

Other equipment

Blanket - the papers are delicate so the colour and ink may stain work surface - or the colour and ink may spread and ruin the picture. An old blanket, felt, an un-textured plain tea towel or a couple of sheets of a newspaper should be used as a working surface to support your painting. A light coloured blanket or felt is preferable.

Pots to Hold Colours - stacks of clear plastic pots that screw together, in small individual pots, or in any lidded containers you can fit your brushes into.

Dishes for Mixing and Diluting Ink and Colours - small dishes, saucers, tiles or plates. Plain white is preferable to coloured. Some Chinese colours are poisonous – do not use table crockery.

Bowls for Mixing Washes - old rice or cereal bowl.

Water Pots - two water pots – one for washing brushes and one (clean) for mixing colours - make sure your pots are big enough to accommodate your brushes.

Water Spray - to moisten colour chips or dried paint from tubes, dampen paper before applying a wash, creating special effects, dampen paper before mounting, etc.

Seal Paste - very thick sticky paste made from cinnabar (mercuric oxide), oils and shredded raw silk mixed together. Good seal paste will not run or fade, but the quality of the paste may vary.

To use your seal - stir paste evenly, make a dome on the dish, tamp the seal until evenly covered, lower seal carefully into position, press down and rock gently from side to side, lift straight off. Wipe seal and store carefully, dispose of the wipe with care as cinnabar paste is poisonous.

Seals or Chops - seals on Chinese paintings and calligraphy are for different purposes. Traditional method of signing and a good protection against forgery. Used to set the mood of the painting - a simple message or part of an ancient poem. Seal makes a painting complete - small splash of red stands out and adds a touch of personalisation / authenticity.

Large numbers of seals found on ancient pictures – seals of collectors / past owners. Chinese students study seal carving as an art form. Mood seals can be readily purchased. Reasonably priced wood and rubber seals can be found, others sell stone seals - good quality but expensive. Name seals are produced specifically for you - so ask a professional to carve them.

Paper Weights - to hold the paper down, stop it from moving, keep it flat and to minimise the effects of folds or creases. Some use old Chinese coins, little figures, 50p pieces, stones or rulers. Custom-made paperweights in wood or brass.

Brush Rests - useful way to keep the colour on the brush or the damp brush off the working surface between strokes. Ideally one that keeps the brush flat to prevent the colour or ink seeping into the handle.

Brush Tamping Material - folded piece of kitchen towel on which to wipe your brush to control the water.

Brush Mat – roll brushes together in the mat and secure with a cord to protect from damage in transit.

Reference Books - to help you develop your skills. Many are written in Chinese. Look at the pictures and ask how certain effects were achieved.

Old collector's catalogues - works of leading Chinese artists. Look in the British Museum, Ashmolean Museum and British Library for expert artists and the best of Chinese art.

Books on specific artists or subjects. Books on specific genres – Lingnan, Blue Green Landscape, Xie yi, Gong bi, etc.

Postcards and Posters - from exhibitions – an excellent source for reference and practice.

Cuttings - pictures from magazines, flyers or brochures of various subjects. These can be used as reference.

Sketchbooks and Notebooks - all Chinese artists make extensive use of sketches in their work, and make notes at seminars, workshops, courses, gallery visits, etc.

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