

Teaching Plan of Japanese Brush Painting

Instructor: Chiho Murphy

This teaching plan is for both beginner and intermediate students and is designed as a two-and-a-half hour class for eight sessions.

Objective:

This class teaches traditional Japanese brush painting (*suibokuga*). The most difficult part of Japanese brush painting is controlling the amount of water and ink in order to create impressions wet and dry and a sense of light and shade. Therefore, we will focus on how to handle a brush with ink and water as well as color pigments called *gansai*. It will also be important to study composition of Japanese brush paintings in this class.

The motifs painted in this class are traditionally used for Japanese brush paintings. Each motif is closely related to Japanese culture. I hope that students enjoy learning some aspects of Japanese culture in addition to the painting techniques. The motifs depicted in this class include seasonal flowers, landscapes, and the like.

How I Will Teach the Class:

Before each class, a copy of a painting that students will practice during that session is handed out to all the students. First, the instructor explains how to draw the elements of the scene, and then the students watch me drawing the example. They can spend rest of the time on practicing the painting under the instructor's direct advice. During the practice, they can ask the instructor questions individually or as a group.

Students should be able to create several versions during a single session, choose the best version and show that to the instructor to receive a final critique for the day. The goal in each class is to complete a whole picture on a practicing paper.

Instructor encourages all the students to draw the painting on a *shikishi* paper (a square of heavy decorated paper which is often used for a formally final work) as a final work at home (or, if possible, in the MAC studio on their own time) and show the instructor it at the next class.

Beginning Student Curriculum

Day 1: Introduction to the Art and the Tools

The instructor introduces Japanese brush painting history and explains and demonstrates the painting utensils. Then, we will practice drawing various lines and dots to get used to handling brushes and ink. Toward the end of the class, we will challenge a simple painting of some orchids, using dark and light ink in drawing lines.

Day 2: Heavenly bamboo

Heavenly bamboo is considered a good luck charm in Japan. The plant is often displayed with plum and bamboo grass on alcove of the Japanese house around the New Year season. The class will study a painting composed from the top right side to the middle. We will practice drawing dots with a vermilion color in addition to leaves and trunks with black ink.

Day 3: Chrysanthemum

Chrysanthemum has been a symbol of the imperial family since Heian period (794-1185) in Japan. The class will draw two kinds of chrysanthemum with yellow and black ink. The instructor will show the class how to form the flower leaves with ink and brush.

Day 4: Landscape

The class will challenge to represent an emotional atmosphere in a monochrome painting. We will also focus on learning how to shade ink and how to make ink dry on the picture (for shading and depth perception.)

Day 5: Bamboo

Bamboo is one of the most difficult motifs employed in Japanese brush paintings. It is important to practice brush strokes many times so that students can draw bamboo well. The class will learn how to draw the petals and leaves of other motifs along with bamboo.

Day 6: Chinese bell flowers

The class will draw the flowers on a narrow long paper called *tanzaku*. We learn how the lines of the flower stalks are elegantly drawn. This flower is considered to be one of the seasonal motifs representing autumn in Japan.

Day 7: Vegetables

The class will draw some vegetables without colors. It looks easy, but it is said that simple pictures are always difficult in regard to Japanese brush painting.

Day 8: Cherry blossoms

The class will practice painting the petals pink with outline. We will also learn how to draw a tree trunk. Cherry blossoms have been loved by people since ancient times. Still today, the plant, which represents symbol of spring, is one of the most favored by the Japanese people.

This lesson plan is changeable because instructor needs to decide what the class will do according to the progress, needs and requests from the class.

Intermediate Level Students will have a curriculum different from the one above, but it will build on the lessons of the Beginner Level class curriculum.

Class Materials:

Painting materials used in this class are listed below. Due to the traditional Japanese brush paintings, some materials like brushes, ink, color pigments and paper are difficult to obtain in this country. Students can purchase those materials through the instructor. Materials needed for this class include:

paint brushes (sold in class),

ink (sold in class)

color pigments (*gansai*) (sold in class),

paper (sold in class)

water containers,

cotton rags,

paperweight,

paper towels,