ARTS 640: The Art of Sumi-e
Professor Keiji Shinohara
Fall 2015
Class Location: AWK 105
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Course Description

This course begins with basic techniques and composition of traditional Japanese sumi-e painting. Sumi-e is a style of black and white calligraphic ink painting that originated in China and was slowly introduced in Japan during the Heian period, then started to flourish with the practice of Zen monks in the Kamakura period. Students will learn the “four pillars” of the basic subject matter of sumi-e: bamboo, plum blossom, Chinese orchid, and chrysanthemum. Students will develop an appreciation of the history of sumi-e within Japanese art, religion, and philosophy. The goal of this course is not perfection of technique, but rather a steady practice of the form combined with the creative intellectual experience necessary for students to produce their own visual images using sumi-e.

Objectives

1. To develop a familiarity with the skills necessary to produce the “four pillars” of traditional sumi-e subject matter and composition,

2. To understand the relevance of sumi-e within Japanese cultural history.

3. To develop the student’s ability to critically evaluate their own sumi-e.

4. To incorporate sumi-e techniques into student’s own creative work, once a familiarity with the tradition has been established.

Requirements

In-class
Please come to class on time and prepared—this means you should be ready to do in-class work, with all the materials you will need, plus any outside assignments that are due.

Deadlines and Late Work Policy
All out-of-class projects are due on time. If you do not hand in a project on time, your grade goes down one-half letter per day it is late. Even if your work is late, you are still expected to attend the critique.

Attendance and Tardiness
Class attendance is required. In-class instruction and demonstrations are designed to be a foundation for homework assignments, therefore it is very important to be present. Each student is allowed no more than three absences of any kind. Please reserve these for actual illness. Every absence over three will result in a drop of one full letter grade in the final grade. If you are seriously ill, please get in contact with me as soon as possible. If you miss class it is your responsibility to find out the homework assignments, and any instruction
that you will have missed. **It is the student's responsibility to keep track of their absences.**

**Class begins promptly at the scheduled time.** This means that you must arrive 10 minutes early to get set-up and installed, to be ready to start at that time. **Two late arrivals to class equal one absence.** Please expect to work until the actual class end. Please come to class prepared (with your assignments, materials, ready to work).

Please turn to two of your colleagues the first day of class, and share names, phone numbers and e-mail addresses, in the event that you miss class and need to know what the assignments and instructions are.

**In-class etiquette**

**No cell phones** should be ever be used or ring during class; this includes text messaging. Be sure to turn devices OFF. It is not my job to remind you. IPods with headphones are not to be used during class. For longer stretches of in-class drawing, we can play music on a boom box. If the music is interfering with any student’s ability to focus, then I reserve the right to veto music. **Drawing=concentration.**

The studio is a shared workspace and it is our shared job to pitch in to maintain a clean and orderly environment for one another. We take responsibility for ourselves, and any residual mess that has been left by others. At the end of class, the studio should return to “ready” position.

We will have one short break during the class; this is not enough time to run to the student center—if you want a drink or a snack, bring them to class for break.

**Critiques**

Everyone is required to attend critiques—physically and mentally. Group feedback is the engine behind this class—no silent wallflowers allowed in critiques! Some questions to think about in regards to evaluating your own work and the work of your peers:

Procedure, expressed in terms of major projects

Ongoing weekly assignments to critique student’s brush stroke and composition

Two major projects

1. Investigate your own style with sumi-e by distilling the essence of a still life that you set up yourself.

2. original composition of landscape.

**Grades**

Each of the two projects = 25% of grade = 50%
Participation in critiques and Class attendance=25%
Weekly assignments=25%
**Required reading** (further bibliographic information forthcoming):

*Mustard Seed Garden Manual of Painting*
*Japanese Painting by Akiyama Terukazu*
*The Art of Zen by Stephen Addiss*
*Japanese Art After 1945 by Alexandra Munroe*

**SCHEDULE**

Week 1: Introduction set-up and preparation and bamboo subject. Learning brush stroke.

Week 2: Bamboo subject. Lecture focusing on composition.


Week 7: Plum blossom subject, lecture focusing on composition. End of Plum blossom.

Week 8: End of Plum blossom. Slide lecture for Project 1 (still life) Learning brush stroke and composition.

Week 9: Project 1 (still life) Slide lecture for Project 2 (landscape).

Week 10: Project 2 (landscape) Slide lecture of Final Project.

Week 11: Final project.

Week 12: Final critique.