

*for continuing students*

*the dance*



*of the eye*

*and*



*the hand*

**more fundamentals of Chinese brush painting by Bob Schmitt**

## **fall 2020 lesson 2**

- **finding the structure**
- **painting the bones of a composition**

## 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)

## What is “structure” in a Chinese painting?

The Chinese talk about structure as the “bones” of a painting.

These are the strokes that are the skeleton of a piece.

It is what comes first.

And everything else hangs off of it.

Just like on the body, some bones are completely invisible after the organs, muscles and skin are placed over and around the bones.

It is the same in the bones of a painting.

So to find the structure you must dissect the model to mentally remove the skin, the muscles and the organs to find the bones.

As is generally true in all things in this tradition: it is easier said than done.

Let’s start with a simple example of a group of rocks.

The images at right demonstrate the backwards progression from looking at a finished piece to layer by layer removing each stage of painting to reveal the basic structure.



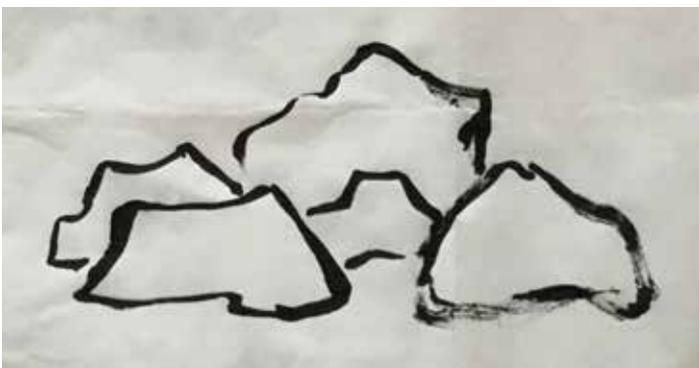
to find the bones, mentally remove the dots ↓



then mentally remove the washes ↓



then mentally remove the shading ↓



now you have found the bones of the piece

*the dance of the eye* 🧑🏻‍🎨 *and the hand* 🧑🏻‍🎨

Use this image to practice mentally removing the layers of color, dots, small twigs and find the bones of this piece.

Methodically moving from the last step to the one before that, and before that, until you get to the bones.



Qi Baishi: plum blossoms

*the dance of the eye* 🧑🏻 and the hand 🧑🏻

Use this image to practice mentally removing the layers of wash, dots, shading and find the bones of this piece.

Methodically moving from the last step to the one before that, and before that, until you get to the bones.



Qi Baishi: walk on a windy night

*the dance of the eye* 🧑🏻 and *the hand* 🧑🏻

Now let's focus on the primary model for this term, "a hope for peace", to practice mentally removing the layers of wash, dots, shading and find the bones of this piece. Where would you start? Guidance is on the next page.



## Deconstructing the structure of a painting:

If you removed all of these elements, what would be left?

(Answer: should be just the rocks. How many rocks are there?)

Can you guess what the order is for painting these elements? Answer on next page.

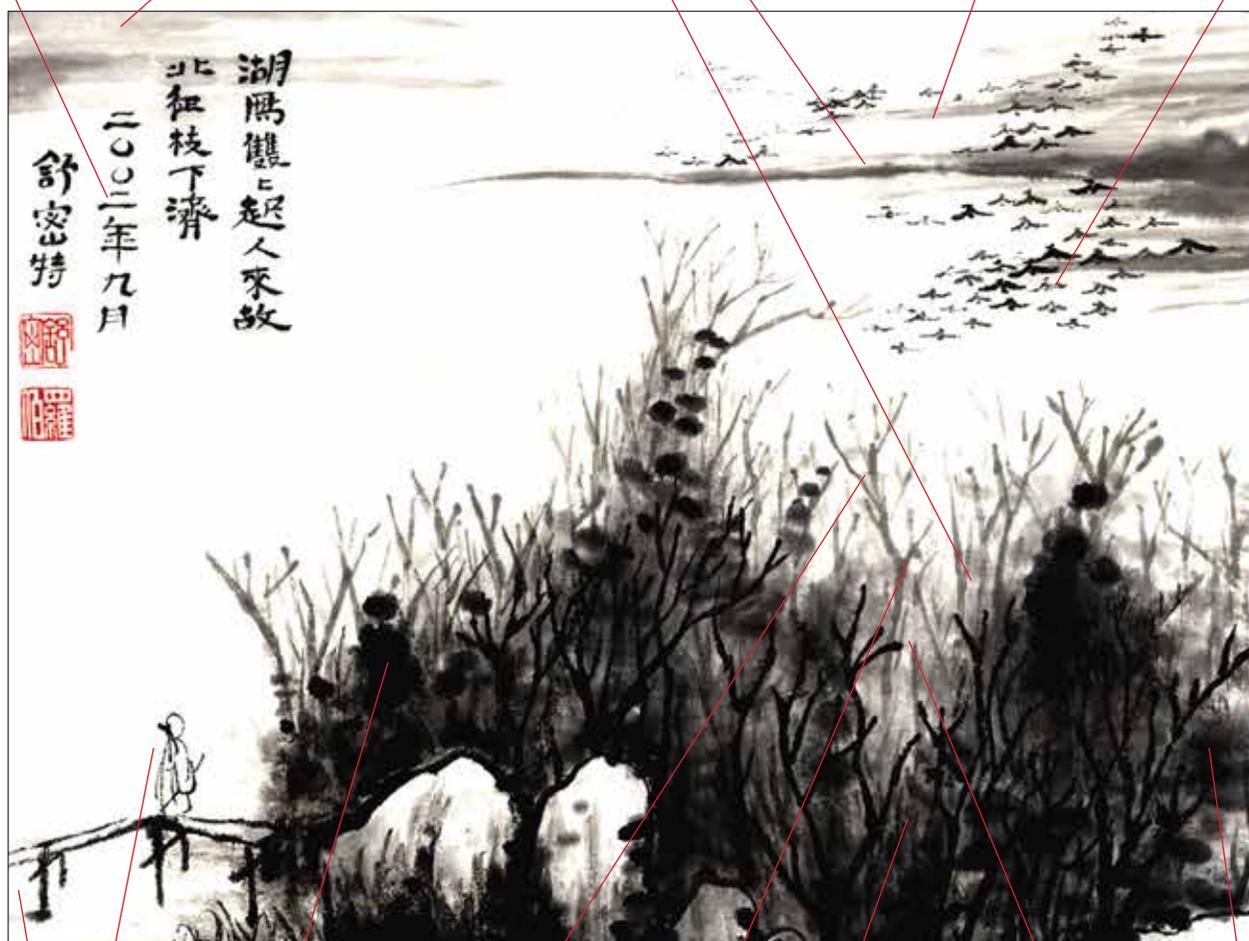
remove the sky washes.

remove the inscription  
and the seals.

remove the gray geese.

remove the black geese.

remove the light gray dots.



remove the person.

remove the black dots.

remove the black trees.  
remove the middle gray wash.

remove the middle gray trees. remove the dark gray wash

remove the lightest gray wash.

remove the bridge.

# Suggested sequence in painting the elements in this model:

Step 1: paint the outline of the rocks.

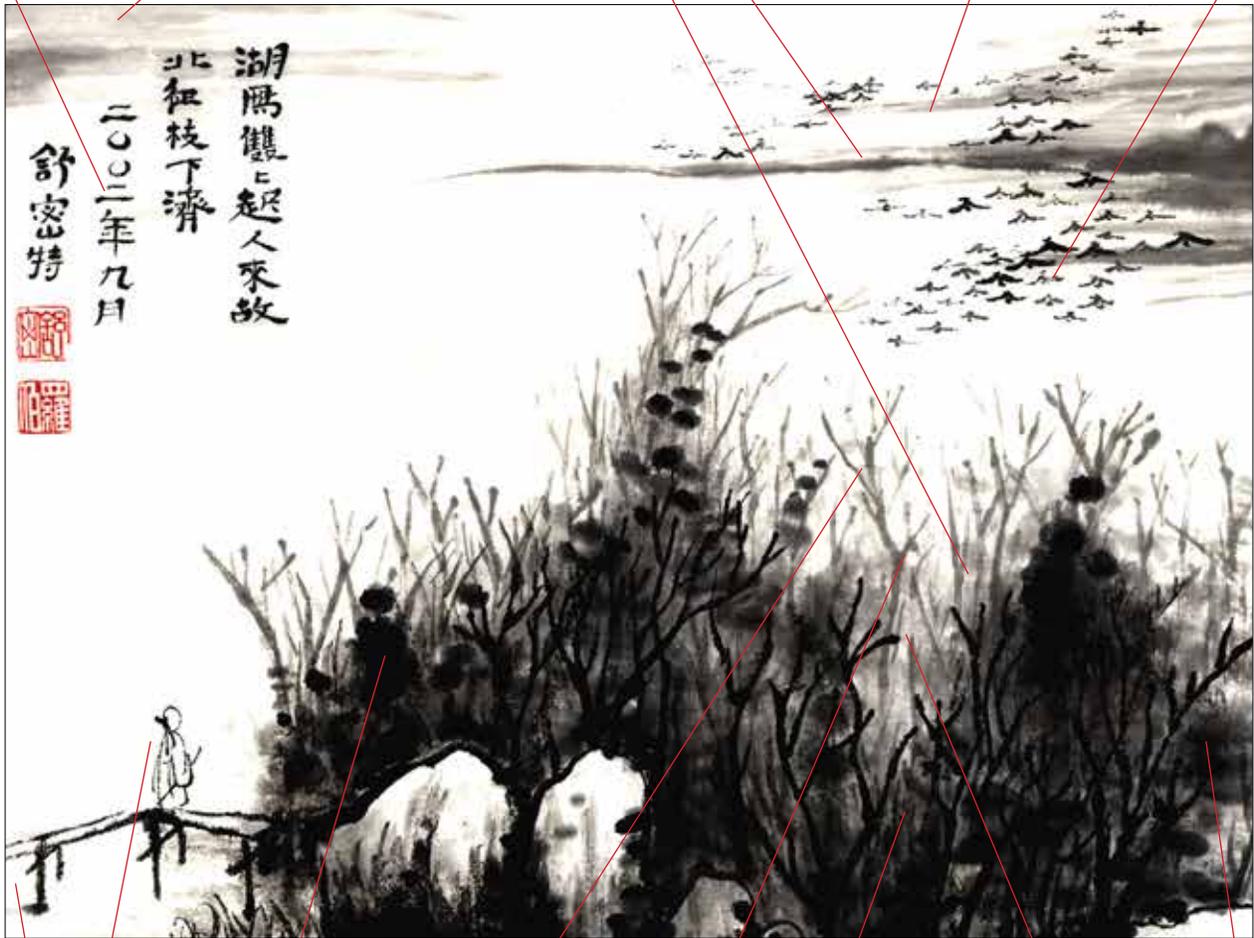
Step 9: the sky washes.

Step 12: the gray geese.

Step 11: the black geese.

Step 14: the inscription and the seals.

Step 13: the light gray dots.



Step 10: the black dots.

Step 2: the black trees.

Step 7: the middle gray wash.

Step 5: the person.

Step 3: the middle gray trees.

Step 6: the dark gray wash

Step 8: the lightest gray wash.

Step 4: the bridge.

model to practice mentally removing the layers.

And then practice building this image from the bones to washes, to dots.

the dance of the eye  and the hand 

