

TITLE: Make A Decorative Scroll

Grades: K-5

TIME REQUIRED: 10-15 Minutes

CONCEPT STATEMENT:

Painting has been an important part of Chinese culture of centuries. Scrolls were an artistic and scholarly form of expression highly valued in the Forbidden City.

OBJECTIVES:

1. Paint a decorative scroll using the symbolic imagery of a carp.
2. Assemble a scroll for the painting.

STANDARDS OF LEARNING CORRELATIONS:

Virginia Science Foundation Block 5: Life Processes

- a) The child will observe and describe the characteristics of living things, compare the growth of a person to the growth of a plant and an animal, and describe the basic needs and the basic life processes of each.
- b) Identify basic structures for plants and animals (plants-roots, stems, leaves; animals-eyes, mouth, ears, etc.)

Geography

2.4 The student will develop map skills by

- b) understanding the relationship between the environment and the culture of ancient China and Egypt.

Earth Patterns, Cycles, and Change

K.9 The student will investigate and understand that there are simple repeating patterns in his/her daily life. Key concepts include the shapes and forms of many common natural objects including seeds, cones, and leaves; and animal and plant growth.

Visual Arts

Virginia Visual Arts Foundation Block 1: Visual Communication Production

The child will develop an awareness of the mechanics of the visual arts and produce various forms on a regular basis.

- a) Understand that artists create visual arts using many different tools.
- b) Understand that the visual arts take many forms.

Virginia Visual Arts Foundation Block 2: Art History and Cultural Context

The child will develop an understanding of the cultural importance of the visual arts.

- a) Understand that all cultures have art that reflects their experiences and identity.
- b) Understand that works of art can be a historical record of a certain time period in history.
- c) Develop an appreciation for the various forms of visual arts.

K.14 The student will describe the concept that people in all cultures create works of art.

2.11 The student will identify symbols from various cultures.

3.14 The student will identify common attributes of works of art created by artists within a culture.

5.11 The student will combine various craft techniques in works of art.

MATERIALS:

Activity 1: Scroll Painting

1. Bamboo brush
2. Watercolor paints
3. Fish stamps
4. Ink
5. Scroll paper

Activity 2: Scroll Assembly

1. Scroll kit (including rods, paper)
2. Ribbon
3. Decorative paper
5. Glue sticks

VOCABULARY:

scroll - a horizontal or vertical piece of art or writing meant to hang or be rolled and transported.

calligraphy - "beautiful writing" in Chinese.

chop - a seal which signifies the artist or an official.

ink - pigments made into a cake form used with water for painting.

literati - an orthodox school of painting, calligraphy, and poetry developed by Dong Qichang (1555 - 1636) at the end of the Ming dynasty

carp - a large fish with whiskers like a catfish

OVERVIEW:

A scroll is a painting mounted on a durable decorative backing with rods at either end for the purpose of rolling it up for transportation or storage. Scrolls were popular in China as a surface to display and transport painting, calligraphy, and poetry. There are two main types of scrolls, a hand scroll and a hanging scroll. Ink, brush, and paper became widely used during the Han period (206 BCE - 220 CE). The ability to write (calligraphy) was a source of power, authority, and religious knowledge that only scholars and royalty possessed. Therefore Chinese culture has always held a deep respect for painting and calligraphy. This developed into the orthodox school of literati painting in the late Ming Dynasty.

Silk and paper were used for funerary banners, religious texts, landscapes, poetry, portraiture, and state records. Silk was expensive and had to be treated in order to create a good surface for painting, so paper made from bamboo, mulberry, jute, and other materials was often a preferred choice. The inks used were water-based pigments made into cakes (like your watercolors!). The pigments came from colorful minerals like azurite, malachite, and iron oxide.

In art and writing, natural elements such as landscapes, animals, and trees helped artists communicate ideas. In Chinese thought, nature is part of humanity rather than separate. Therefore flowers, trees, and animals represent aspects of life and people. For example, the way that a pine tree grows upright at first, then bending and reaching out shows how people can become humble while still growing up towards the sky. Bamboo was also an extremely popular subject and was associated with characteristics of a true gentleman: strong, virtuous, and humble. Plum blossoms represented purity and late winter because it is the first to bloom. Flowers and animals each had special meanings, so that to understand them was almost like being able to read an artistic language.

The Chinese imperial court (the emperor) had court painters who were commissioned to paint and write for them. These paintings would be stamped with the Imperial seal. A seal, or chop, is like a stamp with a special design like a signature. An artist would stamp his/her work and often important people who looked at the work would add their seal or "stamp of approval." During the Ming Dynasty, fish paintings became popular, with the carp as a symbol of a powerful scholar. This was because of the legend of the Dragon Gate, in which carp were able to jump over the gate and transform into a dragon (and dragons symbolized the emperor).

VMFA Enrichment Activities:

Seek and find these related works at the VMFA:

1. Inkstone with Dragon Design, Object Number 2008.150.1-.2a-b, East Asian Galleries, Level 2 (<http://vmfa.museum/collections/art/inkstone-dragon-design/>)
2. Seasonal Flowers, Object Number 2009.306.1-4, East Asian Galleries, Level 2
"Kong Xuan depicts, from right to left, orchid and peony for the spring; lotus and asparagus fern for the summer, chrysanthemum and pine branch for the autumn; and blossoming plum and narcissus for tehw inter. Kong's art generates an immediated appeal and a decorative beauty, symbolizing harmony between nature and mankind. It also reveals the artist's hope for peace and prosperity during the chaos in China after the fall of the Qing dynasty (1644-1911)." - Li Jian, E. Rhodes and Leona B. Carpenter Curator of East Asian Art
3. Album of Twelve Landscape Paintings, Object Number(s) 2005.49-60, East Asian Galleries, Level 2
Artist Wu Yunlai's simple elegant paintings show his association with the literati school of painting developed in the Ming Dynasty. It was typical for painters to make works in the style of earlier masters such as Ni Zan and Guan Tong. He learned painting and calligraphy from his mother.
4. Monju (Bodhisattva Manjusri) Crossing the Sea, Object Number 68.42.2, East Asian Galleries, Level 2
Confucian ideas, Daoism, and Buddhism played a large role in Chinese art and life. In this Japanese scroll, the deity Monju who is the bodhisattva of wisdom descends to earth from the Buddhist paradise.
(<http://vmfa.museum/collections/art/crossing-sea/>)

Download a VMFA gallery map here:

<http://vmfa.museum/visit/plan-ahead/gallery-maps/>

Other Enrichment Resources:

Literature/Media in the VMFA Library Collections:

Pan, An-Yi. *Nature Observed and Imaged: Five Hundred Years of Chinese Painting*. Ithaca, NY: Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, Cornell University, 2010.

Li, Jian. *Forbidden City: Imperial Treasures from the Palace Museum*. Richmond, VA: Virginia Museum of Fine Arts, 2014.

Website(s):

Read more about Chinese Painting: http://metmuseum.org/toah/hd/chin/hd_chin.htm

ACTIVITY DIRECTIONS:

Activity 1: Scroll Painting

1. Select your scroll paper.
2. Use the carp stamps to stamp at least 2 fish. Think about your composition (placement).
3. Use the markers to add details to the fish. Be sure to add eyes, whiskers, and a scale pattern.
4. Use the watercolors provided to paint the fish and the water around the fish.

Activity 2: Scroll Assembly

1. Select your scroll paper.
2. Glue decorative paper on the border.
3. Peel away the adhesive strip on the top and bottom of the scroll. Select a piece of ribbon and place in the center of the top adhesive strip. Add the dowel to the top and bottom adhesive strip and press to seal.
4. Select a Chinese 'chop' or seal to stamp on the top left of your scroll.