



Blue Heron Chapter of the Sumi-e Society of  
America

# Blue Heron News

*January 2021*

## Announcements<sup>\*</sup>

1. The Bayside Library exhibition is being rescheduled for a later date in the summer.
2. National Sumi-e Society membership dues, \$40.00, need to be paid in January.
3. Celebrate the Chinese New Year on February 12, 2021. It is the year of the Ox.

## 2020-21 Chapter Meetings<sup>†</sup>

Date	Time	Location	Program
January 17, 2021	2-4 PM	Zoom	Minh-Chau Truong, Road to Asian Art
February 21, 2021	2-4 PM	TBD	Jerry Singer, Inspiration and Suminagashi
March 21, 2021	2-4 PM	TBD	Norene Spencer, Styles of Calligraphy, including Chinese, square letter, and vertical letter
April 18, 2021	2-4 PM	TBD	Bill Larkin, I Ching, which underpins sumi-e, as well as many other aspects of Chinese culture

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

<sup>†</sup> Church of the Ascension Episcopal, 405 Talbot Hall Road, Norfolk, Virginia 23505

<b>May 16, 2021</b>	<b>2-4 PM</b>	<b>TBD</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ <b>Donna Wynn, Mindful Drawing Process</b></li> <li>○ <b>2022 Calendar Selection, Tea Party</b></li> </ul>
<b>June 13, 2021</b>		<b>TBD</b>	<b>Luncheon</b>

## Message from the Chapter President

*Dear Blue Heron Friends,*

I trust this amazing issue of our chapter newsletter finds you well. Many thanks again to Mary Ann and Masha!

If you, like me, have friends and family who are ill or who have even lost their lives to COVID-19 in this recent spike, I want to extend my sincere sympathy and prayers. Let's hope that the vaccination efficacy is strong and distribution plans are successful in the months ahead. May a new normal be achieved in the coming year!

Speaking for myself as an introvert, I was okay about limiting travel and meetings and being only with a few select folks during most of 2020. Like many of you, I even got in more time in the studio with the brush and paper. That said, I realized the other day that I am now "officially" weary with it all, and my motivation for painting is sagging a bit. I have given the issue some thought and here are a few things that will be a part of my cure for the COVID doldrums:

1. I am going to take out a half a day to journal about the meaning and future direction of my art. I'll try to answer this question—what is the message that I want my art to bring to my community in 2021?
2. I am going to make a list of things and people and experiences of 2020 for which I am thankful. The question I'll try to answer is—is there someone I can and should say thank you to this week?
3. I am going to make a new schedule of a "typical week in 2021" that includes my loves and disciplines—exercise, family activities, painting, learning, friends, etc. The question I will try to answer is—what changes/additions I should make on my calendar today.
4. I am going to clean up my studio.
5. I am going to learn from a masterful painter in 2021.
6. I am going to visit the idea of how my art can serve a cause in 2021. One of my mentors, Makoto Fujimura, says that art is a "gift economy". So, how will my art be gifted to serve others in 2021?

A few days ago, I attended a Zoom meeting of individuals who were giving their input to a consulting company that will be crafting a "master plan" that the City of Norfolk will use to move forward in the post-COVID future. For me, it was fun to consider ways to ramp up into a time when it is safe enough to teach a face-to-face class at the Titustown

Visual Art Center! No, I don't know when that will be exactly, but I believe it may very well happen in 2021. In the meantime, let's hang in there and continue to put brush to paper.

Blessings,  
Mike Lane

## Message from the Exhibits Chair

*Dear Blue Heron Membership,*

Due to circumstances beyond our control the exhibit originally planned for the month of February at the Bayside Library in Virginia Beach is being postponed due to current mandates set by the Governor for the Commonwealth of Virginia.

At the current time, only the lobby is open to the public for hold pickups, and we are not able to enter the building where the exhibition display would be. The library director and I are working on a future date into the summer when, hopefully, life will be resuming to normal again!

It is with great disappointment that I have to send you this notice but, as we know, COVID-19 has changed so many things about the way we live and certainly how we plan into the future! In the meantime, keep creating and thinking about what you will submit for a show sometime down the road. I am working on other future exhibits for our group, but taking it a day (month) at a time in planning.

Wishing you the best in this new year.

Sincerely,  
Donna Wynn

## Message on Checking Out Chapter DVDs

**Kathryn Bush**

Do you yearn for brush painting classes but fear the risk of getting COVID? Do you want to gain inspiration and new painting skills from a Master Painter? Do you want to do this at your home, with the convenience of doing it on your schedule?

The Blue Heron Chapter purchased more than 15 DVDs from Henry Li and we have them available for members to check out and use at home. Below is a list of the available DVDs. You can contact Kathryn Bush by email ([kabush2@gmail.com](mailto:kabush2@gmail.com)) or phone (757-343-5634) to arrange pick up or delivery.

Note that two of our DVDs (Landscape—Three Gorges, and Red Crowned Cranes) are missing. If anyone comes across these, please notify Kathryn.

### Henry Li and Other Chapter DVDs Available

1. Principles of composition, signature, and seal placemen
2. The Four Treasures
3. Bamboo, Panda, and Rocks
4. **Missing.** Landscape—the Three Gorges
5. Lotus, Flower, Frog
6. Scotch Pine and Squirrel
7. Part 1: Various Trees and Rocks
8. Part 2: Elements of Landscape Painting
9. Part 3: Rocks, Trees, Leaves, Composition
10. **Missing.** Red Crowned Cranes
11. Daylily, Rose, Bird of Paradise, Wooden Bridge, Plexi Mono Printing
12. Azalea, Rhododendron, Poppies, Sparrow
13. Horse, Symbols of Success
14. Tiger
15. Waterfalls
16. Professor Ju's Workshop 2005
17. SSA Exhibitions and Awards, 2002-2004, 2013, 2014, 2015, 2016

## Inspirations and Acknowledgements

Sumi-e “is a creative expression happily pursued by countless numbers of people of all ages and capabilities...While the world seeks great masterpieces, there is also a satisfying joy in every modest attempt.” Ukai Uchiyama, *The Art and Techniques of Sumi-e*

### **Thank you, Mary Ann**

For an inspirational presentation on painting birds. By carefully studying the bird shapes in nature, it is easier to use Sumi-e techniques to paint them. (September Chapter meeting on Zoom)



### **Thank you, Ting Mei**

For a detailed description of rice paper varieties and manufacturing processes. (October Chapter meeting on Zoom)



## Thank you, Gail



For an impeccable organization of two (!) guest-artist workshops, held on-line. Members were able to closely observe the artist in action from various camera views as well as to ask questions and advice on their own paintings.

(October and December 3-hour workshops on Zoom)



Hsi-Mei Yates

## Thank you, Joe

For a succinct introduction to painting of figures in landscapes. Members learned their relative dimensions and emphases. (November Chapter meeting on Zoom)



## Thank you, Erin and Cathy

For creative solutions to member holiday card exchange in the current times when face-to-face exchange is not possible. At the December meeting, Erin featured everyone's cards in a slide show. (December Chapter meeting on Zoom)



## Reflections from the 2020 1<sup>st</sup> Guest Artist Workshop

Guest Artist Joan Lok held a workshop "Poppies with Expressive Brushwork" on October 23, 2020 2--5 pm via Zoom



## Impressions from the participating members

One thing I was pleased to learn from Joan Lok was that she is not concerned with exact colors, or names of colors. She is very flexible when it comes to using and mixing colors of paints - this gives a certain freedom in painting. *Jill Vallentine*

Repeatedly Joan Lok said, "know your subject". What a great reminder for painting nature! *Mary Ann Matika*



Sometimes pollen is not just a dot! A little change can make a big difference. *Norene Spencer*

Loading the brush was most helpful, but the greatest benefit was in giving me the confidence that I am making progress. *Bonnie Kuhn*

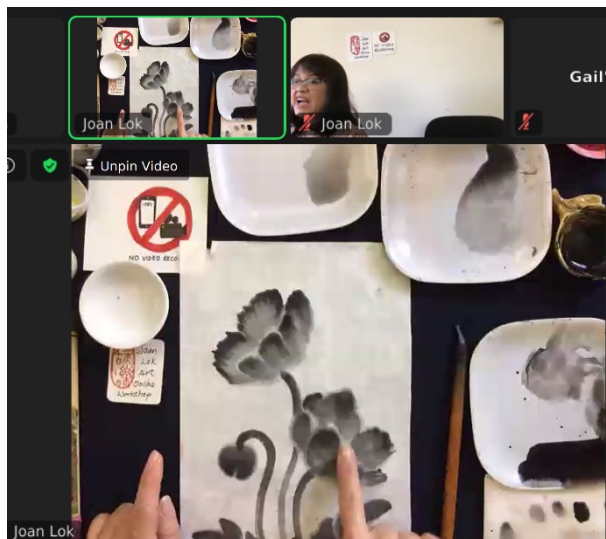
What I got out of the lesson was what Joan said about re-loading the dark-either ink or color- with

every petal. I was working on it today, and I think it really helps to make the colors pop. *Bill Larkin*

We got to paint the flowers "looking" at different directions. *Minh-Chau Truong*

What I noted was the center stroke - brush

straight up, pull a stroke with a slight curve, and hold a steady line. Joan said this shows strength. *Gail Goodman*

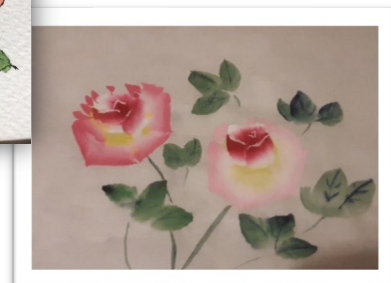


Joan Lok explained how to load a brush with three colors. She would say, "light, medium, dark" which means light color over most of the brush, medium color half-way up, and dark color on tip. Then she squished the brush on a plate to check the paint colors. *Betty Oliver*

Most helpful for me was to see a variety of techniques demonstrated by Joan Lok to paint poppy flowers. It is rare to observe such a versatility to paint a single object.

*Masha Sosonkina*

## Poppy paintings inspired by Joan Lok



Post-workshop, some members expanded their training with Joan Lok by taking her on-line classes. Bill Larkin has completed Joan's class on roses.



# Reflections from the 2020 2<sup>nd</sup> Guest Artist Workshop

Guest Artist Hsi-Mei Yates held a workshop “Cranes and Pine Tree” on December 5, 2020 1--4 pm via Zoom





## Note from His-Mei Yates

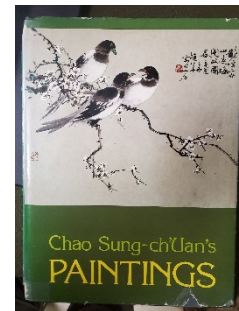
Dear Blue Heron Chapter of the *Sumi-e Society of America*,

The pandemic has changed many things. It is the reason why I began offering online teaching of the Sumi-e style of art. This has allowed me to reach out to people across the country I normally would not be able to.

Chinese Brush Painting has been part of me since I was a child. I am very joyful of the fact that it is my career, and I paint nearly every day. I don't think I need to reiterate my background as many of you are familiar with my bio. If not, my bio can be found on my website: <http://hsi-meichinesewatercolor.com/artist.html>

I began teaching 30 years ago in Washington state. A woman explained that she had cancer and that she believed that learning brush painting would be very therapeutic. I agreed, and she became my very first student. I became more and more involved with teaching shortly afterwards. Through teaching, I've gotten to meet many wonderful people, become challenged as an educator and as artist and have grown in my ability and knowledge as others suggest new subjects and themes. It has been a great experience.

The best way to become a good Sumi-e painter is to stick with it and practice with passion. The following of the fundamentals of Sumi-e Painting: **Understanding the supplies:** Ink, Brushes and rice paper, **Study your subject:** Such as sketching and learning how the bamboo grows, **The stroke:** In the old method you would learn the strokes learning how to paint Bamboo, Plum Blossoms, The Orchid and Mums but I have adapted teaching brush strokes in the U.S. by introducing the basic shapes such as square, triangle, rectangle and circle, **Perspective:** Developing depth with layering, **Understanding light and dark:** Adapting the brush strokes to apply the different shades, **Composition:** The balance of space of your painting



You have been a wonderful group of artists to work with. It was an honor to be able to paint with you. The online workshop was a real pleasure. Teaching is my joy, and hopefully my teachings were helpful and provided some encouragement to keep up with painting.

Sincerely,  
HsiMei Yates



# Close-Up with Sumi-e Painter

**Gillian (Jill) Valentine**

## **Statistics:**

**Family:** I am a (merry!) widow. I was married for 53 years. My husband, Louis, died in 2013 after a long-term illness. I have been blessed with 3 daughters, 6 grandchildren and 6 great grandchildren. You might be interested to know that I was born and raised in England during World War II. My father was called up into the Navy. He lost his life when his ship was torpedoed - I was just 2 years old, and my brother was 3 and a half. Growing up without a father was very difficult for me ... it just did not seem fair that other children had fathers and I did not! Some men were exempted from service due to their age, or their role in the war effort. Some survived the fighting, of course.

**Favorite Painting Tool:** My Happy Dot brush

**Comfort Food:** mashed potatoes

**Favorite Movie:** *It is a Wonderful Life*

**Pet Peeve:** Poor grammar ... double negatives, etc.

**Occupation:** I occupy myself with my art and taking care of myself and my house and yard.

**Education:** High school with some college level German

**Of what achievement are you most proud?** I am not proud of any of my achievements exactly, but I get satisfaction from my paintings that give pleasure and enjoyment to others, especially my Sumi-e paintings. I am also pleased that I was able to take care of my husband for all the years of his illness, with some help in the last year or so.

**If a snapshot is taken of you enjoying a perfect day, what would it look like?** I would be with my Sweetheart on a warm day, outdoors, either on a beach, in a park, or by the lake at his house.

**If you could give your ten-year-old self one piece of advice, what would it be?** Strive to be an educated person and learn all you can.

**If you could invite three famous people living or dead to dinner, who would they be?** I have given this some thought and choose Frederick Douglass, Barack Obama, and William Wilberforce, and I would just listen!

**Favorite thing to do:** Read.

**Book you would recommend:** *Wake Up and Live!* By Dorothea Brande I am sure it is out of print, but it is an extraordinarily inspirational book, especially for an artist or a writer.

**Who or what inspires you?** My Sumi-e teachers and fellow painters inspire me!

**How did you become a painter?**

1. My mother was a pen and ink artist.
2. I had excellent art lessons in school.
3. I have had an interest in art as long as I can remember.

**Favorite gadget:** Is an iPhone a gadget?!

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

Learn the basic strokes and practice them diligently! They can be used in any subject and in any art form.

**What would you like to share with Blue Heron members?** It has been a joy and a privilege to be a part of the Blue Heron Chapter of the SSA! Since I first met our Chapter founder, Doris Weber over 30 years ago, I have been in love with the Sumi-e art form. And being around people like you with your talent and enthusiasm for learning have kept the joy going for me.

## Sharon's Circle

**Dr. Sharon Weinstein**

### CONSCIOUS AND UNCONSCIOUS ART

Art can be planned, or it can be spontaneous.  
We all do a little of each.  
But usually we tend to one side or another.

Conscious art involves logic and sequence,  
coming from the brain's left hemisphere.  
It is also about planning, outlining and orderly structure.  
Paintings that are logically thought out.

Unconscious art emanates from the right hemisphere  
of our brain, where our feelings, intuition, and spirit reside.

When we feel our way through a painting.  
when we start out without a plan--





just adding colors and shapes in an organic way.  
when we go inside for our painterly journey,  
rather than looking for a subject outside ourselves  
which everyone else can see, then we are engaging  
in making unconscious art.

No art comes from purely one side or the other.

Just as being a human being means we partake  
of all sides of ourselves. The same happens in our paintings.

The best we can do is to be aware of our own preferences,  
and seek to build on what we already do so well.

For me, as a primarily unconscious painter, it means  
trusting that a planned painting can still have grace and joy.

For the primarily conscious painter, it means letting go a little  
and believing that an unplanned happening is a good thing.

For all paintings that are a journey, how do we know when  
what we have in front of us--is really a painting?

When we feel that inexplicable sense of wholeness.  
when we know that nothing can be added, and nothing can be  
taken away. We have Aesthetic Pleasure. That is a painting!

## Sumi-e School

### Ting Mei

#### Introduction of The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting

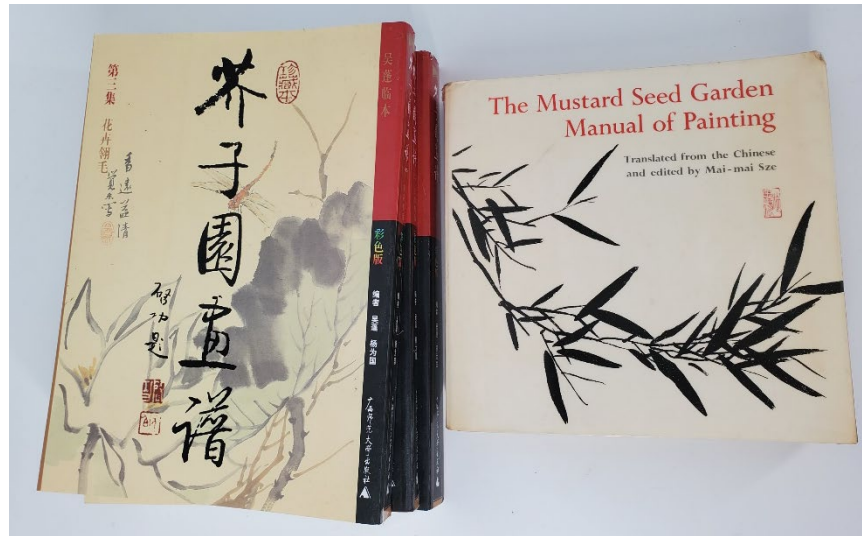
If there is one Sumi-e book an artist should keep, it must be *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*. This classic book systematically covers all skills and concepts regarding Sumi-e.

For hundreds of years, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* has been a necessary step for every master—an essential book for beginners. For those who have practiced in Sumi-e for years, this book is a good path leading into the next stages. *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* has many versions.

The most common problem among Sumi-e painters is they skipped the essential step of systematically learning. To illustrate this, a house builder tries to build a metaphorical

house, but she never learns how to build the foundation, and (2) he does not know the whole image of a house—he just learned how to install a door and how to paint a wall by attending one by one unsystematized workshops.

The book, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, can resolve these problems. The Princeton-published book (see the right-hand book in image above) introduces most fundamental strokes and techniques, their origins, and some traditional composite methods. But the Princeton-published version of the book has many limitations. For example, it did not mention the theories of Sumi-e, and the paintings are entirely black without any trace of color (gradual change in ink intensity). This is a key drawback: one of the main aspects of Sumi-e is handling ink and water, or the skill to create dry-wet-dark-light combined strokes. The Princeton-published book totally ignores this critical part, like a ballet teacher never teaching how to dance on toes. The worst part is that this “teacher” never demonstrated dancing on toes, so the teacher’s students roll around the floor and claim they are dancing ballet.



Free English-translated videos of *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* in Sumiestore.com were uploaded to resolve all these problems. They not only systematically teach all aspects of Sumi-e, but also emphasize the core of Sumi-e and discuss the philosophy of Sumi-e. They emphasize ink-water control, or, in essence, teach true Sumi-e. These videos are a classic series from China’s highest official TV education channel. All instructors in this channel are masters and proficient teachers. Think of them as the best Sumi-e teachers in the world.



The instructor of the videos of *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, Master Wu Peng, published his colored version *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* (see left-hand book in image above). His set of books include many more paintings and subjects than the videos and the Princeton-

published book. Also, his books present dry-wet-dark-light combinations very well. It is nice to have the videos for studying.

When Cynthia was taking Hsi-Mei Yates' Four Gentlemen course. *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* was an excellent supplement to enrich her learning. It provided her many examples to copy. Her orchid was accepted by SSA national juried exhibition in 2020.

In conclusion, *The Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting* is the most important learning book in Sumi-e. The Princeton-published version, while it has some use, is not the best option. It is much better to learn from the free videos at [sumiestore.com](http://sumiestore.com).



## On Creativity

### Gail Goodman

To live life creatively, one will need inspiration, curiosity and freedom. Inspiration is everywhere. It is not a matter of coming to you, but rather your awareness that it is already here. Creative people are curious, flexible, persistent and independent, with a tremendous spirit of adventure and love of play. There are ways to reach, develop and expand your creative potential. You will have to be curious, be willing to experiment, and willing to free yourself from expected norms. That does not mean to abandon the rules ... maybe just stretch them a little bit. Inspiration is a stimulation of creative energy or urge. You feel the desire and a feeling of power to create something ... to make it happen.

If there is a single component to creativity, it would be space. Space for spontaneity. When we are at our most creative, it is usually due to being open, not forcing things, benefitting from a natural unfolding. Try to embrace a “beginners mind” ... a state that is clean and fresh, unmarked by assumptions or the weight of judgement. If your mind is empty, you are ready for anything, open to all possibilities.

Adopting the beginners mind allows you to be attuned to moments and a handful of unique experiences. You change. You grow. You become wiser. You maintain imperfections, but you have a path that you appreciate having taken. Often when starting a painting you may have a preconceived idea of what and how you want the painting to look - and then it does not happen that way. Instinctively, you try to “fix it”, make it look like your mind’s eye (that’s forcing it). Now is the time to set yourself free, sit back and relook at your work. What do you like? How can it be different? What other idea or inspiration can you source to add into the painting?

Do not lean back into the original idea—it’s gone. You gave that up. Now you have space, no restrictions on ideas or concepts. Holding on taxes our mental strength.



“Letting go” will bring a sense of relief, and a wave of pleasure will wash over you. Let go and let TAO happen.

TAO does not have a specific English translation but sometimes the word “way” or “path” is used. Another word is “flow”. Try to put these words together and have your ideas flow out - you do not need to be deep in creativity to get in touch with this feeling - let go and find space, experiment! You have nothing to lose!

\*Excerpts from “The Wabi-Sabi Way” by Mike Sturm.

I’ve attached an example of making a creative change. Figure 1 shows the initial plan for the painting. I added fish to the stream which I didn’t like at all. (I do not have a photo of the original, but this is a similar painting because I tried to execute my mind’s eye several times - the fish just are not right. Now was the time to change the path and experiment. In Figure 2, I painted over the fish (which you can still sort of see), first with white “opaque” then painted over that with some color (peach, so it would look good hanging on my bathroom wall). AND THEN, I had space and freedom; I stepped out and added those watery flowers - style is in deep contrast to the muted foreground. Does it work?



Figure 1



Figure 2