



Chinese Region Brush Painters Society

News Letter

Happy Year of the Horse!
Welcome to the January 2014 newsletter

So, what have we been doing?

As you have probably guessed—we have carried on with our silk painting but tigers will be our last subject on silk.



Chinese New Year in London

19th January at 12:00 —The **Victoria and Albert Museum** is holding a special event offering you the opportunity to take part in a day of traditional and contemporary Chinese culture including: performances of music, dance and storytelling, painting demonstrations and drop-in craft workshops. The exhibition is still on if you haven't seen it.

China Town (London) is celebrating on 2nd February—2014 is the Chinese New Year of the Horse and the Festivities begin at 10am with a parade which begins at Duncannon Street, moving along Charing Cross Road and Shaftesbury Avenue. An official opening ceremony then takes place in Trafalgar Square with speeches from special guests. Once officially opened, the real celebrations kick off with Dragon dancing, music and performances on the Trafalgar Square stage. Join the throng in a stall-covered Chinatown for fun and firecrackers on and around Gerrard Street, Lisle Street and Shaftesbury Avenue where there are impromptu parties, food stalls and lion dancing. Also, look out for the lion teams dancing through Chinatown and local artists performing on a stage at the end of Dean Street and traditional food and craft stalls. Be warned, this is a popular free event in the London calendar so there will be big crowds (around 500,000 in 2013). The organisers ask you to check the web for more details.

Sunday Workshops

Our meetings are held at Park Lane Village Centre in Harefield and are held on the first Sunday of every month.

February 2nd—I will be away but Margaret has agreed to take the class and you will be fan painting.

March 2nd—the AGM which will start at 13:00

April 6th—we will take a look at the silk paintings—if people remember to bring them in—and check for any final adjustments—we will then move onto to painting free style paintings on different papers. Phyllis has ordered paper from Hong Kong and it should be with us by the AGM so, we will be able to decide on the order we wish to tackle them in when we see what we have.



Sunday workshops cost £1 and start at 13:00 with a demonstration of the subject and guidance during the afternoon.

Chinese Fans

The fan was popularized in China during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–220 AD) when the simple bamboo fan, the cattail-leaf fan and feather fan were invented. These fans were most popular among the common people right through to the Southern Song Dynasty.

During the Tang and through the period of the late Northern Song, many fans were painted in the format illustrated below, which was well suited to the abbreviated, lyrical images prevalent at that time. The images tend to be weighted towards the bottom, start on left or right bottom corner, extend across the centre and leave plenty of space across the top to retain the “light” airy feel.



Chen Hongshou (1598-1652)
Appreciating Plums (detail)

During the Southern Song Dynasty, round fans also became popular and were often created with a painting on one side and a verse couplet on the other. They were a perfect vehicle for the small, intimate compositions of the Southern Song Academy painters. Characteristic of the time, are hazy mountains in light washes and the gracefully drooping willow trees that balance each other in the upper and lower corners of the paintings. Other subjects included flowers and birds. Again the compositions started on the left or right with

the weight towards the bottom and space towards the top.

The round fan became popularly known as “the moon-shaped fan” and the format became the firm favourite of refined young ladies, especially those of the imperial palace.

Later, this moon-shaped fan took on many other shapes, such as an oval flat round or a Chinese plum flower or sunflower. Usually, ribs of the fan were made of animal bones, wood, or bamboo, and the handles were engraved with beautiful designs and often decorated with jade pendants.

Beautiful scenes of mountains and waters or flowers and birds were either embroidered or painted on the face of a moon-shaped fan. Deeply loved by young ladies, the round fan was popular in China for nearly 1000 years. The popularity of the moon-shaped fan also enhanced the development of painting itself and from the Song Dynasty onwards, fan painting became an independent art form. A typical composition used in many landscape paintings and figure paintings of this time often included a figure holding a fan.

Ma Yuan (of the Song) was noted for the asymmetry of his compositions. The focus of these paintings is often off to one corner or side (rather than at the centre) and a large tree often predominates and threatens to destroy the balance of the composition. In the example above, Ma carefully holds the tree down using rock formations to balance it. Ma became known in Chinese art history as “one corner Ma” because of his use of his technique.



Ma Yuan (c1160-1225)
Plum Blossom by Moonlight



Pictures taken at a BM library visit. Artists unknown

In China, it is believed that the Japanese invented the folding fan in the time of the Song Dynasty and that the invention was inspired by the bat's wings. As this fan could be easily folded and carried, it soon became a fashion item in Japan and China.

Compared to other types of fans, the folding fan is more like a piece of handicraft. The ribs of early folding fans were made from valuable materials, such as hawks-bill turtle, ox horn, ebony, mottled bamboo, elephant tusk and jadeite that were carved into different elegant shapes.

Different sizes of folding fans are classified by the number of ribs the fan has, usually 7, 9, 12, 14, 16 or 18. Often, an image is painted on one side and appropriate calligraphy is used to decorate the

other.

Many folding fans were originally and still are made of semi-sized xuan paper or silk and are often beautifully painted.

The rules that apply to folding fan compositions—as provided by Qu Leilei are as follows:

Figures – picture taken in China. Artist unknown

- Vertical calligraphy should follow the path of the ribs—rather than being upright.
- Horizontal calligraphy should follow the curved shape of the fan.
- Landscape compositions will follow the shape of the fan—rather than be horizontally and vertically oriented.



Qu Leilei—Winter Landscape compositions



Qu Leilei—Green and Gold landscape composition

- Flower and bird compositions will be weighted towards one side of the fan with space being provided on side towards which the foliage is growing and the weight towards the end it is rooted.

- Like landscape compositions, figure compositions (like those below) should follow the shape of the fan.



Artists unknown (unless you can read the calligraphy)



Flower example provided by Qu Leilei

When a famous artist paints a fan, it can be worth a lot of money. For example, a folding fan painted with running script of Chinese calligraphy by Zhang Daqian, a famous Chinese painter, recently sold for HK\$252,000. Many contemporary painters, like Wu Changshuo, Qi Baishi, Xu Beihong are also regarded as elite fan-painting artists in China.

In China today, there are over 500 styles of fans available. In addition to those that are painted and embroidered, the four most popular fan forms in China are currently: the damask silk fan from Hangzhou, Zhejiang Province; the sandalwood fan from Suzhou, Jiangsu Province; the fire-painting fan from Guangdong Province and the bamboo thread fan.

Fans have been widely used for thousand years and are still bringing people world wide a cool breeze and a hint of Chinese culture.



Damask Silk Fan



Carved Sandalwood Fan. The image is carved into the fan and then areas are enhanced with ink and colour.



Fire-painting fans are created by burning the image onto the paper or silk.

Sorry—I couldn't find a "bamboo thread" fan anywhere!



Forth Coming Exhibitions

Victoria and Albert Museum

Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700 - 1900

26 October 2013 – 19 January 2014

Price £13.40 adult; £11.20 senior

If you haven't seen this yet—you should really try to get there before it closes. It's very intense and there is a lot to take in—so be prepared to take your time.

It Presents Masterpieces of Chinese Painting 700-1900. It will be a once-in-a-lifetime chance to see rare surviving works of art drawn from collections around the world, exploring over 100 of the finest examples of Chinese painting, from small-scale intimate works by monks and the literati through to scroll paintings over 14 metres long. Many of these paintings have never before been seen in the UK before.

The exhibition is charting the evolving periods and styles of painting over eleven centuries. It also uncovers the technical processes and traditional techniques of painting on silk.

A significant number of masterpieces are shown together for the first time, including paintings on silk and paper comprising figure paintings, paintings from tombs and temples, landscape paintings by the literati, finishing with illustrations of the introduction of Western influences in both native consumption and export paintings.

I was told that some of the pictures on show that are owned by the V&A haven't been seen 1935!

Lotus Competition

Remember: you are all invited to enter the "paint a lotus composition" and submit your picture in time for the AGM. Those attending the AGM will be asked to select their favourites and prizes will be awarded to the selected winners.

If you don't have time to deliver yours before—remember to bring it to the AGM with you!

Library Audit

Once again, a large number of books are missing from our Chinese Painting library. They have been taken without being signed out.

Can I ask you to have a look around the house and see if you have any of the library books and to return any book that you have borrowed—including those signed out or not signed out—to allow us to confirm what is really missing. We would like them back by/at the March 2014 meeting

Jean Gray has kindly agreed to under take the audit after the AGM if she can get some help.



Books

Early Chinese Texts on Paintings

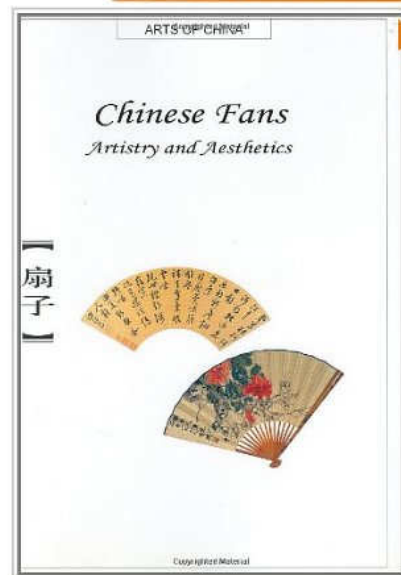
Shih Hsio-yen and Susan Bush



For very serious students of Chinese art and culture this anthology has proven invaluable since its initial publication in 1985. It contains NO PICTURES. It collects important Chinese writings about painting, from the earliest examples through the fourteenth century, allowing readers to see how the art of this rich era was seen and understood in the artists' own times. Some of the texts in this treasury fall into the broad category of aesthetic theory; some describe specific techniques or the work of individual artists. A number of the works referred to are in the V&A exhibition. Presented in accurate and readable translations, and prefaced with artistic and historical background information to the formative periods of Chinese theory and criticism. With a glossary of terms and an appendix containing brief biographies of 270 artists and critics add to the usefulness of this volume.

- **Paperback:** 416 pages
- **Publisher:** Hong Kong University Press (27 Nov 2012)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 9888139738
- **ISBN-13:** 978-9888139736
- **Product Dimensions:** 0.1 x 18.6 x 24.2 cm
- **Amazon Price including postage** £18.76

Click to **LOOK INSIDE!**



Chinese Fans: Artistry and Aesthetics

For those of you with an interest in the history of Chinese fans there is a book on the subject.

To gain access to an on-line version of this book:

Chinese Fans: Artistry and Aesthetics

enter the name into Google search and it will take you to it.

For those of you that prefer a book—Amazon doesn't have this book but their resellers have a few copies remaining. The prices vary from £4.48 to £10.97.

- **Hardcover:** 78 pages
- **Publisher:** Long River Press (31 Aug 2004)
- **Language:** English
- **ISBN-10:** 1592650201
- **ISBN-13:** 978-1592650200