



Blue Heron Chapter of the Sumi-e Society of America

Blue Heron News

April 2020

Announcements

- The April meeting was canceled
- Guest Artist Workshop (March 20-22, 2020) featuring Joan Lok was canceled

- Sumi-e Japanese Ink Painting (5-week class) with artist *Norene Spencer*
 - When: Tuesday's, June 2-30, 2020 11 am - 1:30 pm
 - Where: Norfolk Botanical Garden
 - Register: online norfolkbotanicalgarden.org or by phone (757) 441-5830
 - Subjects: determined based on those in the class, appropriate for most skill levels. Concentration will be on brushwork
- Masterpieces from Mustard Seeds Garden may be viewed and downloaded [here](#)
Courtesy of Ting Mei

2019-20 Chapter Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Program
April 19, 2020	<i>Canceled</i>	<i>Canceled</i>	<i>Canceled</i>
May 17, 2020	2-4 PM	Church of the Ascension, Norfolk	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ting Mei, Different Paper and Brushes • Selection of Paintings for the 2021 Calendar • Tea Party

Message from the Chapter President Bill Larkin

I am quite pleased and proud to introduce you all to our new Exhibits Committee, chaired by Donna Wynn, with members Patricia Nelson and Dawn Blair helping. They have already made contact with The Pagoda Garden Foundation, as well as Dr. Jeffery Smith, both of whom have expressed interest in displaying our members' paintings.

Please join me in welcoming Donna, Patricia and Dawn to their new positions, as we look forward to their continued support of our club's efforts.

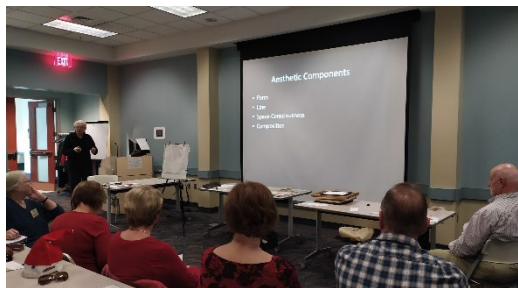
Thank you,
Bill

Inspirations and Acknowledgments*

Ning Yeh's descriptions of Four Gentlemen from 4 Volumes of *108 Flowers*:

- "Plum blossom represents the spirit of resiliency because the flower blooms in winter."
- "The grass orchid is admired for its subtle beauty and fragrance. The flower finds hermitage in the most spiritual places in nature – where mist embraces mountain or by roaring waterfalls. The grass orchid is a happy spirit."
- "Bamboo is honored as a gentleman with perfect virtues. . . . Bamboo symbolizes tranquility."
- "Chrysanthemum . . . implies to endure with devotion. It is the spirit of autumn."

Thank you, *Joe Nicholas*, for the December meeting program on *Judging One's Painting*



Thank you, *Betty Oliver*, for your enjoyable presentation about your children's book on Egypt. It was very interesting to learn how your travels and your love of Sumi-e inspired you to write this book.



* Blue Heron image is from <http://www.wetcanvas.com/Community/images/03-May-2005/21167-HeronWC500.jpg>

Blue Heron Sumi-e Chapter was featured along with Tidewater Bonsai Association in the annual Paul Street Gallery Show (in the Norfolk Titustown recreation center). *"The artwork is especially exciting with new artists' as well as long-standing members' contributions"*, said Chapter President Bill Larkin.

...Check out more pictures in the bottom of the newsletter



Potential Venue for Exhibiting Our Artwork

Donna Wynn

On January 20, I was able to spend time with Madelyn Sly, President of the Pagoda Foundation. She gave me a complete tour of the facility, and I toured the beautiful gardens before she arrived. The gardens were spectacular even in the winter season!

Currently Hummingbird Macaroons had just moved out so the facility was in need of organizing and clean up. I was able to take the following complete inventory of the current framed pieces that are currently on display by our members:

Joe Nicholas 1
Gail Goodman 2

Margaret Mitchell 1 (past member)
Diane Jacobson 3 (past member)
Shaw-Mei Shen 1 (past member)
Unknown 2

The above members should let me know if they want to leave or, perhaps, switch out their work. If anyone has information about how to contact the past members, please let me know. Doris Weber (deceased member) currently has 11 pieces, which her son is managing with Madelyn.

Madelyn would love to have more pieces or refresh what is there! Jill Bruner always worked with her but has not in a long while due to illness. I will be working with her now! She is excited about the future and working together.

I left her 8 brochures for guests as they visit and will get more to her. I think it is important for visitors to see our presence there. We are currently listed in the back of their color brochure as a supporter of the Pagoda.

We discussed a Fall or late Summer tea party, perhaps, as an opening reception for new works on display while the gardens are so pretty. She suggested that a *plein-air* painting on the grounds would be fun. In addition, I suggested a Sumi-e painting demo.

There is plenty of potential for a good relationship here. However, I would like to see the disorganization cleaned up. Madelyn mentioned painting a few walls. The hangers are thrown in a pile in the first floor. We are responsible for hanging not she.

Bill Larkin will be visiting with her to access the hangers available and how to hang works for future. We will continue to monitor their clean up progression, re-organization and the planning of an event there. I think it could really be a fun event for the Pagoda and an opportunity to increase the public's awareness of our Society!

I am thrilled to be your new Events Chairman and am working on a few other ideas!

Close-Up with Sumi-e Painter

Erin Smyth, New Member in 2020

Statistics:

Family: Husband: Fred Lenihan

Pets: Ollie, a Shetland sheepdog, and two sister cats: Sedona (tuxedo) and Wyoming (all black)

Favorite Painting Tool: Some of the watercolor brushes that I inherited from my grandmother when she passed away

Comfort Food: Peanut M&M's

Favorite Movie: Pride and Prejudice, starring Keira Knightly

Pet Peeve: Disposable, one-time use plastic products

Occupation: I am a former middle school science teacher and am currently pursuing the goal of being an author and illustrator of children's books. I am taking art classes at Titustown Art Center, Charles Taylor Art Center, and plan to take classes at TCC in watercolor in the summer and fall.

Education: Bachelor of Arts in Environmental Studies, Ecology and Biodiversity from the University of the South in Sewanee, Tennessee.



Of what achievement are you most proud? In college I found I was holding myself back from trying activities that interested me because of fear. Eventually recognizing this, I decided that I wasn't allowed to use fear as a deterrent anymore. In fact, if I started talking myself out of doing something because I was afraid of it in some way, then I HAD to do that thing. Because of this pledge I snowshoed the Colorado Hinsdale Haute Route, canoed the Rio Grande just outside Big Bend National Park, went sky diving twice, studied abroad in Costa Rica, and lived and worked for a year in New Zealand after college, to name a few of my adventures. I learned with each trip that it was never as scary as I had imagined, and the more I pushed the boundary of my comfort zone the larger it became.

If you could give your ten-year-old self one piece of advice, what would it be? Art is like all things in life: you get better with practice. Making mistakes isn't a sign of failure but a sign that you are pushing yourself to try new things and grow.

If you could invite three famous people living or dead to dinner, who would they be? Lucy Maude Montgomery, Judy Blume, and J K Rowling.

How did you become a painter? My grandmother, Barbara Timmerman, was a painter. She and my parents encouraged me towards artistic activities. She bought a lot of the art supplies I learned with. I have several of her paintings hanging in my house. I've enjoyed re-examining her work and figuring out how she made them as I learn more myself about painting techniques.

I took art classes all through school, focusing mostly on painting and clay in middle and high school. Later in high school I made films and wrote plays as a part of the after-school theater program. I studied art during a gap year in Italy where I was able to see in person some of the Italian art masters' works. In college I explored sculpture (including woodwork and welding), film, and photography.

As a teacher I found my extracurricular time was non-existent and didn't do much in the way of art during those years. I have enjoyed re-emerging myself in my artwork these last several months and find myself excitedly describing new things I've learned about, for example, color theory to friends who probably aren't interested.

Favorite thing to do: I love spending time with my family, especially my sister and her kids. My niece, Hazel, is 4 and is the inspiration for my wanting to write children's books. Her twin younger brothers are so sweet and fun, just little bundles of energy and curiosity. I love watching their personalities develop.

I also enjoy gardening, especially my vegetable garden.

Book you would recommend: *Mindset: The New Psychology of Success* by Carol Dweck. This book revolutionized my teaching and brought me back to a healthy mindset, especially where my art is concerned.

Also, all of the Harry Potter books!

What would you like to share with Blue Heron members? When I talk about this group to people outside of the group, I tell them that this is the most welcoming and friendly group I have been a part of in a long time. I have so appreciated how encouraging and helpful everyone has been. So many people have shared books, and tips, and supplies. So many times, I've had someone lean over to explain something to me that was mentioned in a meeting that, being new, I wouldn't otherwise understand. I've really appreciated that.

I wasn't sure what exactly I was getting myself into when I signed up for the class, but I'm so glad I did! I've really loved learning about how Chinese philosophy influences their art and how their art traditions are so different from Western art. It is eye opening and has helped me understand my own biases and self-imposed limitations. I love the idea of using simple and few strokes to capture the essence of something rather than fussily trying to capture an exactness (something I am still working on). I am fascinated by the Chinese approach to perspective, which allows for more information to be captured, showing the mountains behind the mountains, instead of the straightforward and literal approach used in Western art. I am enjoying the process of learning and look forward to classes beginning again.

Sharon's Circle

Dr. Sharon Weinstein

EBB AND FLOW

Sumi-e is a centering art.

I leave it for a while.

Then I come back.

No other Western art that I do -- watercolors, acrylic, pastel, collage, sketching, drawing--has an invincible essence to it.

Sumi-e connects itself deeply to centuries old traditions.

When I stand up and poise my brush over rice paper I am intimately connected to all who came before and to all who are painting now.

Sometimes I chafe at Sumi-e rules.

But rules are so much fun to break.

**And like all the greatest religions
you can always come back into the fold.**

Seeing everyone at the Visual Art Center's opening reception on February 8th reminded me:

**No matter how far I travel
I am one with Sumi-e painters.**

Blue Heron Members Stay in Touch

Mary Ann Matika

As we sheltered in place and responded to the seven-day Painting Challenge, chapter members were in contact with each other through two free apps for a smart phone, tablet or computer. Using these apps allayed feelings of social isolation and kept members painting and sharing artwork.

The first app Zoom allows members to set a date and time for a meeting and then all talk together live. Download Zoom from the App Store. Then contact Masha, mashel@cox.net, if you wish to join the April 10th four o'clock meeting.

The second app Marco Polo lets members post videos or photos of the day to day art they are working on. Then other members at their convenience can view the videos/photos and tape comments. Download Marco Polo from the App Store and contact Mike Lane, haoyisi2@gmail.com, if you wish to join the group.

Those who participated enjoyed both apps and the Painting Challenge so much that they have decided to continue the Painting Challenge through April 10th. During these two weeks, members may not be able to paint every day and are just encouraged to paint when they find the time. However, the daily practice really improves the members' skills, artwork and enjoyment. Practice is making perfect!

Please join us for the fun, the connections to Sumi-e members and the joy of painting!

Hints for Painting from Tesshin Sasaki

Gail Goodman

Below is a reprint from the judging worksheet used by Tesshin Sasaki. The following is meant as a guide and tips to remember that could improve your painting style in the Sumi-e manner. These are things that he looked for in judging a prize-winning painting. Master Sasaki was a Japanese traditionalist painter who only painted in ink.

Skill in Using Sumi Ink

- Combining dark and light
- Dark and light in one brush stroke
- Clarity of Sumi-e ink tone

- Has the ink stick been ground finely or roughly (if the ink stick is ground roughly, the grains of ink are course and this will result in having muddy color)
- Type of Sumi-e ink used (blue, brown, or artificial color added to ink sticks)

Skill in handling the brush

- Using brush movement with change of speed
- Pressure applied to the brush, combining light and heavy pressure
- Quality of line when holding the brush sideways, straight up, or slanted
- Wet and dry strokes
- Successfully combining all of the above brush techniques in one painting

Composition

- Balance between painted and unpainted areas
- Balance between heavily and sparsely painted areas
- Well defined focal point
- Well balanced “contrast” parallel lines and long and short lines
- Feeling of harmony

Painting as a Whole

- Power of spirit
- Beauty
- Purity
- Refinement (or lack of)
- Timidity

Blue Heron Book Club

Mary Ann Matika

Following Joe Nicholas’s suggestion that good painters should understand the aesthetic components and standards of Chinese brushwork, on February 23, several members joined the first-ever book club and read chapters six and seven of ***Chinese Brushwork in Calligraphy and Painting*** by Kwo Da-Wei.

During the book club meeting, members reviewed and edited the chart below. Use the chart below to evaluate your painting to decide if it should be framed. Also think about the “DO/Ya” side of the chart as you prepare to paint. Choose an artistic merit to work on in each painting you do.

For the future meetings: Those members who attended the book club wanted to read *Part Three*, which will be divided into sections and subsequent book clubs planned. There is no need to have read chapters six and seven to participate.

Judgements of Artistic Merit:

DON'T /Su <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Vulgar ○ Ostentatious ○ Artificial ○ Dullness ○ Flatness ○ Harshness ○ Too sweet ○ Unnecessary detail ○ Loud color ○ Sloppiness/Laziness 	DO/Ya <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Elegant ○ Noble ○ Refined ○ Alive ○ Politeness ○ Thoughtfulness ○ Harmony ○ Modesty
<u>Chiao</u> : artificial, showiness, awkwardness	<u>Chuo</u> : effortless, natural, childlike, spontaneous, simple
	<u>Chung</u> : seriousness or gravity of a painting; weight and solidity make the art last
	<u>Da</u> : The onlooker's eye is not confined to the painting but is led out to the space surrounding it
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Economy of strokes ○ Five shades of ink



Words of Wisdom from Dr. Kwo:

- Rather be Chuo than Chiao; rather be clumsy than clever; rather be ugly than charming; rather be segmented than slippery and weightless; rather be spontaneous than elaborative.
- Form must convey emotion.
- The first requirement for a good line or dot is vigorous strength.
- Paint with one breath (one sitting).
- The realm of a piece of painting transcends reality. It exists in the mind's eye as an imaginative space.
- Form should not reproduce the natural shape but rather create a suggestion of its very nature.
- Take a "bird's eye view" or "an imaginary perspective" when painting a landscape.
- Ch'i is moving force. Yuen is harmonious tone. Ch'i Yuen is "Life, spirit and vivid movement in a painting".
- Ch'i Yuen is the paramount element in Chinese art. It is "rhythmic vitality, spirit resonance and harmony with the spirit".
- Ch'i Yuen can be learned if one "reads 10,000 books and travels 10,000 miles".
- Read to enrich one's knowledge and travel to enhance the power of observation.

Ink Sticks or Liquid Inks

Ting Mei

All calligraphers and painters use ink. Usually, authentic liquid inks are good for calligraphy. For painting, ink sticks are the better choice.

The excellent quality of ink sticks is mainly shown in the following aspects:

- Ink stick shows variety of tones: The ink sticks are plant-based smoke materials, such as tung oil smoke, pine smoke from burnt pine, referred to as oil soot ink and pine soot ink, respectively. After grinding, this ink has a wide color scale. Or, as ancestors called it, "ink is divided into five colors". The thick ink is pure black, light one is transparent, clear and elegant, with clear brush marks.
- Smooth brush feel: For ground ink, the brush feeling is not sluggish. The gradual changes of ink colors are smooth. Strokes and ink method are fully shown.
- Lasting ink color: Since there are no synthetic chemicals in ink sticks, years later, the calligraphy and paintings created by ink sticks are more stable and never fade. Therefore, we can enjoy the classical works from thousands of years ago in major museums today.

We Danced with the Brush and Virginia Lloyd-Davies

Mary Ann Matika

Masha and I traveled to Fairfield, Virginia to paint with Virginia Lloyd-Davies. In her studio. Virginia played her favorite songs and urged us to dance with the brush. With every stroke she took, her brush danced. We tried to dance with some concentration on learning the basics.

Virginia evaluated the work we brought with us and based her instruction on what we needed to improve. Although I worked on leaves, both Masha and I practiced painting perching and standing birds in classical poses. much easier than flying ones. Virginia guided me to paint strong beaks and place the eye in just the right spot, on or above an imaginary line extending from the center line of the beak. I was told to do hundreds of beaks and eyes to improve my skills. Masha practiced painting birds with just shades of black ink. Virginia told us to exaggerate the eyes, beak and legs to bring out character in a bird.

A highlight of the trip was Virginia's tour of the Sumi-e paintings hung on the walls of her home. She explained her inspiration for each one, the spot on the rice paper where she began the painting and the composition. Many of the paintings were award winners and all were spectacular. I especially loved the landscapes and would like to return for a lesson on painting landscapes.

Our session ended with tips on painting the lotus. Virginia gave Masha her lotus painting to keep and use as a guide for her own painting.



Photo Gallery

- February Meeting: Vernissage in the Paul Street Gallery



