

THE SIX LAWS

During the Eastern Tsin dynasty (A.D. 317–420), Hsieh Ho, an artist and the first art critic in Chinese history, established the Six Laws of Painting. First, *vitality resonates from a painting*. This means that a painting should carry lively forces that touch viewers.

Use bone manner brushstrokes, or brushstrokes that are confident, strong and elastic. They should resemble bones in content—not necessarily uniform, but strong in texture.

Capture the forms of nature's objects. In other words, sketch nature with the intent to capture its forms and spirits.

Apply colors according to each object's

category. When painting a group of trees, there is no need to differentiate each tree's color. Paint all of them using one color, such as green or yellow.

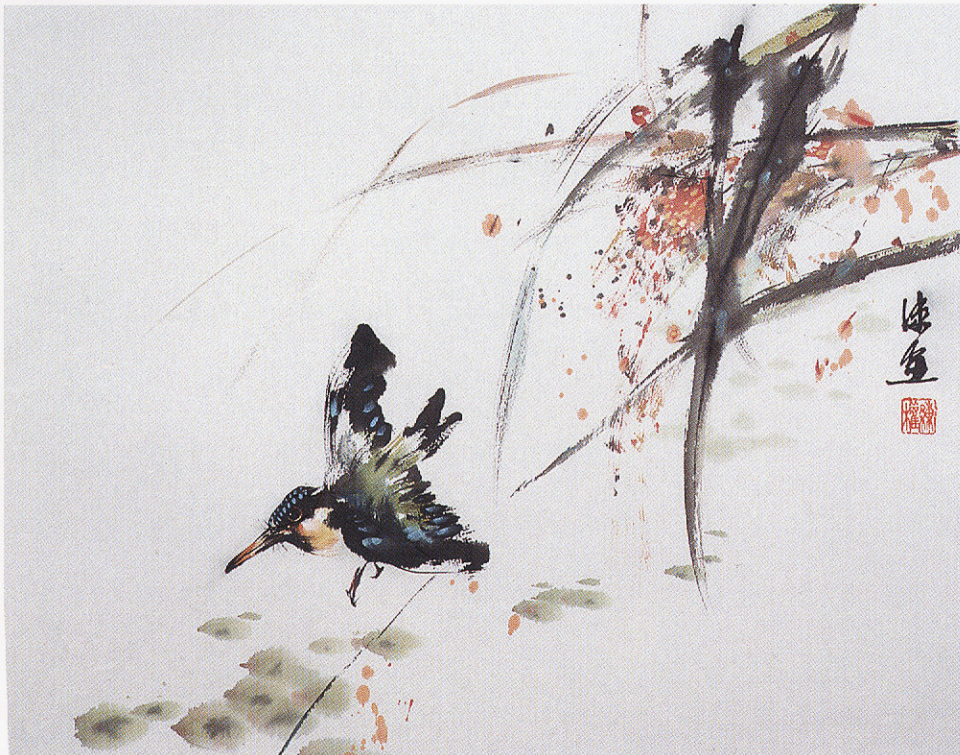
Properly place the objects. A great painting has a well-organized composition.

Transfer masters' techniques. Learn from the masters by copying and analyzing their artwork. As a result, you will learn a variety of techniques and theories with which you can develop your own.

The first law is most significant. It seeks to blend the artist's spirit with the rhythmic vitality of nature. A great painting should not only demonstrate

outstanding technique, but should also express harmony and vitality. When painting a bird, it does not matter how much detail your painting has, nor what technique and media are used. It is essential to capture the *essence* of the bird: its texture, activity and sound—its life. The bird should be able to communicate with its viewers.

Chinese artists are encouraged to learn from nature. If you paint landscapes, for example, then practice sketching as many magnificent landscapes as you can. Likewise, if you paint fish, then observe fish as often as possible.



Using the Six Laws

This painting further explains the Six Laws. It depicts the moment just before the kingfisher catches a fish. It is a vivid painting that captures harmony in nature (first law). The minimal brushstrokes are sure and forceful (second law). The bird is lively and energetic, and is derived, rather than copied, from nature (third law). The colors on the water plants are uniform, according to category (fourth law). The objects are arranged on a diagonal line from bottom left to upper right to further emphasize the motions. The white area in the kingfisher's direction of flight allows viewers to use their imaginations (fifth law). Finally, the painting techniques are influenced by the Lingnan School (sixth law).

FISHING

18" x 22" (46cm x 56cm)

Chinese ink and colors
on Korean paper
Spontaneous style