



# Chinese Region 6 Brush Painters Society

## News Letter

Welcome to the April 2014 newsletter

### So, what have we been doing?

In February, because of a mix up with our booking (how many years have we been booking the 1st Sunday of the month?!?) the session was held later in the month and Margaret taught fan painting—which was great fun.

In March we held our AGM which was attended by 20 members (including the new committee). The existing class reps were re-elected and Margaret, Marion, Jean, Phyllis and Audrey were re-elected as the committee.

It was agreed that the Sunday session fees be increased to £2 per session and that daily tutored taught event fees be increased to £22 to cover the increased costs of tutor travel and that if the tutor charged more than our normal fee, the price would be increased for that event.

The April session saw us start on trying different techniques and new papers. We started with a crash technique on clear water paper.

Next month we will move onto painting magnolia on one of the new papers that will be offered for order in July.



### Sunday Workshops

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

We have decided to try out a range of papers that will be offered for order from Hong Kong in the July Newsletter. We have also decided to send out a pack of paper samples to all members to allow people to see what is available to order.

May 4th—Magnolia. We will be working from Qu Leilei's magnolia sketches. This is not one of them!



June 1st—Landscape.

July 6th—Summer Flowers

Sunday workshops cost £2 and start at 13:00 with a demonstration of the subject and guidance during the afternoon.

### Border Mounting Workshops

We are currently planning a silk border mounting workshop 13/7/2014. If you want to buy border mounting silk your picture size can not exceed 17" by 14" and must be landscape format. This allows us to get the maximum number of borders out of the silk. If you are bringing your own mounted silk to create a border the picture will need to fit on your board—so needs to be 9" smaller all round as the boarder will be 4" wide on each side. Also think about how you will transport the board as the picture will be wet when you go.

We can only take 9 people at the workshop because you each need a table to work on. So, if you want to come—book early! Form included.



## Sizing silk for Painting

Some of you may have attended classes with Maggie Cross and painted on unsized silk, sized the silk and then finished the painting.



Spring Flowers by Maggie Cross

When we have finished trying out papers—we could have a go at painting this way on silk over a few Sundays.

If you can't find it locally, alum is available in small quantities via the Internet. I found it at <http://www.spicesofindia.co.uk> for £0.85p per 100 gms. They also have all sorts of amazing oils, herbs and spices.

Below are Kali Fu's instructions on how to size silk for painting. It might be something nice to try yourself over the Summer. Enjoy!

Patience is required throughout! Everything you are about to do takes time!

### Alum solution for silk work

Take 1 teaspoon of alum powder and ½ pint of warm boiled water

Mix well until alum powder dissolves

Leave mixture to settle for a minimum of 24 hours. You will find a sedimentary deposit at the bottom of the container.

Decant into a screw top jar – leave deposit behind.

The mixture will keep for a year or more in the refrigerator if the lid is kept tight and the mixture isn't contaminated. When taking mixture from the jar, always use a clean spoon or dropper. Do not use your paint brush!

### Painting on un-sized silk

You can get some very atmospheric effects by painting loose subjects or washes onto un-sized silk before you paint your main subject.

To help keep your paint in place, you can mix it with your alum solution—rather than plain water—as some colours may move when you size the silk.

Having completed your under-painting, leave it to dry preferably over night.

### Sizing your under-painting

Decant some of your solution from the jar.

Using a clean wash brush or while cloud brush, dip into the alum solution. Wipe off brush on side of container (same as when picking up water when painting). Tamp on kitchen towel if still too wet (same as when painting) and carefully apply to the area to be sized. Reload brush as necessary and work carefully until the required area is sized.

Leave work until completely dry before adding more colour.

The silk should now be sized and ready for painting.



Late Sun Flowers by Cia Xiaoli

### Sizing between painting layers when silk painting

When painting with colours on silk, the colours can run – especially red and mineral colours. To help prevent this, you can size the picture with the alum solution as the work develops. This technique is known as zhao-se (undercoating).

If the colour starts to lift when you add the next layer, let the area dry and then, using a clean wash brush or while cloud brush, dip into the alum solution. Wipe off brush on side of container (same as when picking up water when painting). Tamp on kitchen towel if still too wet (same as when painting) and carefully apply to the area to be sized. Reload brush with alum solution as necessary. Leave to dry completely before adding more colour

Repeat the process whenever colours start to lift off.

### Sizing silk for painting

If you can't buy sized silk and want to paint a more traditional painting, you can size your own. Buy ordinary silk from a textile supplier. Wash it to remove any finish. Leave to dry and iron flat. Only size the piece or pieces of silk you want to use for this session. Cut the pieces you want to the dimensions you want.

Mix size:

Only mix sufficient size for the task in hand. Mix size in proportion: 1 spoon of alum solution to each 2 spoons of Gloy. Note: this is paste glue not PVA. It's the cheap sticky glue used in schools! You need to look for something similar if you can't find it. DO NOT use PVA under any circumstances. Wall paper paste would do nicely—but mixing 2 teaspoonfuls could be a problem!



Sun Flowers by Cai Xiaoli

Mix glue and alum well and make sure there are no lumps.

Brush onto silk in Union Jack format with a very clean wash brush or just dip silk into mix and massage size in using your fingers.

Smooth silk out onto a clean non-porous surface (window or melamine board). Make sure that the warp and weft are both straight.

Leave until completely dry.

Peel off carefully when dry – being careful to keep it flat and straight.

Paint your silk painting as normal and leave on the board for at least 1 month or may be more before backing.

### Sizing a painting for mounting

If you are worried that the paint on your painting (on silk or paper) might move when you back it, you can size it and leave to dry before backing.

To size:

Put picture on a very clean, flat, non-porous surface – picture side up.

Brush alum solution from your jar over the whole surface using a soft brush. For silk, ensure that the warp and weft are both straight.

Leave the painting flat to dry.

Remove from surface and hang in the air for at least one week before mounting.

If you think it might be necessary – if you have a lot of red on the front or mineral colours on the back of the picture – you can repeat the process on the back of the painting when the front has dried.



Scholars by Marion Dearlove (detail)



## The History of Chinese Calligraphy

Notes taken from a talk by Qu Leilei

The Chinese characters we use today started out as pictographs that were carved into rocks and onto bones more than 3,500 years ago. These inscriptions were used mainly for religious purposes and fortune telling. Around 3,000 years ago, because the characters were adopted to record state business and legal records, they then became more formalised.

The Qin Dynasty (221 – 206 BC) Qin Shi Huang Di unified China and set up a single counting system, currency, language, writing system and communication system that covered the whole of China. His Prime Minister, Li Si, created a standard script for official use – Small Zhuan style. It still remains a popular style and is today called Seal Script.

The Han dynasty (206 BC to 220 AD). During this period, books and records were introduced. The books were made up from wooden or bamboo strips laced together with hide strips or threads. Along with the record books came a unique script developed for official use that was known as Han Official script. Court officials travelled around the country, recording crop and harvest details, trials and laws, etc. They carried their writing brush - which had a small head and a long thin curved handle - in their hair, using it as a hairpin. When needed, the brush was removed and used to write records on strips of bamboo which were then strung together to form permanent records - some of which are still around today (see British Library). The development of Han Official script was the turning point for Chinese calligraphy and it started to develop from here as an art form. However, at this time, inscriptions were still being made on stone and the finest example of this can be found in the Ti Shan Mountains (where Confucius was born) where the Buddhist monks carved 2-foot square characters on the whole face of the mountain.

In the Eastern Han period (25-220 AD) constant war led to the development of Running script by the calligrapher Zhang Zhi. This script allowed messages to be created and transmitted quickly. Today, Zhang Zhi's script is still regarded as the ultimate form of running script.

Zhong You (151 – 230 AD) (who was the tutor to the emperor) is known as the father of the standard-style script. He laid the foundations of the style based on an almost square character format.

In the 4th century AD, in the Wei Jin Six Dynasty period, the finest calligrapher that ever lived

emerged - Wang Xi Zhi. He was unsurpassed in every style and perfected many of the standard-style script characters in use today. When he was producing a piece of work, he would create a draft en situ and then go home and write it out again. He remains unsurpassed in every aspect of his work and his work still dominates Chinese calligraphy today.

The second master of this period was Zheng Dao Zhao who established a second major form of standard-style script. It is one that is produced at higher speeds from beginning to end than that of Wang Xi Zhi.

Many pictures painted of artists of this period by later artists are inaccurate as they show calligraphers writing at what appear to be tables. They are actually bed frames not tables - but they would not have been used. In this period, working conditions were not as we might imagine them; there were no tables and chairs. Calligraphers working on paper held the brush in their right hand and the roll of paper in their left. They would then write out the record working down the roll - this is why Chinese writing developed from top to bottom and right to left. Calligraphers of this time still worked on bamboo and wood but also worked on paper and silk. The materials used reflected the ultimate use of the final work.

The golden age of Chinese calligraphy was occurred during the Tang dynasty (618-907 AD). This was the period during which all script styles reached their zenith in the hands of master calligraphers such as Ou Yan Xun, Yan Zhen Qing and Liu Gong Quan who each developed forms of Standard-style scripts that have taken the names of their creators (Ou, Yan and Liu). Examples of these works are provided as copy books to students studying the subject seriously today. It is worth noting that Standard-style script is actually the most difficult style to practice but - once you have mastered it - all other styles are (relatively) easy! Other masters of the period include Zhang Xu (known as the mad monk calligrapher) and Huai Su who were noted for their freedom of expression and the velocity and power of their work.

In the Song dynasty (960 – 1270 AD), there were still no chairs, but some calligraphers now used their bed frames (as tables) with the paper or silk laid flat, but they were still kneeling on the floor rather than sitting. Others still sat on the floor and the servant or apprentice that ground their ink would sometimes hold the paper roll for artist / calligrapher while they worked. Calligraphers of note from this period include Su Dong Po, Huang Ting Jian and Mi Fu.

## Forth Coming Exhibitions

### British Museum

#### **The Ming—50 Years that changed China 18th September 2014—5th January 2015**

This major exhibition will explore a golden age in China's history.

Between AD 1400 and 1450, China was a global superpower run by one family – the Ming dynasty – who established Beijing as the capital and built the Forbidden City. During this period, Ming China was thoroughly connected with the outside world. Chinese artists absorbed many fascinating influences, and created some of the most beautiful objects and paintings ever made.

The exhibition will feature a range of these spectacular objects – including exquisite porcelain, gold, jewellery, furniture, paintings, sculptures and textiles – from museums across China and the rest of the world. Many of them have only been very recently discovered and have never been seen outside China.

Open daily from 10:17:30. Friday last entry 20:30

Adults £16.50. Members free



Large porcelain flask painted with underglaze blue decoration. Made in Jingdezhen, China. Ming dynasty, Xuande mark and period, 1426–1435. © The Trustees of the British Museum

### Ashmolean Museum

#### **Michael Sullivan: A Life of Art and Friendship**

**11 Mar 2014 to 14 Sep 2014**



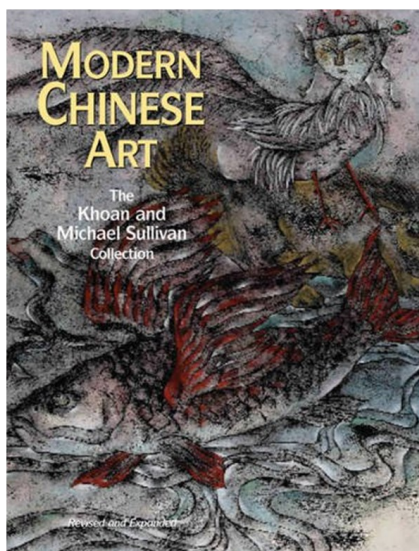
Michael Sullivan, who died aged 96 in September 2013, was a leading scholar of Chinese art.

He was also able to build up an outstanding collection of modern Chinese art through his life-long friendships with prominent Chinese artists who presented many inscribed paintings, prints, drawings, and albums to him and his wife Khoan. Their collection has been bequeathed by Michael Sullivan to the Ashmolean, and this selection of works commemorates his long and fruitful life of art and friendship.

This exhibition will be well worth a visit. Please try to get there before it closes. Admission: Free



## Books

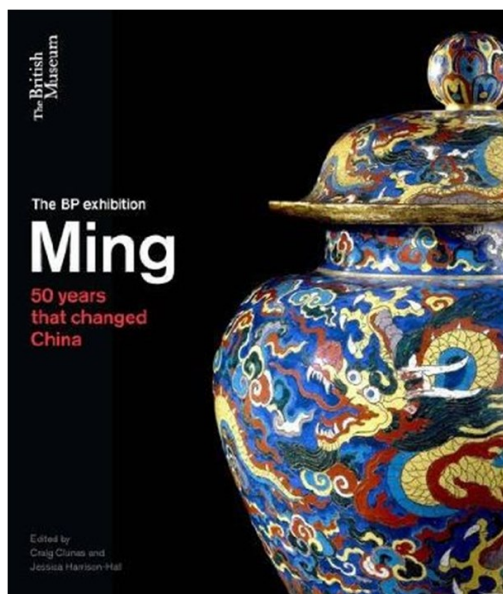


### Modern Chinese Art: The Khoan and Michael Sullivan Collection 2nd edition

Michael Sullivan

Although this is the 2nd edition of the catalogue and was published October 2013, if Michael has now left the rest of his collection to the museum—they will—eventually—need to publish a much larger book!

When I visited him at home last year with Cai Xaioloi, his lounge, dining room and hall were almost wall to wall stacks of paintings! And these were in addition to everything already stored at the Ashmolean. I suspect it could be some years before they are all catalogued and we get another edition so this one is well worth having.



### Ming 50 years that Changed China

No details of the catalogue as yet but you can pre-order from Amazon for £25



If you have anything you would like to include in the next newsletter, you can send it to me

### Another Library Audit

A large number of books are still missing from our Chinese Painting library. They have been taken without being signed out. Very few books were returned following the last newsletter

Can I **again** 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 June 2014 meeting. Jean Gray has kindly agreed to undertake the audit again if she can get some help.



### Contact Details

Contact details for the committee and those representing the classes are provided below to allow members to make contact.

#### Class reps

Wednesday Jean Gray  
Thursday Anne Keating  
Saturday Tina Clarke

#### Committee Contacts

Chairperson Margaret Wall (Margaret also teaches the Saturday class)  
Secretary Marion Dearlove  
Treasurer Jean Gray