and self-censorship in the Chinese Internet (The Great Fire Wall)” (Ying, n.d., para. 2).

**Figure 12**  
*Miao Ying, Post Commentary, Monetary Likes, Morgan Freeman's Advice on Reality, screen shot of the website, 2016*





Ying actively uses the Internet as her critical filter of society. In the New Museum's exhibition in 2016, this artistic practice was described as follows:

*Chinternet Plus* (2016) is what she describes as the official unveiling of a “counterfeit ideology,” a parodic take on the original strategy of Internet Plus (see Figure 13). The work is essentially a guide for how to brand an insubstantial idea, suggesting that, in the case of political branding, in particular, media can easily stand in for the message.....Miao recounts seeing censorship as “the enemy” and wanting to change it with this work. (New Museum, n.d., para. 1-2)

Ying's use of multiple digital/non-digital forms, including the browser, apps, print, and installation, can inspire today's students to deconstruct their own cultural and societal values and reconstruct them by visual examination.

**Figure 13**

*Miao Ying, Chinternet Plus, fresh images #No. 10, website, 2016*



**Classroom Connection**

**Artist Examples:** Xiaoyi Chen and Miao Ying

**Classroom Setting:** Appropriate for grades 9-12 in the United States: Consists of three 60-minute class sessions: a) Exploring the work of Chen and Ying for art appreciation, b) Creating web pages based on a critical examination of daily life-studio practice, and c) Discussion of the web pages-art critique.

**Central Focus:** The central focus of this lesson is for students to understand that artists utilize a filter of critical thinking to examine their everyday lives and daily routines, creating artworks based on this critical inquiry. Through exploring Xiaoyi Chen and Miao Ying's art pieces, students investigate how artists use photography and digital art to express their interests and critically assess

social events by deconstructing their knowledge and visual images and reconstructing their personal values. Moreover, students create web pages about their interests based on examining their cultural experiences, social surroundings, and relationships with the people around them.

**Essential Question for Student Prompt:** How do you present your daily lives and personal interests in web art pieces using your daily routines as a critical lens?

**Guiding Questions for Class Discussion (see Figures 8 to 11):**

- What do you see in these images? What do they remind you of?
- Are there any other things you notice in these photographs? Do you see any symbols?
- Do you notice any differences between these photos and photos that you see in websites, magazines, and books? What are the differences? Please explain.
- Why do you think Chen used black and white photography for this series?
- Regarding the title of this series, the artist made the following statement: “In Zen Buddhism, a Koan is a story or riddle used to help in the attainment of a state of spontaneous reflection, free from planning and analytical thought” (Chen, n.d.-b, para 1). Do you find any connection between the meaning of the title and these images? Was the artist successful in delivering that message visually? Why or why not?
- How is the process of deconstructing and reconstructing Chinese philosophy the critical aspect of Xiaoyi Chen’s art?

**Lesson Activities and Tips:** First, during the art appreciation segment, the art teacher guides the students in exploring the photographic images and websites by the two Chinese artists, Xiaoyi Chen and Miao Ying. The teacher can use the suggested questions as a discussion guide to engage the students with the Koan (see Figures 8 to 10) and the *Stranger* (see Figure 11) series by Xiaoyi Chen. The students also explore the work of Miao Ying, including *Chinternet Plus* (See Figures 12 and 13). Then, they are asked to write statements about the topics they have chosen as the focus of their own critical inquiries into society and everyday life. Based on their selected topics, the students can collect photo images that reflect their culture and social contexts. In the second session, which involves studio practice, the students create their own web pages focusing on personal storytelling, using web-page making software (e.g., Adobe Spark). They can make one or two web pages based on their personal stories and critical examination of society, incorporating photo images that reflect their everyday lives. In the last session, the students share their web pages with the class and discuss what they tried to depict and express through photos, storytelling, and web page creation. Figures 14 and 15 present the web pages created by students.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> More student examples created with the use of Adobe Spark are available in the following links:  
<https://spark.adobe.com/page/6a4qouIR9xfy6/>  
<https://spark.adobe.com/page/hbEYbb6hIxEFJ/>  
<https://spark.adobe.com/page/nVz9fxxQXSWvN/>  
<https://spark.adobe.com/page/g0CaZZU2BOGzD/>  
<https://spark.adobe.com/page/t9QzljsoFzEub/>

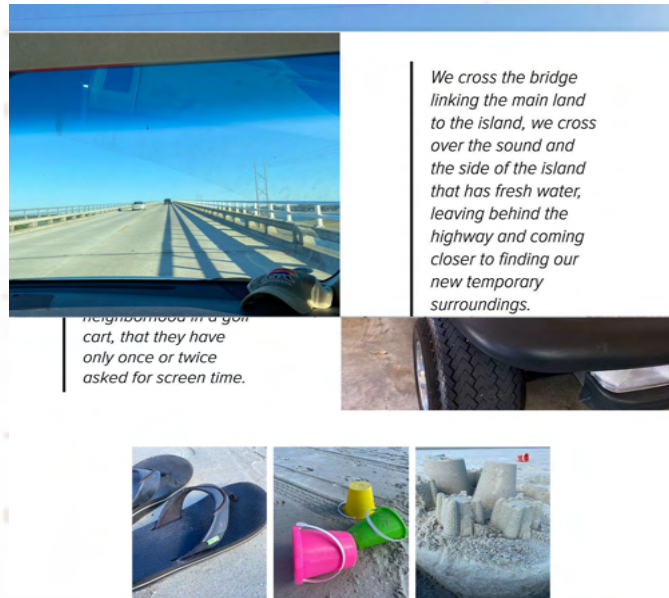
**Figure 14**  
*Graduate student examples of website creation*



As an art teacher I teach them to “Make something special, Create meaning, Learn to look with discrimination.” But who is



**Figure 15**  
*Graduate student examples of website creation*



### Segment III: Installation Artists: Xu Bing and Wenda Gu

Xu Bing is known for his printmaking and installation art; his creative use of words, text, and language; and his influences on our understanding of the world. His *Book from the Sky* (1987 – 1991) is a massive installation featuring precisely laid out rows of books and hanging scrolls with written texts (see Figure 16). Xu created 4,000 characters, which were hand-carved into



woodblocks. This installation work challenges our approach to language because his characters who looked Chinese were found to be meaningless and inherently deceptive modes of communication. Xu expresses the sense of language's immortality while illustrating the impermanence and capriciousness of words (Jerome et al., 2006). Language becomes malleable, and it can be fashioned to have either a liberating or controlling effect.

**Figure 16**  
*Xu Bing, Book from the Sky, 1987 – 1991*



Xu focuses on political messaging about the role, purpose, and reality of language through his works. After the June 4<sup>th</sup> student-led democracy movement held in Beijing, commonly known as the Tiananmen Square Protests of 1989, Xu's artworks came under inspection by the government and received harsh criticism for what was perceived as a critique of the Chinese government (Lau, 2011). Political pressures and artistic restrictions caused him to move to the U.S. in 1990. In particular, Xu plays with “the notion of the paradox between the power and fickleness of language, of what it means to be human, and how our perceptions color our worldview” (Bembo et al., 2013, p. 247). The constant linguistic changes during Mao's Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976) and the standard Chinese language reorganization influenced Xu's art of creating these unreliable characters, adopting traditional Chinese art in his artistic expression to be contemporarily yet distinctly Chinese.

**Figure 17**  
*Xu Bing, Ghosts Pounding the Wall, 1990*



His monumental project *Ghosts Pounding the Wall* (1990), which created a stone rubbing from a section of the Great Wall using entirely traditional Chinese methods and materials, directly reflected China's political situation (see Figure 17). It is translated from Gui Da Quang as "a wall built by ghosts," a Chinese aphorism meaning to be stuck and trapped in one's own thinking. In other words, Xu represents "a kind of thinking that makes no sense and is very conservative, a closed-in thinking that symbolizes the isolationism of Chinese politics" (Britta, 2001, p. 6). His works, like *Ghost Pounding the Wall*, exemplify how to message social and political issues through art. Xu continually creates large installations that question the idea of communicating meaning through language and demonstrating the manipulation of written texts.

Wenda Gu is another Chinese artist whose works are themed around the Chinese language, especially traditional calligraphy and poetry. Like Xu Bing, his works use invented, unreadable, and meaningless written texts. The *Mythos of Lost Dynasties* (see Figure 18) is a series of fake Chinese ideograms depicted as if they are truly traditional Chinese words. The Chinese authorities shut down the exhibitions because they were assumed to carry a subversive message. Gu said, "Language ... is a symbol of the culture that created it, and it is a way for me to maintain Chinese traditions and calligraphy. Within many cultural issues, there are political issues. Can language lead to war?... For me, language represents culture" (Art Rader, 2011, para. 3). Although his works focus on traditional calligraphy, he resists the conventional Chinese art as his signature style, saying that "one must understand tradition in order to better rebel against it" (Art Rader, 2011, para. 17).



**Figure 18**  
*The Mythos of Lost Dynasties - Series #1, 1983-1987*



Gu focuses extensively on ideas of culture, identity, and political events. He also developed his interest in bodily materials, especially human hair, linking humanity across ethnic and racial differences and messaging political and social resistance. The *United Nations Projects* (see Figure 19) is a series of installations created with human hair and unreadable calligraphy.

Beginning in 1993, Gu had completed 21 total projects in fifteen years. Over one million people from many different races contributed their hair. Gu fastened the hair together to symbolize the diversity of races globally and to convey meanings of genuine internationalism (Symcox, 2014). He wrote, "... by utilizing the real hair of the local living population, I am strongly relating to their historical and cultural contexts, to create monumental installations and land arts to capture each country's identity, building on profound events in each country's history" (Zhou, 2015, p. 61). Despite some visitors vehemently opposing his work because the human hair reminded them of the Nazi concentration camps where Jewish prisoners had their heads shaved, Gu's idea was to send a message protesting the Holocaust and other political tragedies (Cateforis, 2007). He also used old characters from ancient Chinese dialects or old Chinese unspoken language to symbolize the fragmentation of communication and human disconnection.



**Figure 19**  
*United Nations Series - China Monument: Temple of Heaven, 1998*



### **Classroom Connection**

**Artist Examples:** Xu Bing & Gu Wenda

**Classroom Setting:** Appropriate for secondary to college students in the United States, 75 minutes for two lessons.

**Central Focus:** The central focus of this lesson is for students to explore cultural and historical backgrounds on various Chinese script types and traditional calligraphy styles through a social studies cross-curriculum connection by introducing them to Chinese writing systems and their emergence as an art form. Given this knowledge and through practice, the students explore messages, attitudes, and values used in Xu's and Gu's works by deconstructing the understandings and visual images and reconstructing personal meanings.

**Essential Question for Student Prompt:** How do you understand and interpret contemporary Chinese artists who use traditional art forms?

### **Guiding Questions for Class Discussion:**

- What social, cultural, or political messages do their works display to viewers?

- How do these artists incorporate traditional Chinese calligraphy into their contemporary works?
- Why are these contemporary artists interested in using meaningless, reconstructed, unreadable Chinese characters and texts in their works?
- How do the Chinese government's political pressures and artistic restrictions affect these artists' ideas, values, and identities?
- How is the process of deconstructing and reconstructing Chinese characters a crucial element of Xu-Bing's art?

**Lesson Activities and Tips** (see Figure 20 and 21): Calligraphy is defined as beautiful writing, so creating it in another language with an unfamiliar writing style is challenging. Chinese characters like Japanese *kanji* and Korean *hanja* are written characters based on words and phrases, while the English alphabet represents sounds only. Teachers can explain the differences between a logographic and phonetic system. These are some instructional tips for American teachers before creating calligraphy: Teachers need to prepare all proper materials, such as bamboo brushes, rice paper, and Chinese ink, to teach students the calligraphy medium. Second, they can teach the basic strokes of Chinese calligraphy. Many video resources on YouTube and blogs, such as *Chinese calligraphy learning* and *Teach your students Chinese calligraphy*, provide demonstration videos free for teachers to use in supporting their instructions. Third, they can teach the students how to place the brush between their middle and ring fingers and hold it vertically to draw in a straight line. Lastly, students can discuss various styles/meanings/issues of calligraphy from Xu's and Gu's works, comparing them with their understanding of traditional calligraphy.

**Figure 20**  
*Calligraphy handouts I*

**Introduction to Chinese Calligraphy**

**Definition:** Calligraphy is handwriting designed to be beautiful

**Tools and Materials: Four Treasures**  
The Four Treasures are the most essential implements for any painter or calligrapher. They are the brush, paper, the ink stick, and the ink stone.



**Holding the Brush**

1. Hold the brush midway up the handle.
2. Grip the brush like a pen, but leave an open space in the palm of your hand.
3. Hold the brush in a gentle and relaxed manner. Imagine holding a tomato without bruising its skin.
4. Hold the brush at a 90-degree angle, perpendicular with your paper.

**Basic Strokes**  
The character *ying* (which means eternity) contains eight strokes and dots that begin- ning calligraphy students learn as the basis for many other strokes.



**Figure 21**  
*Calligraphy handouts II*

Chinese Characters: Logograms















	書		爐	
	畫		櫃	
	棋		簾	
	琴		屏	
	秤		紙	
	尺		墨	
	斗		筆	
	桶		硯	

Image Source: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Logogram>

In class activity: Writing "LOVE" (Modeling/Visuals)



Discussion: (Looking and talking): Artists Xu Bing/ Gu Wenda and their works (PPT)

- Traditional calligraphy (meaningless) in contemporary works
- Political and social changes/pressures/issues & artists' ideas
- Xu Bing vs. Gu Wenda (similarities/differences)

## Conclusions

This chapter orchestrated methodologies, practices, and pedagogical strategies for teaching contemporary Chinese artists' works from three perspectives. According to Howard (2006), "[D]iversity is not a choice, but our responses to it certainly are" (p. 5). Teachers' responses to the increasing diversity in schools have been insufficient to solve the multitudinous problems and complex issues that confront them as teachers in a multiethnic nation. Teaching about contemporary Chinese artists and their artwork can challenge the teachers' conceptual shortcomings, requiring them to seek applicable visual narratives and their meanings. By exploiting deconstruction and reconstruction strategies in their classroom activities, teachers can



offer students an opportunity to grow their critical thinking skills and generate creative problem-solving ideas. In turn, teachers' efforts to guide students by exploring contemporary Chinese art and artists can enhance their students' awareness of and readiness for cultural diversity, inclusion, and globalization in the modern world. In this process, the development of students' critical thinking skills can help them become open-minded, conceptually flexible global citizens who can tolerate diversity within their communities and welcome interactions with different cultures (Kraehe, 2010). By engaging in this exploration of artwork by contemporary Chinese artists in various genres, students can have the opportunity to connect these artists' meaning-making processes with their own artmaking experiences and learning outcomes. These artists' artworks and unique narratives can be resources that students can reference for in-depth self-reflection and an exciting exploration of the world.

According to Kalin (2014), visual art provides an opportunity to re-examine what we have become. As we advocated in this chapter, students can be encouraged to talk about the artwork with the guiding questions suggested above for class discussions. Teachers can help students interpret the images, deconstruct given notions, and reconstruct personal meanings and implications to make connections between the featured artworks and their daily lives, thereby examining their community's traditions and values. Finally, we hope that through involving students in the creative activities and class discussions outlined in this chapter, art teachers can inspire each student to embark on a journey of art-based learning through exploration, creativity, imagination, and investigation of our multifaceted and ever-changing world.

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## Meet the Authors



### Jaehan Bae

Jaehan Bae is a professor of Art Education at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. He was born in Busan, and raised and educated in Daegu, South Korea. Jaehan was an elementary school teacher in Daegu, South Korea for 4.5 years. He earned a Ph.D. in Art Education at the Florida State University in Tallahassee, Florida. Jaehan's research on preservice art and elementary teacher education, socially engaged art, and art teachers' perceptions and lived experiences on their art pedagogy is published in *Art Education*, *Art Education Research Review*, *International Journal of the Arts Education*, *International Research Journal of Art Education*, *Studies in Art Education*, and *Visual Arts Research*.

### Eunjung Chang

Dr. EunJung Chang is Professor of Art Education at Francis Marion University. She received an MS in Art Education and a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Instruction from Indiana University, Bloomington in 2007. Her research interests include museum education, integrated curriculum, cross-cultural education, and social justice art education. She has published on these topics for *Studies in Art Education*, *Art Education*, *International Journal of Education Through Art*, *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education*, as well as several art education anthologies. Dr. Chang made over 75 presentations state-wise, nationally, and internationally, addressing many contemporary topics in art education. She also received a number of awards including the South Carolina Most Creative Teaching Award and the NAEA South Carolina Higher Art Educator of the Year.

### Hung-Min CHANG

Hung-Min Chang (a.k.a. Mina Chang) is Assistant Professor of Visual Communication Design at the Hsuan Chuang University, Hsinchu, Taiwan. She holds a Ph.D. in Art Education from Northern Illinois University and has been Adjunct Assistant Professor of Art and Design at the National Taipei University of Education, Taipei, Taiwan since 2012.

### Ting Fang (Claire) CHIEN

Ting Fang (Claire) Chien is an Assistant Professor in Art Education at Colorado State University. She earned her bachelor's and master's degrees in art education and art studies in Taiwan and a Ph.D. at the University of Arizona in the U.S. Her recent research focuses are on arts-based autoethnography, arts-based educational research, and museum art education. She is dedicated to promoting adaptive and holistic art education for young adults by engaging them in rethinking



their daily life experiences, exposing them to diverse types of arts, especially contemporary arts, and social justice issues.

**Victoria Cook**

Victoria Cook is an adjunct lecturer in the School of Art at the University of Arizona. She has taught in higher education for over twenty years in the disciplines of Art and Visual Culture Education, Art History, and Comparative Women's History and spent over a decade as an executive college administrator. Her research interests include autoethnographic art, fostering equalitarian university classrooms, Asian art, history and culture and the intersections between art and local social justice movements. Her work as a professor and administrator in higher education has allowed her opportunities to speak at conferences throughout the United States, Italy, and southeast East Asia.

**Yongying DONG**

Yongying Dong, Associate Professor, School of Foreign Languages, Xidian University, Adjunct Researcher, Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum, Xi'an, Shaanxi Province, P. R. C. (China). In addition to her duties at Xidian University, Yongying Dong is a docent-training lecturer and museum education consultant, most recently for Emperor Qin Shihuang's Mausoleum Site Museum (which is formerly known as Terracotta Warriors Museum). She also serves as the Associate Editor for *Curator: The Museum Journal*. In 2017, while working as a fellow at the Smithsonian, she initiated the pilot project involving both the Smithsonian Institution and the Mausoleum Site Museum.

**Elizabeth K. Eder**

Elizabeth K. Eder, Ph.D., Office of the Deputy Director of Operations and External Affairs, National Museum of Asian Art. Elizabeth Eder has worked at the Smithsonian Institution for more than 16 years, first as Assistant Chair, National Education Partnerships at the Smithsonian American Art Museum and then as Head of Education and Public Programs at the Freer Gallery of Art and Arthur M. Sackler Gallery (now known as the National Museum of Asian Art). She recently worked as Program Director in the Office of the Associate Provost for Education and Access where she oversaw Smithsonian-wide Pre-K-12 strategic education initiatives. Dr. Eder came to the Smithsonian in 2005 after teaching social foundations of education (history, philosophy, and sociology) at the University of Maryland College Park and Millersville University (PA) for five years. She began teaching in the Johns Hopkins University Museum Studies Graduate Program in 2008. She is the author of several books, numerous articles in juried publications, and museum digital and print publications, as well as a frequent speaker at professional conferences and an invited lecturer at museums and universities. Dr. Eder has a B.A. in art from American University, an M.A.T. in



museum education from George Washington University, and a Ph.D. in social foundations of education (comparative and historical) from University of Maryland College Park.

### **Li-Hsuan HSU**

Li-Hsuan Hsu is an Assistant Professor of Art Education at the University of Wisconsin Oshkosh. She received her Master's in Arts Education and Arts Administrations at the National Taiwan Normal University and Ph.D. in Art and Design Education at Northern Illinois University. Her training in the philosophically different educational environments of Taiwan and the United States enhances her art education practice, with a multicultural understanding and a culturally responsive approach that values individual differences. Hsu's research interests lie at the intersection of arts and leadership, investigating leadership qualities and development tools in art education. Her research also examines cross-organizational leadership and collaboration between universities, K-12 schools, and their communities, focusing on expanding interdisciplinary connections across curricula in and through the art.

### **Grace HU**

Sijia (Grace) Hu is currently a visual art teacher at the Avenues: The World School. She is also an Ed.D. student in Art and Art Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. Before joining the Avenues, she worked as the founding teacher of the Chinese immersion art program for Grade 6 to 9 at D.C. International School. Her research focuses on integrating Asian culture into the K-12 and higher education art curriculum. She is dedicated to advocating for multiculturalism in the art classroom and on a never-ending journey to engage students with a meaningful and culturally responsive learning experience.

### **HUANG Ching-Wen**

Huang Ching-Wen graduated from the Department of Fine Arts at Tunghai University. From 2004 to 2010, she worked as a resident art teacher in Taiwan Kindergarten, focusing on children's cognition and observation of painting performance. From 2011 to 2020, she was engaged in teaching plan development and teacher training in Tomato Art School, an art education institution in China. Nearly twenty years of time has been devoted to the link and research of children and art education. She specializes in teaching plan development and PBL learning.

### **Koon-Hwee Kan**

Dr. Koon-Hwee Kan earned her Doctor of Education and Master of Arts degrees in Art Education from the University of Illinois at Champaign-Urbana. She is an Associate Professor of Art Education at Kent State University School of Art. Her research interests include global intercultural education, continuing education through





interactive technology, and qualitative methodology, especially visual narrative inquiry. She has published more than 25 articles in art education journals. Other than her regular exhibitions in mixed medium watercolor, Koon's two recent series of digital photcollage have been accepted in more than 10 theme-specific exhibitions and juried shows across the country.

**Ahran Koo**

Dr. Ahran Koo is an Assistant Professor of Art Education at California State University, Fresno. As an artist, art educator, and art advocate, she promotes the efficacy of art to address cultural and social awareness. Locally and globally, she focuses on community art and critical multiculturalism, encourages interdisciplinary collaboration through social engagement, and advocates culturally responsive/sustaining pedagogy. Dr. Koo received Ph.D. in Arts Administration, Education and Policy from the Ohio State University, specializing in art education; MA in art education from University of Florida; MFA and BFA in Korean Painting from Ewha Womans University in Seoul, Korea.

**Alice LAI**

Dr. Alice Lai is a professor and Associate Department Chair in the Department of Arts and Media at Empire State College, State University of New York. Dr. Lai earned her PhD in Art Education from The Ohio State University and MA in Art Education and BA in Art from California State University at Los Angeles. Her recent research topics include art education, online education, Asian American transnational art, and critical theory and pedagogy (e.g., feminist pedagogies, critical multiculturalism, and digital inequality). She has published book chapters and journal articles in the field of art education and frequently presented her research at national and international conferences.

**Maria Lim**

Dr. Maria Lim, artist-educator-researcher, is an associate professor in the School of Art at the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. She was a founding member and the past Chair of the Asian Art and Culture Interest Group (AACIG) of NAEA. Dr. Lim has been the founder and director of UNCG Summer Arts and Design Intensive Program since 2014. Her research interests include teacher education, social justice in art education, and equity diversity inclusion (EDI) pedagogy, critical discourses on Asian racial identity, social and global learning through art, and online education. She co-edited a book, *Pedagogical Globalization: Traditions, Contemporary Art, and Popular Culture of Korea* published by the International Society for Education through Art (InSEA) in 2017.



**Yen-Ju LIN**

Yen-Ju Lin, Ph.D., is an art educator and an instructional technologist. Her research focuses on instructional design and digital technology in art education and also explores creative ways of visualizing dynamic research data using computing software, drawing, collage and graphic novel. Lin holds a B.F.A. in Art Education and Studio Art from National Taiwan Normal University, a Master of Arts Management from Carnegie Mellon University, and her Ph.D. in Art Education from The Pennsylvania State University. Lin currently serves as the Managing Editor of the *International Journal of Education & the Arts* and the Associate Editor of *Visual Culture & Gender*.

**Mei-Lan LO**

Me-Lan Lo is a professor in the Department of Arts & Creative Industries, National Dong Hwa University, Taiwan. She completed her Ph.D. at the Roehampton University, London. Her research fields are in visual art, aesthetic, and creative education. She was the Director, Institute of Visual Art Education, at the National Hualien Education University, Taiwan. Dr. Lo has published several articles and book chapters, and presented papers in international conferences. She is currently conducting her sabbatical year research in “Yangxin Painting” and A-R-T action research.

**Mackenzie Pell**

Mackenzie Pell is a high school visual art teacher in Newton County, Georgia. She earned her bachelor’s degree in art history at the University of California, Davis. In 2021 she earned her teaching certification and master’s degree in art education at Georgia State University in Atlanta, Georgia. Her research interests include Art Brut, Outsider Art, and folk art. In her teaching, she focuses on exposing students to diverse types of artmaking and both traditional and non-traditional materials to encourage their creative interests and abilities outside the classroom.

**Tess Porter**

Tess Porter, Digital Content Producer, Smithsonian Office of Educational Technology. Tess Porter focuses on the use of digital museum resources to deepen learning. Her work on the Smithsonian Learning Lab involves educator professional development on using museum resources for teaching and learning, the development of new Lab tools and features, and the research and creation of interactive learning experiences in collaboration with educators and curators at the Smithsonian Institution and other cultural institutions. She has a B.A. in Anthropology and a B.A. in Art History from the University of Colorado Boulder and is currently pursuing an M.S. in Museums and Digital Culture at Pratt Institute.



**Ryan Shin**

Ryan Shin is a professor in the School of Art at the University of Arizona, Editor, *Convergence of Contemporary Art, Visual Culture, and Global Civic Engagement* (IGI Global), Co-editor, *Pedagogical Globalization: Traditions, Contemporary Art, and Popular Culture of Korea* (International Society for Education through Art). He was inducted as 2021 USSEA Kenneth Marantz Distinguished Fellow. His research interests include Asian popular media and visual culture, critical discourse on Asian identity and teacher decolonization, global civic engagement, and application of new media and technologies to school and other educational settings. He is the Media Review Editor of *Studies in Art Education* and served as co-editor of *Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education* (2016-2018). His articles have appeared in *Studies in Art Education, Art Education, Visual Arts Research, Journal of Cultural Research in Art Education, and International Journal of Education through Art*. He also has authored numerous book chapters and has given presentations at both national and international levels.

**Borim Song**

Borim Song is an Associate Professor at the School of Art and Design of East Carolina University, Greenville, North Carolina, USA. She holds her Ed. D. and Ed. M. from Teachers College, Columbia University in New York City. Her scholarly interests include new technologies for art education, online education practice, contemporary art in K-12 curriculum, cross-cultural and intercultural movements, and community-based art education for underserved population. Song's writings on art, art education, and cultural studies appear in publications in both the U.S. and Korea. Song also has actively exhibited her artwork, and her solo exhibitions were at Macy Gallery in New York City and at J. Y. Joyner Library, Greenville, NC. She is a recipient of the 2021 Kathy Connors Teaching Award (NAEA Women's Caucus), 2021 Achievement in International Research/Creative Activity Award (East Carolina University), and 2020-2021 Higher Educator of the Year Award (North Carolina Art Education Association).

**Yinghua WANG**

Yinghua Wang is an adjunct lecturer at Ohlone College and also the founder of Happy Valley Art School. She earned her bachelor's and master's degree in Industrial Design and Artistic Design in Shanghai and Ph.D. in Art Education at the Ohio State University. Her current research focuses on Visual Cultural Art Education and art education practices in STEAM. She believes that through a community of inquiry, students learn to investigate, question, and take risks in art-making and searches for personal or social truths.

**Yiwen WEI**

Dr. Yiwen Wei is an Assistant Professor of Art Education at Virginia Commonwealth University. She was the recipient of the 2017–2018 National Art Education Foundation (NAEF) Research Grant and has presented her research at statewide, national, and international levels. Her undergraduate and graduate courses include elementary art





education practicum, research methods, curriculum theories, art assessment, and data visualization. She is currently exploring the global influences of the U.S. and Taiwanese art education scholars through academic relationships and examining their impacts on Taiwanese art education development.

**Yuichih WU**

Wu Yui-Chih is a Ph.D. student in Art Education at the National Taiwan Normal University. From 1999 to 2001, she was a licensed junior high school art teacher in Taiwan. Afterward, she devoted herself to art education in Ju Ming Museum, during which she invested much effort in establishing alliances between the museum and primary schools in New Taipei County. This long-term experience has subsequently led to her employment at Tomato Art School, an art education institution in China, where she seeks to expand contemporary art education into the realm of children. Her work focuses on STEAM, arts-based research, and data visualization.

**CHAN Chih-Ting**

Chan Chih-Ting has graduated from School of Fine Arts, Bordeaux (France) in 2007 and licensed primary school art teacher in Taiwan. She has been working as an art teacher since 2001, specializing in Reggio curriculum. Her working experience at CAPC Museum (Bordeaux) inspired her strong interest in sharing contemporary art with children. She is also a curriculum designer for children art especially for art institutes. Independently doing research and developing different kind of educational program. As an artist, she has exhibited her works in France, Spain and Taiwan, and won the prize of Jean-Claude Reynal foundation in 2008.

**Enid Zimmerman**

Enid Zimmerman is Professor Emerita of Art Education and High Ability Programs at Indiana University. In her research, she focuses on creativity, feminist, global, history, and policy issues in art education. She was the first NAEA Research Commissioner and is a Distinguished Fellow. She has written extensively and held offices nationally and internationally. Current awards are the Distinguished Lecture in Art Education at Miami University; the Davis Lecture in Art Education; and the NAEA Elliot Eisner Lifetime Achievement Award. Her contributions and influences are summarized in *Through the Prism: Looking at the Spectrum of Writings of Enid Zimmerman* (NAEA, 2008).





## Dr. Kevin Hsieh

He/Him/His  
Professor of Art Education  
School of Art and Design  
Georgia State University

Ph.D. in Art Education  
Pennsylvania State University



Dr. Kevin Hsieh is an art educator and artist. He worked as a research assistant under the Department of Eastern Asian Art at the Philadelphia Museum of Art. He received the 2012 Higher Education Educator of the Year Award from the Georgia Art Education Association and the 2021 Faculty Award for Fine Arts Education and Mentored Research from the Honors College, Georgia State University. His research and teaching interests include interdisciplinary art education, Chinese art history, museum education, LGBTQ+ issues, and instructional technology in art education. He also leads Georgia State University's Study Abroad in China program. Hsieh published his research studies nationally and internationally, such as *Studies in Art Education*, *Art Education*, *International Journal of Education through Art*, *Visual Art Research*, *Journal of Fine Arts*, *Museology Quarterly*, and *Journal of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences*. He has also received numerous internal and external grants for his research projects.

謝國昱博士，現任於美國喬治亞州立大學藝術教育學系副教授。謝博士於二零零四年獲得台灣屏東教育大學藝術碩士學位，爾後於二零零八年獲得美國賓州州立大學藝術教育博士學位。在獲得博士學位前，謝博士於二零零六年在費城美術館的亞洲藝術部門擔任研究助理，研究東漢畫像磚拓本收藏。在喬治亞州立大學任教期間，謝博士於二零一二年榮獲喬治亞州高等教育優秀教師之殊榮，並於二零二一年榮獲喬治亞州立大學榮譽學院所頒發的藝術學術研究與優秀指導教授之殊榮。謝博士發表許多研究期刊與論文，包括北宋山水畫研究、美國戰後現代藝術發展、博物館教育理論、LGBTQ+ 議題、美術教育理論、以及科技在美術教育上的應用等。謝博士每年也帶領美國大學生與研究生至中國考察訪問。謝博士的研究論文也被收錄在國內外許多重要的研究期刊中，例如：美國藝術教育研究、藝術教育期刊、視覺藝術研究、人文與社會科學期刊、台灣美術學報、博物館學季刊、與國際藝術教育期刊等。謝博士亦獲得校內外的多項研究經費與補助。



## Dr. Yichien Cooper

She/Her

Lecturer and Field Supervisor  
College of Education  
Washington State University, Tri-Cities

Ph.D. in Art Education  
Florida State University

Dr. Yichien Cooper received a Ph. D. from Florida State University with Museum Studies Certificate. Interested in arts integration, STEAM education, data visualization, public arts, social justice, arts-based and narrative inquiry, mixed identity, and cultural competence, her articles appeared in *Art Education*, *Journal of Art for Life*, *Journal of Social Theory in Art Education*, *The International Journal of Arts Education* (Taiwan), *Hongkong Education Journal*, and *China Art Education*. She authored *Curriculum Design: On Thinking of Integrated Arts Curriculum* (Hung-Yeh, 2016), *The Power of Integrated Curriculum: The Core of STEAM Education* (Hunan Fine Art, 2017); edited *The 21st Century Arts and Culture Education* (Hung-Yeh, 2018); co-edited *New Trends in World Art Education Research* (Shanghai Education Press, 2020), and co-translated Patricia Leavy's *Method Meets Art* (Hunan Fine Art, 2019). She serves as the Chair of the Asian Arts and Culture Interests Group at National Art Education Association, the honorary President of the World Chinese Arts Education Association, and the Past Chair of the Data Visualization Working Group. She received a Proclamation of Appreciation for her contributions as an Art Commissioner at the City of Richland, WA. USA.

陳怡倩博士畢業於美國佛羅里達州立大學藝術教育系博士與博物館學研究。任教於華盛頓州立大學三鎮分校教學系。現任美國藝術教育學會亞洲藝術文化委員會主席、里奇蘭市兒童戲劇學院委員。曾任世界華人美術教育協會主席、美國國家藝術教育學會「數據可視化」研究議題主席、里奇蘭市藝術委員副主席。致力於統整藝術和STEAM課程設計與教學研究，亞裔與跨文化議題，視覺可視化，並積極推廣社區藝術文化與公共藝術的設置。著有《統整藝術課程設計與趨勢》、《統整的力量》。主編《21世紀藝術文化教育》。譯有《藝術本位研究的九堂課》、合編《挑戰與轉化-世界華人第七屆大會論文集》、《國際藝術教育研究趨勢》。





## Dr. Lilly Lu

Associate Professor  
Art Education, Media Arts, & Game Design  
School of Arts  
University of Nebraska at Omaha

Ph.D. in Curriculum & Instruction  
Specializing in Art Education & Instructional Technology  
Indiana University, Bloomington



Dr. Lilly Lu is an Associate Professor of Art Education and Media Arts at the University of Nebraska at Omaha. With a background in instructional technology, she focuses her research on virtual environments (virtual worlds, mixed reality, and virtual reality), gaming (video games, game design, play/game pedagogy), new media art/technology, and digital visual and gaming cultures. Recently, she expanded her interests to include Chinese trans/intermedia art and multicultural art education in contemporary times. Lu received many grants including three competitive research grants (2007, 2016, & 2019) from the National Art Education Foundation (NAEF) in the USA. She published her work nationally and internationally in premier journals in Art Education and Technology in Teacher Education. As Director of the Creative Media & Visualization Lab, she developed the summer video game camp series (Virtual Worlds, Minecraft, and Unity) for middle schoolers for KANEKO, a non-profit interdisciplinary cultural organization, in Nebraska.



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