

*for continuing students*

*the dance*



*of the eye*

*and*



*the hand*

more fundamentals of Chinese brush painting by Bob Schmitt

## lesson 5

- Chinese painting theory:  
the six methods  
methods 1-3

## Assumptions behind the dance of the eye and the hand

As a teacher I begin with several assumptions.  
Any student coming to me has 3 sets of skills to be nurtured.

First, the student has the skills of the eye - when they look at things, what do they see?

Second, the student has the set of skills of the hand - how are they able to connect what they see to the brush, the ink and the paper?

Third, the student has the set of skills of their heart/mind - how are their actions connected to the source of their energy, their spirit, the Qi?

It is from these assumptions that I now offer the dance of the eye and the hand.

These instructional videos with printable models are based on the concept that to learn Chinese brush painting one must train not only one's hand but one's eye as well.

The understanding is that continued learning is a tension between what the eye can see and what the hand can do.

And that the dance of the eye and the hand will always be in play.

That tension is always there.

Mastery is a process.

Not a destination.

Bob Schmitt

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## About brush painter Bob Schmitt



I am a life long student and teacher of the traditions of Chinese brush painting.

I began my study of brush painting in 1962 watching what was then educational tv. I would sit in front of the tv after school with my brush and ink and learn basic forms. I practiced most of my life unschooled.

In the late 90s I was fortunate to begin to study with Lok Tok, Yitong Lok of Toronto and

Hong Zhang in Minneapolis—three incredibly gifted Chinese brush painters and teachers.

Since 1998 I have been a weekly student of Hong Zhang, a native of Shanghai, schooled there and now living in Bloomington, Minnesota.

I have also had a long distance relationship with Chinese master Lok Tok (now deceased) and his son Yitong Lok.

In 2001, all three of these teachers endorsed my beginning to teach Chinese painting to students here in Minneapolis.

Currently I have 40 students who before the COVID 19 pandemic came to my house for weekly instruction in Chinese calligraphy and paintings.

I also have a weekly painting practice.  
To see more of my work, visit:

[www/laughingwatertsstudio.com](http://www/laughingwatertsstudio.com)

# Theory in Chinese landscape painting

## The Fundamentals of Painting

from the *Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*, 1679

Lu Ch'ai says:

Among those who study painting, some strive for an elaborate effect and others prefer the simple. Neither complexity in itself or simplicity is enough.

Some aim to be deft, others to be laboriously careful. Neither dexterity nor conscientiousness is enough.

Some set great value on method, while others pride themselves on dispensing with method. To be without method is deplorable, but to depend entirely on method is worse.

You must first learn to observe the rules faithfully; afterwards, modify them according to your intelligence and capacity. The end of all method is to seem to have no method.

Among the masters, it was a different matter. Ku Ch'ang-k'ang applied his colors sprinkling and splashing, and the grass and flowers seemed to grow at the movement of his hand. Han Kan, whose picture *The Yellow Horse* was unique, used to pray before he painted, and his brush was inspired. At a later stage, therefore, one may choose either to proceed methodically or to paint seemingly without method.

First, however, you must work hard. Bury the brush again and again in the ink and grind the inkstone to dust. Take ten days to paint a stream and five to paint a rock. Then, later, you may try to paint the landscape at Chialing. Li Ssu-shun took months to paint it; Wu Tao-tzu did it in one evening. Thus, at a later stage, one may proceed slowly and carefully or one may rely on dexterity.

If you aim to dispense with method, learn method. If you aim at facility, work hard. If you aim for simplicity, master complexity.

Some of this is helpful.

Some interesting.

And some really quite obscure.

It's just like Chinese painting.

It takes some practice to break the secret code!

## The Twelve Things to Avoid

In the Yuan period, Jao Tzu-jan said:

The first thing to avoid is a crowded, ill-arranged composition.

The second, far and near not clearly distinguished.

The third, mountains without Ch'i, the pulse of life.

The fourth, water with no indication of its source.

The fifth, scenes lacking any places made accessible by nature.

The sixth, paths with no indication of beginning and end.

The seventh, stones and rocks with one face.

The eighth, trees with less than four main branches.

The ninth, figures unnaturally distorted.

The tenth, buildings and pavilions inappropriately placed.

The eleventh, atmospheric effects of mist and clearness neglected.

The twelfth, color applied without method.

## The six methods, the six essentials, and the six qualities are variations on the same principles

### The Six Methods (Lui Fa)

In the Southern Ch'i period (479-501 CE), Hsieh Ho said:

1. Circulation of the *Ch'i* (breath, spirit, vital force of heaven) produces movement of life.
2. Brush creates structure.
3. According to the object draw its form.
4. According to the nature of the object apply color.
5. Organize composition with the elements in their proper place.
6. In copying, seek to pass on the essence of the master's brush and methods.

### The Six Essentials

In the Sung period, Lui Tao-ch'un said:

First Essential: Action of the *Ch'i* and powerful brushwork go together.

Second Essential: Basic design should be according to tradition.

Third Essential: Originality should not disregard the *li* (the principle or essence) of things.

Fourth Essential: Color (if used) should enrich.

Fifth Essential: The brush should be handled with *tzu jan* (spontaneity).

Sixth Essential: Learn from the masters but avoid their faults.

### The Six Qualities

First Quality: To display brush stroke power with good brushwork control.

Second Quality: To possess sturdy simplicity with refinement of true talent.

Third Quality: To possess delicacy of skill with vigor of execution.

Fourth Quality: To exhibit originality, even to the point of eccentricity, without violating the *li* (*essence*) of things.

Fifth Quality: In rendering space by leaving silk or paper untouched, to be able nevertheless to convey nuances of tone.

Sixth Quality: On the flatness of the picture plane, to achieve depth and space.

### The Three Faults

In the Sung period, Kuo Jo-hsu said,

The Three Faults are connected with the handling of the brush.

The first is described as “board like” (*p'an*), referring to the stiffness of a weak wrist and a sluggish brush. Shapes of objects become flat and thin, lacking in solidity.

The second is described as “carving” (*k'o*), referring to the labored movement of the brush caused by hesitation. Heart and hand are not in accord. In drawing, the brush is awkward.

The third is described as “knotted” (*chieh*), referring to the knotted effect when the brush seems to be tied, or in some way hindered from moving freely, and lacks pliancy.

# The Six Methods

6	5	4	3	2	1	
傳	經	隨	應	骨	氣	六法
模	營	類	物	法	韻	
移	位	傳	寫	用	生	
寫	置	彩	形	筆	動	

chuán  
mó  
yí  
xiě

when  
you copy  
get essence  
of the  
master  
in stroke  
and  
method

jīng  
yín  
wèi  
zhì

organize  
composition  
with  
elements  
in the  
right  
place

suí  
lèi  
fù  
cǎi

according to  
category  
of object  
apply  
color

yīn  
wù  
xiě  
xíng

according  
to the  
object  
draw its  
form

gǔ  
fǎ  
yòng  
bǐ

use bone  
structure  
when using  
brush

qì  
yún  
shēng  
dòng

spirit  
moving  
produces  
life

liù  
fǎ

the  
six  
methods