

Brushes for Gongbi (Meticulous painting)

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This article is an excerpt from CBPS book Gongbi 1 Bai Miao Yu Mo Ran: Meticulous Style Painting 1 White Sketch with Ink Wash

Brushes



Unknown Song dynasty artist – the Emperor Huizong

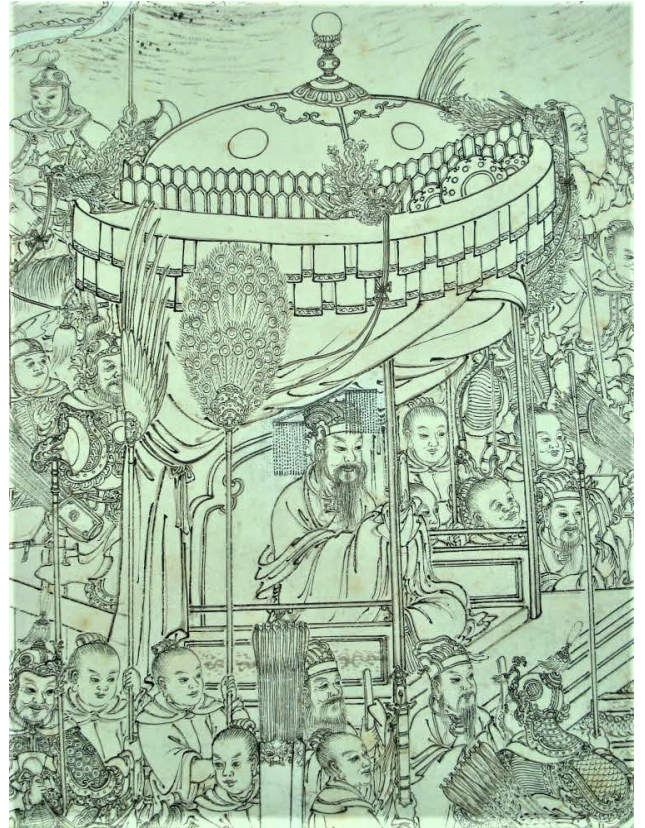
You need a line brush that will create fine, dynamic lines in a size suitable for the painting you are working on and suitable wash brushes to add the wash work. For small scale subjects, these will be small brushes and for larger scale subjects these will be larger brushes. Your line work needs to be scaled to the size of the subject of your painting and to the level of detail required.

Look at the portrait of Huizong. A picture with a subject of this scale – which is life-sized – still requires elegant but very definite line work – so, a larger line work brush is required.

The following picture is a small section of a Wu Daozi 462 cm long by 65.5 cm tall hand scroll.

Even though the overall scale of the picture is much larger than the scale of a life-size portrait,

the scale of the subjects in it is much smaller and, therefore, the line work requires a much finer brush.



Wu Daozi (680 – c 760) Procession (detail)

Brushes for lines

The brushes you use will be very much the ones that work best for you. This really does vary from person to person.

Depending on how you work, you would normally need one or more per painting.

The finest brushes for small scale subjects are from left to right:



- Xie Zhua (crab claw) has a firm core with hairs longer than the outer hairs. It is a good brush for the finest details eg wings of dragonfly.
- Hong Mao and Hong Yumao (Red feather or Red Hair and Red Bean) are made from 2 types of hair: longer wolf in the centre with

shorter rabbit hair around it. They are used to create the thicker lines.

- Yi Wen is a fine wolf hair brush used for the long lines (contours of clothing for example). These brushes come in 3 sizes.
- Ye Jing is a very small wolf hair brush used for the veins of leaves and for contour lines of the flowers and leaves.

Brushes for larger scale subjects are from left to right:



- Elegant Gongbi brush which has a centre of resilient horsehair surrounded by black sheep hair. It forms a fine point and can produce fine lines.
- 7 purple 3 white or 7 rabbit 3 sheep has a centre of rabbit hair surrounded by white sheep hair. It forms a very fine point and can produce very fine lines.
- Small calligraphy brush made from wolf hair and can be used to create any line in a medium-scale subject.
- Small orchid bamboo brush is wolf hair. It forms a fine point and can be used for medium and larger scale projects.
- Small badger brush is made from badger hair. It comes to a fine point and can produce fine and thicker lines and can be used to produce any line in a larger-scale subject.

If you are working on a life-size portrait, you may need something even larger.

As previously stated, you need to find the brushes that work best for you and allow you to achieve the results you are looking for. You may find other options.

Brushes for washes

White Cloud brushes have dark hair in the centre surrounded by white sheep hair. They come in 3 standard sizes – small, medium, and large. There are other varieties of mixed hair brushes that come in other sizes which are described below.

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For most paintings you will use small or medium sized brushes. The picture would need to have very large areas of wash to require a large or larger brush. You will need one brush that you should only ever use with clean water plus one or more brushes to use with ink. Again, the size you choose is what suits your style best, but it is easier to work in very small areas with a small brush. However, it is worth having a selection and choosing the right one for the current painting.

Traditionally the water only brush is a medium sized brush.

The picture below shows what the 3 standard sizes look like when you buy them:



Again, you need to choose the brushes that work best for you.

If you are working on a large scale subject, you may want to use larger scale wash brushes. Some examples of what you may have and what is available are shown below:



These are all brushes with the same composition as white cloud brushes, but they are much larger.