

# Taiwanese Visiting Artist Workshops on Calligraphy and Ink Painting



Professor Emeritus Chuan Chang (left) and Dr. Shih-Chiung Hsiao helping participants with their painting and calligraphy

On November 12th and 13th, 2014, the East Asia Institute hosted two hands-on workshops on Chinese calligraphy and ink painting at the Southwest School of Art and at the University of Texas at San Antonio. The workshops were made possible with very generous support from The Ministry of Culture of the Republic of China (Taiwan) and Houston's Taiwan Academy. The workshops were conducted by Professor Emeritus Chuan Chang and Dr. Shih-Chiung Hsiao, two visiting art masters from Taiwan. The workshop at the Southwest School of Art was attended by 20 art students and faculty while the workshop at UTSA was attended by 70 participants. A mixed group of attendees were comprised of families, college students, and seniors of all types of background.

Professor Emeritus Chuan Chang was Chair of the Department of Fine Arts at the National Chia Yi Normal University and was a Fine Arts professor at Chung Jung Christian University in Chia Yi, a town about two hours south of Taipei. He has won numerous awards and has had many solo exhibitions both

domestically and internationally to showcase his paintings. Chang is held in high regard for using lines and contrasts in his paintings. He is also an expert on drawing flowers and birds.

Dr. Shih-Chiung Hsiao is currently a Fine Arts professor at Asia University in Taichung, an hour south of Taipei by high speed rail. Similar to Chang, Hsiao has also won various awards and exhibited his calligraphy works both within Taiwan and around the world. Hsiao is well known for his creative styles of combining traditions with modernism in his calligraphy works.

At the Southwest School of Art workshop, both professors had a presentation about their art works and styles. They also talked about the history of calligraphy and ink painting. After the presentations, each student was invited to practice the art styles and create drawings of their own. A student in the workshop used his new skills of watercolor techniques to draw cactus adding a Texan twist to it. All the art students developed beautiful drawings and the artists were quite



The artists with UTSA art class faculty and students

impressed. A student commented that these two art styles should be taught and offered as a class in SSA.

At the UTSA workshops, Hsiao began his portion of the workshop with a short lecture to explain what Chinese characters are, and the different styles of Chinese characters used on ancient vessels, turtle shells, and bones. He also explained how Chinese character styles had evolved over time. Hsiao gave many examples of the works created by famous calligraphers in the ancient Chinese dynasties, including Dong-Puo Su (蘇東坡: 1037 – 1101) of the North Sung Dynasty, Zi-An Zhao (趙子昂: 1254 – 1322) of the Yuan Dynasty, and Zhong Wang (汪中: 1745 – 1794) of the Qing Dynasty along with works from other famous Chinese, Korean, Japanese, French and American artists. He also explained that there are five different fonts that Chinese characters can be written in; seal, clerical, cursive, frame, and regular script. Hsiao explained the artists all used their calligraphy to express their feelings and creativity. For example, if an artist would not agree with the Dynasty or Emperor, his or her art works would imply the disagreements by the movement of strokes and choices of color.

After the lecture portion, Hsiao gave out a few of his own silk fan works to participants who answered

his questions correctly. Each silk fan had the character sheep written in different ways from many time periods. Hsiao began the hands-on portion with a few short video clips on the techniques for writing Chinese characters with a brush pen. Since the year of 2015 is the year of the sheep, Hsiao demonstrated how to write “Sheep (羊 Yáng)” and then the participants practiced numerous times using scratch paper and calligraphy paper. Finally, the participants were ready to write on the silk fan provided by the workshop.

While the participants finished their calligraphy work, refreshments were served during the intermission. Soon after, the audience welcomed Prof. Chuan Chang to the floor who then began his part of the workshop.

Chang started his portion of the presentation with a short lecture on the history of ink painting with works from past artists such as Xi Xu (徐熙: 886年 – 975) of the South Tang Dynasty, Emperor Hui Zong (徽宗: 1082-1135) of the North Sung Dynasty, and Tao Shi (石濤: 1642-1708) of the Qing Dynasty. The participants were asked to observe various styles, the content of the paintings, and to express their own thoughts and the reasons to back up their observations.





Dr. Shih-Chiung Hsiao with SSA art professor Chriisy Quattro



Chang also utilized video clips to demonstrate how to paint stems, leaves and flowers from many different angles. While the looped videos were playing and Chang explained in great detail on how to draw them and how to move the brush, the participants practiced by drawing on rice paper first. After practicing, they were able to create plants of their own on a paper fan. Chang went around the room to help participants who were struggling. In the end, most of the participants were able to draw beautiful plants on their fans.

At the end of the workshops, Chang's exhibition art albums were raffled to participants who could answer his questions on ink painting techniques. Only a handful of the lucky ones received them.

The UTSA East Asia Institute's mission is to promote appreciation and understanding of East Asian societies and cultures both on campus and in the community through research, outreach, networking, education, student/faculty exchange, and business development and cooperation. The East Asia Institute organizes seminars, workshops, lectures, conferences, film festivals, visual art exhibitions as well as bringing in performing art groups from China, Japan, Korea, and other Asian nations. It also encourages faculty research collaborations both within UTSA and with participating East Asian university researchers. All events are free and open to the public.

One of the students commented, "I really enjoyed this workshop! It was very informative and hands on. I am so glad I have artwork to bring home." A returning attendee said, "This is my second time attending this class and I enjoyed every minute of it."

"It truly is an honor for UTSA to be hosting an educational event like this to introduce Chinese arts to our San Antonio community," said Dr. Wanxiang Yao, director of the East Asia Institute (EAI). "The artistic and intellectual grace and strength the artists have shown to the participants through their works are just beyond description. EAI is pleased to be the bridge between Eastern and Western cultures and arts."

Chinese calligraphy and ink painting have been treasured by the Chinese and throughout the East Asia for centuries. The art forms are closely associated with literature, nature, and philosophy. These two techniques bring out the ancient tandem of complex spirituality and unique beauty. Both forms take a lifetime of studies in order to achieve the mastery.

Special thanks to the following sponsors:



(From left) Mimi Yu, associate director of the East Asia institute, Dr. Shih-Chiung Hsiao, Professor Emeritus Chuan Chang, Ms. Yueh-Chin Liu, associate director of Houston's Taiwan Academy, and Dr. Wanxiang Yao, director of the East Asia Institute