



Blue Heron Chapter of the Sumi-e Society of  
America

# Blue Heron News

January 2019

## Announcements

**Workshop with Guest Artist *Susan Frame***

**April 26 - 28, 2019**

**Westminster Canterbury Penthouse**

**“Spontaneous Splash, Dribble, & Pour”**



### Update from Gail Goodman



What an exciting and unique workshop Susan Frame is offering, like something we have never done before. The entire three-day workshop will focus on contemporary interpretations of Sumi-e. Emphasis will be on spontaneous splash background, and experimental techniques including the use of transparent and opaque colors. We had a

sample of this technique if you attended the National Exhibition Workshop in Portsmouth in 2013 with Cheng Kee Chee.

Workshop hours are from 9:30 AM to 3:30 PM on Friday and Saturday. Sunday morning Workshop is 9:30 AM until noon, break for lunch and prepare for the Public Demonstration for all members and guests at 2 PM. This workshop is for all skill levels, and Susan will guide and develop participants to the conclusion of their paintings.

For information on the supply list and detailed syllabus, refer to the Blue Heron website, <https://www.blueheronsumie.org/>.

*Registration for the workshop will open on Wednesday, January 9, 2019. That is the first day of Titustown Class and Gail Goodman will be at Titustown to collect any registrations. Seating is limited to just 20 participants, so your registration is important. The cost per person for the 2 ½ days is \$225 payable to Blue Heron Chapter, SSA. Fee includes lunch.*

**Sumi-e Japanese Ink Painting (5-Week Class) with Norene Spencer**

Tuesdays, January 15-February 12, 2019, 11:00 am - 1:30 pm  
Norfolk Botanical Gardens.

**Preparing for Exhibition at Paul Street Gallery**

Members may bring two or three framed paintings beginning January 15, 2019 to Titustown Visual Arts Center, 7545 Diven Street, Norfolk, Virginia, 23505.

## 2018-19 Chapter Meetings

Month	Program
January 13, 2019	Painting Birds, Creating Depth Norene Spencer, <i>Pretlow Library</i> , 2-4 PM
February 16, 2019	Reception for Exhibition of Members' Art Paul Street Gallery at <i>Titustown</i> 10AM-1PM
March 17, 2019	Creating Optical Illusion, Concave & Convex Bill Larkin, <i>Pretlow Library</i> , 2-4 PM
April 28, 2019	Guest Artist Reception and Demonstration Susan Frame, <i>Westminster Canterbury</i> , 2-4PM

May 19, 2019

Background Wash Techniques, Lee Wertheimer  
Tea Party, Location TBD, 2-4 PM

## Inspirations and Acknowledgments\*

*“Art Matters because your imagination can change the world. Art tests the bonds of the possible by going beyond them...and YOU can too.” – Neil Gaiman.*

Thank you to Mike Lane for his presentation at the October meeting. Members enjoyed his journey in China and the Asian art that was created along the way.



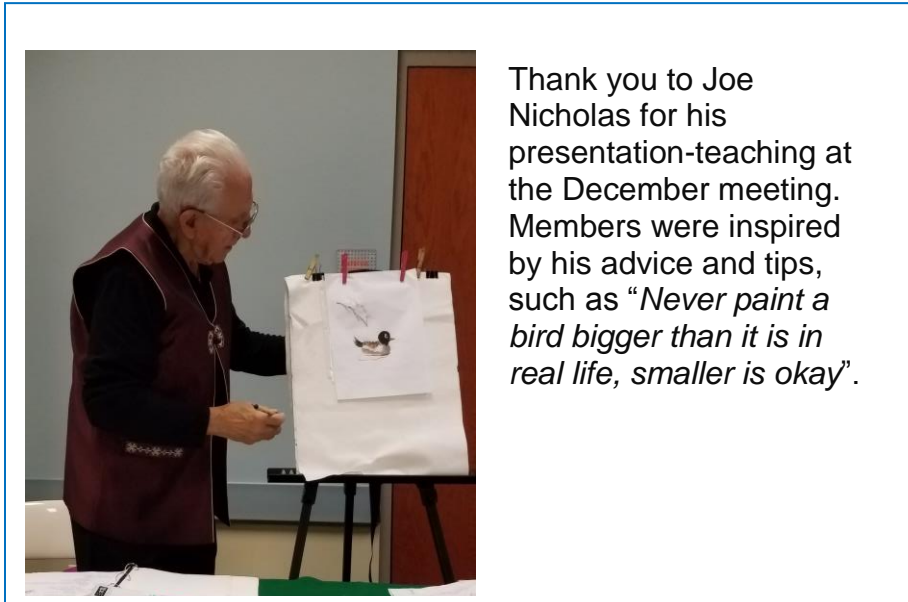
Thank you to Gail Goodman for her creative demonstration at the November meeting. Members were energized with new ideas for art and participated in a raffle of Gail's creations.



Thank you to Bill Larkin for cultivating Qi during Chapter meetings by practicing Tai Chi with members in the beginning of each meeting.

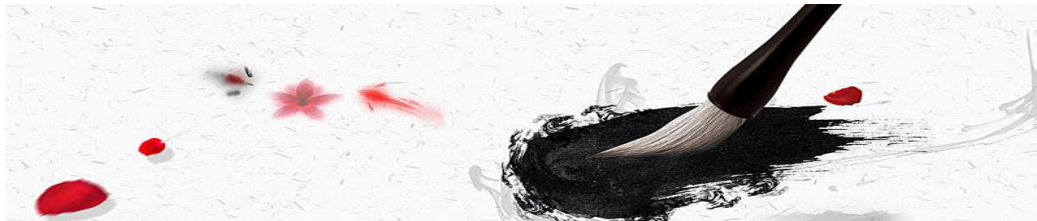


\* Blue Heron image is from <http://www.wetcanvas.com/Community/images/03-May-2005/21167-HeronWC500.jpg>



Thank you to Joe Nicholas for his presentation-teaching at the December meeting. Members were inspired by his advice and tips, such as “*Never paint a bird bigger than it is in real life, smaller is okay*”.

## Words from the Pros



From Pngtree

### Joe Nicholas

This month I was asked to answer three interrelated questions. Specifically, I have been asked, “Can you explain the difference between Freestyle painting and Gongbi? What skills are needed by each type? And lastly, should a painter stick to one type or can one practice both types?”

**Freestyle vs Gongbi:** In Freestyle, also called *xieyi*, the artist is writing an idea and is more interested in personal expression than accuracy, detail or merely creating a beautiful painted surface. It is based on simplicity, often reflecting exaggerated forms and generalized shapes. The painting is done quickly, “in one breadth”.

Gongbi, however, is a very meticulous and detailed style of painting. The subject matter is outlined clearly in fine line detail. The outlines are then filled in with color in precise step by step stages. Often the artist works with two brushes (in one hand). One brush contains color, the second brush adds moisture to tone and blend the color as it is applied. It is a time-consuming technique.

**Skills Required:** To list the skills required in these two styles is well beyond the scope of this article in that those two styles along with combinations of those two styles, basically encompass *ALL* Chinese painting styles. I have not tried any serious Gongbi painting, but it looks like the artist would need great patience, attention to detail, and excellent drawing skills. In the case of the freehand painter, I would say imagination, an adventurous art spirit, and expressive /dexterous brush skills are needed. Actually, they probably have more skills in common than separate them. A few examples include good powers of observation, good color handling, and an understanding of all those aesthetic standards by which Chinese art is judged. (If you'd like to review those aesthetic standards see Kwo Da-Wei's "Chinese Brushwork in Calligraphy and Painting".)

**Can an Artist Practice Both?** The short answer is, Yes! The key word here is "practice". If the goal is to just try some experimenting or just take a short break from one style to another, I see no problem. However, if the goal is to achieve a high degree of excellence, probably not too good an idea to devote a lot of time and effort in the area we have no real interest in. Also, of importance is the individual's temperament and disposition. If you tend to be impatient and have no interest in detail, then Gongbi is probably not for you. On the other hand, a person that is very meticulous and likes detail, yet is tentative in brushwork skills will probably have some problems with freestyle painting. The good news is that there is an endless variety of styles and techniques in the wide spectrum between the most meticulous style (Gongbi) and freewheeling freestyle painting. In that spectrum, there *IS* a place there for each of us. I hope that my series of articles will help you find your niche.

## Close-Up with Sumi-e Painter

**Mike Lane, 2018-2020 Chapter Vice-President**

### Statistics

**Family:** My wife Joy teaches ESL at TCC and has after retirement plans to continue teaching part-time at the Adult Learning Center in Virginia Beach. Our son Matt works at the Naval base. Son Andrew is a marketing videographer and director, and daughter Rachel just finished up a degree in holistic nutrition.

**Pets:** 5 fish.

**Occupation:** Semi- retired but focused on art, adjunct teaching; and China related travel.

**Education:** BA & MA in English Literature and PhD in organizational leadership.

**Comfort Food:** custom flavored popcorn-- current favorites-- bacon bits, lemon pepper, smoked paprika, and last but not least-- smokehouse maple by McCormick

### **Book Recommendations:**

- *Sailing Alone Around the Room* by Billy Collins
- *The Prodigal God* by Tim Keller

- *Refractions* by Makoto Fujimura

***Of what achievement are you most proud?*** With my wife Joy, I raised three children while living in Asia.

***Who inspires you?***

- Jesus.
- Tim Keller is the founding pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in Manhattan. He is the Chairman of [\*Redeemer City to City\*](#)(CTC), which starts new churches in New York and other global cities.
- C.S. Lewis was one of the intellectual giants of the twentieth century and arguably one of the most influential writers of his day. Lewis wrote more than thirty books including *Mere Christianity*, *Out of the Silent Planet*, *The Great Divorce*, *The Screwtape Letters* and the universally acknowledged classics in *The Chronicles of Narnia*.
- Tolkien was an English writer, poet, philologist and university professor who is best known as the author of the classic high fantasy works *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *The Silmarillion*.
- Makoto Fujimura is an artist, writer and speaker who is recognized worldwide as a cultural shaper. His studio for a time was just a few blocks from “Ground Zero”, and his art and life were deeply influenced by 9/11. In 2014 the American Academy of Religion gave him the “Religion and Arts Award”. The award recognized that he had made a significant contribution to the understanding of the relations among the arts and the religions.
- Jimmy Carter’s autobiographical book, *An Hour Before Daylight* and his book of poetry, *Always a Reckoning*, were impactful.

***What inspires you?*** Trees, water and natural stuff...especially transitional spaces (front porches, swamps, marshes, bays, etc.). The “betwixt and between” is sometimes messy and unnerving but creative opportunities are also nested there. I guess you might say I’m inspired by the edge.

***If you could give your ten-year-old self one piece of advice, what would it be?***  
 “Go ahead, join the orchestra.”

***How did you become a painter?***

I began to paint because I had always been interested in and drawn to art. Growing up in a household full of engineers sort of muted that impulse. After many years, the art scene in China re-awaken my interest in art, and there were plenty of very talented and patient Chinese artists around who were kind enough to teach me.

***What words of wisdom can you share with someone who does Sumi-e?***

Visit the roots of sumi-e often, observe nature and touch the brush to the paper a lot.

# The Blue Heron Chapter Celebrates 30 Years

## Gillian (Jill) Valentine

Doris Weber, who died in May of 2017 after a long illness, was the founding member of the Virginia Beach Chapter of the SSA, now known as the Blue Heron Chapter. The first meeting was held in March of 1988. She was known as the mother of our chapter. Doris



had been teaching Sumi-e painting for 5 years in Virginia Beach. Flo Wolin remembered that she called us, her students, her “little chicks”, and she was the “Mother Hen”. Flo recalled her kindness to her when she first joined the chapter. Norene Spencer said that when Doris moved here from Ohio, she joined the Chesapeake Bay Watercolorists and was invited by them to teach a class. She did so, and over

60 people signed up!

Doris was soft-spoken and never failed to praise the efforts of her students with great sincerity. Always encouraging us in our efforts, and reminding us that we, too, would become teachers one day. She wanted us to grow, and the chapter to grow, which, it has done, from the original 35 charter members to 54 members today.

One of Doris' favorite expressions as she was demonstrating in a class was, "jiggy, jiggy"! This referred to the dance of the brush on the paper.

I first met Doris when I was volunteering for the Virginia Beach Art Center. When I first saw Doris' paintings I was awestruck! I had never seen art so simple and so beautiful! Doris told me she was teaching at the Virginia Beach Learning Center, and I immediately signed up for a class. A new world opened up to me and I've been in love with this art form ever since! Cathy Peyton says: *Doris taught us the strokes of the 4 gentlemen, and that with these basic strokes you can paint anything. She told us to sketch, to feel, to learn the subject, and to paint the essence of it. She encouraged us to paint every day,*



*even on vacation. She said Sumi-e began in simplicity, thrived in simplicity, remains in simplicity, and will develop and go forward in simplicity. In listening to her and watching her paint we knew we were in the presence of a master teacher.*

Doris always wanted to spread the word and encouraged us all to be teachers, especially to children. Her three favorite “P’s” were: Practice, Patience and Prayer. She was very aware of the spirituality in painting Sumi-e. We remember Doris fondly as we celebrate 30 years of our chapter, the Blue Heron Chapter of the Sumi-e Society of America.

## **Eye-opening National Sumi-e Society of America Conference Bradenton, Florida, November 2-7, 2018**

### **Mary Ann Matika**

When I attended the National Sumi-e Conference I learned two amazing lessons. First our Blue Heron Chapter has an active participation and educational program that is not matched by the other chapters. Much more often than other chapters, we meet, participate in workshops, enjoy demonstrations and display our art throughout the community. I also learned what talented sumi-e artists we are! Every member of our chapter has painted high quality Asian art that is worthy of entry into the National Sumi-e Society Juried Exhibition. Viewing the exhibition, I saw no finer art than I have seen in Blue Heron classes and shows. I challenge you to focus on entering the National Exhibition. Let’s inspire and support each other to paint award winning art for next year’s national conference!

### **How to Chop a Chop**

I learned a little bit more that I would like to share. As he taught us to paint grapes and wisteria, guest artist/juror, Professor Yifei Gan shared the following Chinese rules for adding chops to artwork:

- Never put a chop on top of the artist’s calligraphy signature, but place beneath.
- Place the chop so that it balances and supports the painting’s flow.
- Use two small chops, one a positive print and the other negative.
- Put a magazine underneath the spot on the rice paper where the chop will be stamped. Never stamp a chop when the rice paper is on felt.
- In addition to a chop of one’s name, use chops with phrases, and round, oblong and rectangular shaped chops.
- If your red ink has dried out, add sesame or grape seed oil and stir the ink.
- Perhaps follow Chinese superstition and never stamp a chop in flowing water.

**Membership in the Sumi-e Society of America.** I was a newbie at the national conference. Norene Spenser, the National Second Vice President, introduced me to



everyone, and I easily made new friends. I encourage our Blue Heron members to join the society and reap the benefits of membership, such as

- support from artists living all across the United States,
- entrance in the national juried shows,
- opportunities to take classes taught by renown sumi-e artists from all over the world,
- receiving four quarterly publications filled with paintings and inspiration,
- attending national conferences.



**Norene Spenser and the Board for the National Sumi-e Society of America.**

January is the time to join the society. Use the Sumi-e Society of America website, [sumiesociety.org](http://sumiesociety.org), or contact Carol Wiggins, Membership Chairman, 217-751-5111. Membership is well worth the \$40 dues.

## Criteria for Judging a Sumi-e Painting According to Cheng Khee Chee

### Gail Goodman

After you have painted a satisfying personal masterpiece, have you ever wondered if it would be good enough to compete in a juried exhibition or show? Here are a few guidelines to look for as you assess and prepare your painting for submission. But before we start. Here is a secret from Chee:

- Never submit a painting that is a copy from someone else.
- Never paint to the Judge. What does that mean? If the judge is known to paint something well known or very good, DO NOT paint something in that style. Please note, that the judge thinks he paints this style best and no one can do it as well as he does. Paint something new and fresh that the judge will respect and admire.

### **Four criteria that a judge looks for when judging a painting in a juried show:**

1. *Brush work:* Practice those strokes and load the brush to perfection. Carry energy through the line. All paintings are an extension of calligraphy.
2. *Composition:* Follow the design elements and note how you orchestrate color, shape, texture and line. Analyze the design principles. Note the center of interest. Balance color, shape and tonal value. Study the positive and negative space. Sometimes the mist is more important than the mountains.
3. *Content:* Paint something new and fresh.
4. *Creativity:* Look at the process and how you handled it. Paint from your heart because it will show as a part of you and that it comes from within you and a part of you. Paint something refreshing. Take a risk, let go. The first three criteria can be judged objectively, the fourth, creativity, becomes very subjective.

## Ink: 1-2-3

### **Ting Mei**

Sumi-e ink is traditionally composed of pine or oil soot, natural glue, and Chinese medicine and spices.

**Pine Soot Ink vs Oil Soot Ink:** The black ash solidifies after the pine is burned in the raw material for the pine soot ink. Correspondingly, oil soot is made from many kinds of vegetable oils or lard. The pine soot particles have irregular reflection and become black with absorbent thickness. Oil soot particles are homogeneous, have positive reflection and become a glossy black. This explains why pine soot ink is darker and why oil soot ink is glossier. Usually pine soot ink is for calligraphy and landscape painting. It is especially good for painting smoky cloud and mist. Oil soot ink is for calligraphy as well as flower and bird painting.

In the 1970's, machine burned soot was adopted by ink markers. The particles of machine burned soot are much larger, and sizes are varied and unevenly distributed. Therefore, the results of color and layers are inferior. For this reason, ink sticks over forty-fifty years old (made before 1970's) are significantly more expensive.

**Glue:** The quality of glue used in ink is very important. Animal glue is traditionally used and is the standard and the core when making Sumi ink and mineral colors. Good factories usually use glue from ox skin for ink sticks and solid mineral color cubes, and from ox bone for liquid ink or semi-solid color products.

There are three main functions of glue in the ink and colors:

1. **Adhesion:** Glue reacts with soot particles and makes them connect each other and disperse evenly in water for a long time. With the help of glue, thick or light ink can occur.

2. Lubrication: Glue reduces the friction among particles of soot, brush and rice paper.
3. Gloss and Transparency: Glue can better create ink layers and glossy on rice paper.

When applying ink by good glue, the ink soot of the first stroke is firmly attached to the paper surface, and it is not easily dissolved by water in subsequent strokes. This results in a better presentation of overlapping layers.

When relatively strong glue is used, soot particles hold together more tightly, so that finer soot particles are produced when grinding the ink stick. Years ago, there was an unfavorable trend of using very weak glue for ink, especially in Japanese products. The most obvious sign was ink sticks that would break after only a few years. Additionally, the black would drop off slightly after the paper dried. On the other hand, if glue is too strong, that causes problems too. The correct portions of good quality materials and a proper production process are the keys to good quality ink.

Animal glue is the standard and core of Sumi-e ink and colors because when diluted, animal glues demonstrate a smooth progression of change in ink colors, rather than the step-wise change produced by synthetic resin or industrial glue. Although the US market is full of synthetic resins, animal glues are superior in presenting cores of Sumi e art. For example, by controlling water and ink, ink can be divided into the full spectrum of ink colors: dry, wet, thick, light and coke (the blackest). And to break ink, such as when “light ink breaks dark” or “dark ink breaks light”, ink must cover all linear changes of the dryness, wetness, thickness and lightness. Moreover, washing and shading require a full tonal gradient from clear to opaque black when diluting ink with water.

**Chinese medicine and spices** help ink soot to penetrate the rice paper, enhance color and glossiness, and give off an enjoyable aroma.

For more detailed information about Sumi-e inks, this article in its entirety has been posted to the Blue Heron website, <https://www.blueheronsumie.org/>.

## Painting Tips from Susan Frame (Part II)<sup>†</sup>

**Gail Goodman**

### Composition

- Do not center your subject in the middle of the paper.
- Do not cut the paper in half with a subject in any direction.
- Leave a lot of white space.
- A little curve in the stem adds a lot more interest.

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<sup>†</sup> Part I was featured in the October 2018 newsletter.

- Try a fingernail sketch or a little charcoal before beginning your composition.
- Adding passion is a necessity.
- Never put your name or chop in the white breathing space of the painting, but ok to place it in the body of the painting.
- For long stems, use your thumbnail to “map out” direction, composition. Your thumbnail will leave an impression of where you want to go.

### **In general**

- Susan uses newspaper instead of felt. It creates a little different bleed. The ridges in the newspaper create challenges with fine lines.
- When using big brushes, it is very important to “smoosh” the brush after loading. This will blend the color up the well of the brush.
- If you want to create texture and water lines, use an unsized paper (a short fiber paper). Susan loves water lines.
- To create water lines, just line the paper with lines of plain water to ensure water marks. You will need to start painting while the water is wet.
- White haired brushes don’t have bounce.
- The Orchid/bamboo brush is always stiffer.
- Flow Brushes are combination brushes.