

## Maggie Cross – Chinese Brush – 10 June 2019

Maggie was brought up in Hong Kong, speaks and writes Cantonese and was taught to use the Chinese Brush while there.

Chinese Painting is a development of Calligraphy and uses similar techniques, ritual and symbolism are fundamental to the art

**First there are The Four Treasures:**

**Inkstone** - a slate or jade equivalent of the western palette and



**Ink stick** - a block made of soot and glue. This produces a traditional black ink whose characteristics depend on the type of wood burned (pine is the most common). You can depart a bit from tradition by buying the paint, particularly colours, in block, chip, powder or tube form (she does not recommend tubes - they harden). To make the ink, put a drop of water on the stone and scrape some ink from the stick and grind it.

**Brush** – made of various animal hairs such as sheep, goat and horse hair, squirrel and deer is also used. All types behave differently but all brushes come to a fine point. When brushes are new, they are starched and need soaking in water; a small brush for 20 minutes and larger brushes for an hour, but do not leave them soaking overnight.



**Paper** - silk or plant fibres, always thin and absorbent and often with very visible fibres and added constituents (e.g. gold flecks?) all either unsized or semi-sized. The Chinese painted on silk 700 years before paper was invented.



**Seal** – The seal is personal and the equivalent of putting a signature on the bottom of a painting.



When beginning to learn Chinese Brush start by practicing the brush strokes. The brush is held with two fingers on top, two underneath and steadied by the thumb.

Maggie showed how to make different marks by varying the pressure and rotating the hand during each stroke - from fine lines and wide lines to knobby branches and two or three-stroke leaves or fishes.



For a **Leaf Stroke**, sweep in, press in the middle and then sweeping out and releasing to make a point. A **Dot Stroke** of varying pressures; circular, two strokes, for berries.

Peonies are highly regarded in China and Maggie was going to paint a peony on Gold Flecked Bamboo paper. She rolled her brush in a Rose colour; loading it nearly to the top and then putting rouge on the tip. Using the brush sideways she used sweeping strokes to produce highlights.

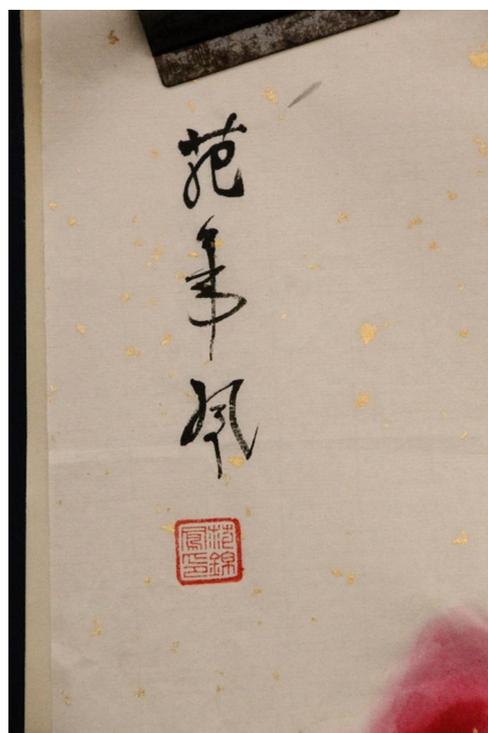


The Chinese do not have a green and paint their stems in black or indigo mixed with Gamboge (yellow). The new growth of the peonies was painted in light green and Burnt Sienna for the shadows under the petals. More green was used for the leaves on the stems and then black for the older craggy trunk. Emerald Green mixed with white was put on the trunk to look like lichen.



Maggie then used a thinner brush on the leaf detail, acrylic white ink for the stamens and Indian Yellow on top to highlight.

Chinese paintings have to have a creature in them so Maggie painted a butterfly using her fine brush with Gamboge and a Yellow.



She wrote her Chinese name, 'Golden Phoenix' in Chinese Running Stroke and then put her seal.

After the break Maggie started to paint Manchurian Cranes which are a symbol of longevity and a pine tree; a symbol of the New Year.



White was used for the main bodies with an Indigo mix to shadow the main feathers with Black Ink for the tail feathers. Scarlet and Carmine was used for the head and the beak, which is a grey-blue was again the Indigo mix but slightly stronger and then a bit of Yellow around the eyes.

The Pine tree was given a craggy look using a semi-dry brush in Green with Indigo for the leaves/needles using very fine brush strokes and then so more Indigo for contrast.

Some grass was added at the bottom of the painting using upstrokes and some Mineral Green added to the tree bark.



Maggie with the Crane pictures

A very interesting evening using a technique that many will not know but will be inspired by and a fascinating insight into a small part of Chinese culture.

Jon Wright

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