

Discover the Art of the Chinese Brush

When executed with masterful technique, a single ink brushstroke is capable of conveying vitality, delicacy, and contemplation—the essence of Chinese philosophy and spirit. It is this “life force” or *qi* (pronounced chee) that the artist aspires to capture and express through brushpainting. Unlike European-trained artists, the Chinese artist does not try to create a realistic rendering of the external appearance of a subject, seeking instead to capture its inner spirit. Only after intently observing the subject matter in its natural state does the painter return to the studio to paint. The essence of the subject is retained in the artist’s imagination, and it is this image that is painted in a moment of spontaneous inspiration.

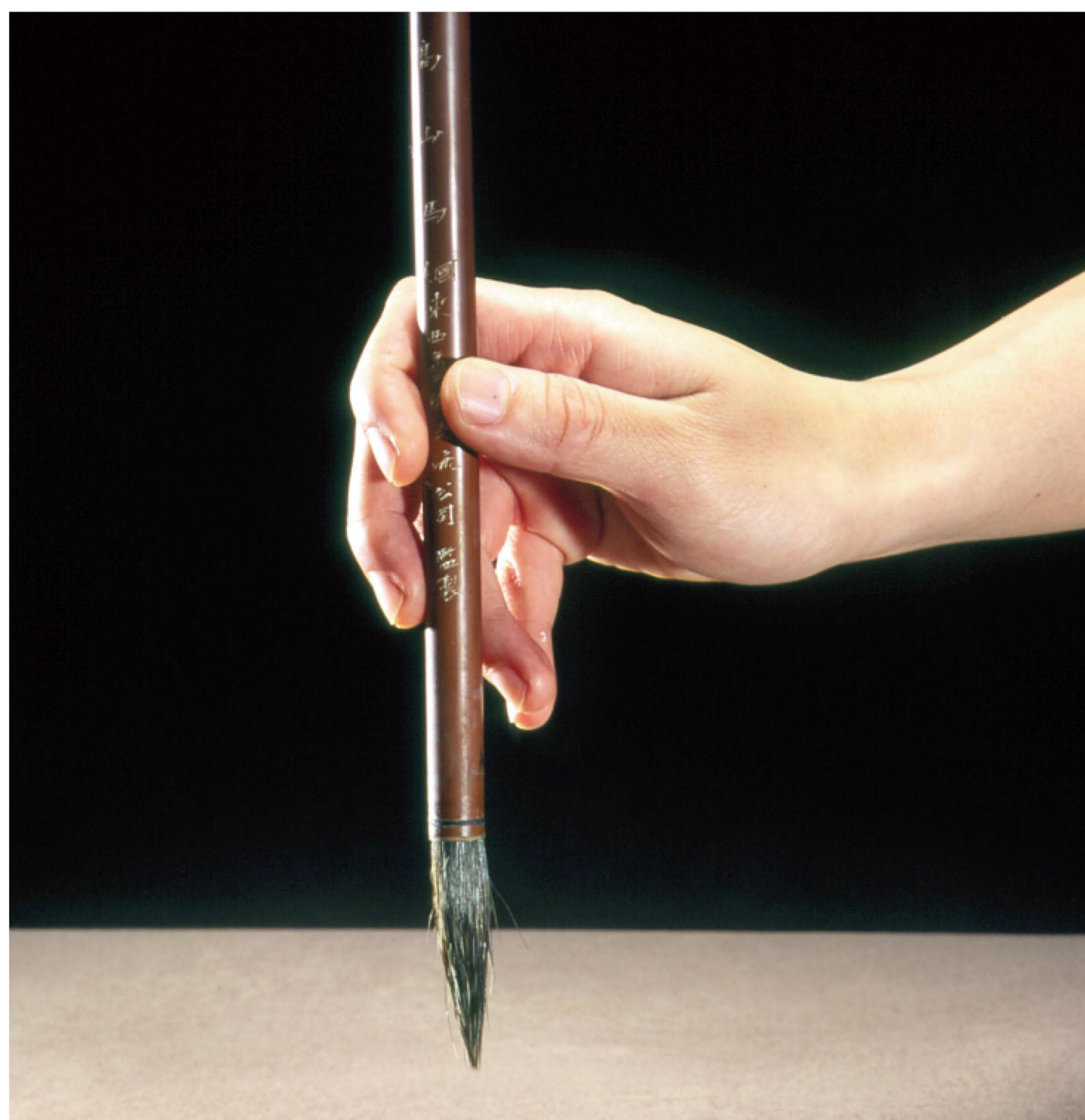
How do Chinese brushpainting masters create such an array of vibrant brushstrokes and ink washes? They begin by intently studying the techniques, elements, and principles of traditional brush and ink painting (*bi mo hua*).

Experience for yourself the art of brush-and-ink painting. Begin by learning how to hold the brush. Once you feel comfortable, experiment by applying varying degrees of pressure, speed, and moisture. Finally, create your own brushpainting masterpiece!



How to Hold a Brush

- Hold the brush midway up the handle. Place the handle on the inside of the index finger, supporting it on the opposite side with the tip of your thumb. The tips of the index and middle fingers rest on the top of the handle: the ring and pinkie fingers are placed behind. Leave an open space in the palm of the hand, allowing for a full range of movement. None of the fingers should touch the inside palm.
- To achieve a full range of brushstrokes, hold the brush in a gentle and relaxed manner. Your touch should be gentle enough that a tomato could be held in the cup of the hand without bruising its skin.



The Upright Brush

- Hold the brush upright and perpendicular to the paper. Apply varied speed and pressure to create a range from thin, delicate lines to wide, powerful strokes. For long, sweeping strokes, hold the brush higher up the handle. For detail work and shorter strokes, hold the brush closer to the brush hairs.



The Oblique Brush

- Hold the brush at an angle in relation to the paper. In this method, the broadest strokes can be made with the greatest number of bristles touching the paper.