

# CHINESE CALLIGRAPHY

## LANGUAGE AS ART

**Calligraphy** means 'Good Writing' or 'Beautiful Writing'. Chinese calligraphy is an art form, and calligraphers are highly respected. There are several styles of writing: Seal, official or clerical, regular, running or semi-cursive, and cursive. Each one has its own characteristics and purpose.



The use of the Chinese writing brush can be traced back 6,000 years. The brush intact today was found in a 5<sup>th</sup> Century B.C. tomb in 1958.

When writing Chinese, you must always keep the brush straight up and down. Do not let your palm touch the brush. You must know how to hold the brush correctly to become a good calligrapher. Calligraphy takes lots of practice.



**Chinese brush-** Brushes are made from animal hair that is bundled together and put on bamboo reeds. The Chinese use hair from wolves, sheep, rabbits, deer, foxes, weasels or mice depending on the type of writing. For small delicate writing, use rabbit hair. For bold writing, sheep hair is good. You must take good care of the brushes to keep the point stiff and straight.

There are seven standard strokes. Some calligraphers believe there are up to thirty-two strokes. Either way, there are many interpretations.

The seven strokes or '**Seven Mysteries**' as they are called:

1. Horizontal line



2. dot



3. sweeping downward stroke



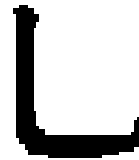
4. vertical line



5. sharp curve



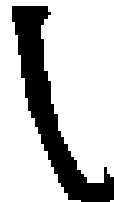
and



6. downward stroke



7. downward stroke



If you study Chinese brush writing further you will find many varied Ideas as to the number of strokes that make up the basis of writing.

Calligraphy has become an accepted form of art along side painting In China. Many artists will leave room on a painting for a poem or other writing to be added later.

Many art shows have Calligraphy and paintings displayed next to each other.

Even music has joined Calligraphy as dancers will dance to the characters of brush writing and the animals or feelings expressed in the strokes of the characters.

虎

**Tiger**

1974

1986

**1998**

兔

**Rabbit**

1975

1987

1999

龍

**Dragon**

1976

1988

2000

蛇

**Snake**

1977

1989

2001

馬

**Horse**

1978

1990

2002

羊

**Sheep**

1979

1991

2003

猴

**Monkey**

1980

1992

2004

雞

**Rooster**

1981

1993

2005

犬

**Dog**

1982

1994

2006

豕

**Pig**

1983

1995

2007

鼠

**Rat**

1984

1996

2008

牛

**Ox**

1985

1997

2009



**Chinese inkstone-** Inkstones are made from stone or pottery. They are flat and hard, and are sometimes shaped into beautiful objects. The calligrapher puts water on the inkstone, then grinds the stick of ink against it. This makes ink that can be brushed on paper. It is important to grind enough ink to finish what you start. If you have to grind more ink, you may not be able to make it the same shade.



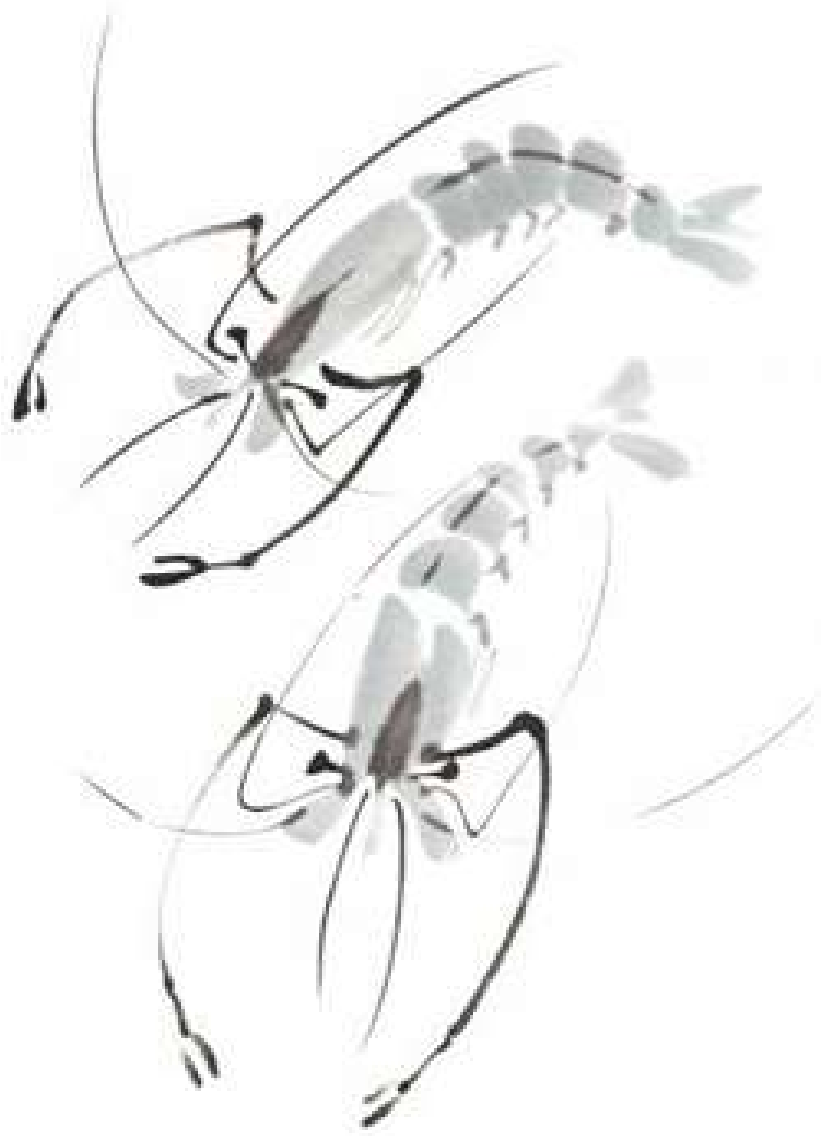


**Chinese ink-** It is solid, and usually comes in the shape of sticks. Black ink is made from the soot of pinewood or oil smoke, and a gum substance. Often, these sticks are decorated and highly prized by themselves.



**Brush rest-** These stands are used to hold extra brushes. They are usually decorated.



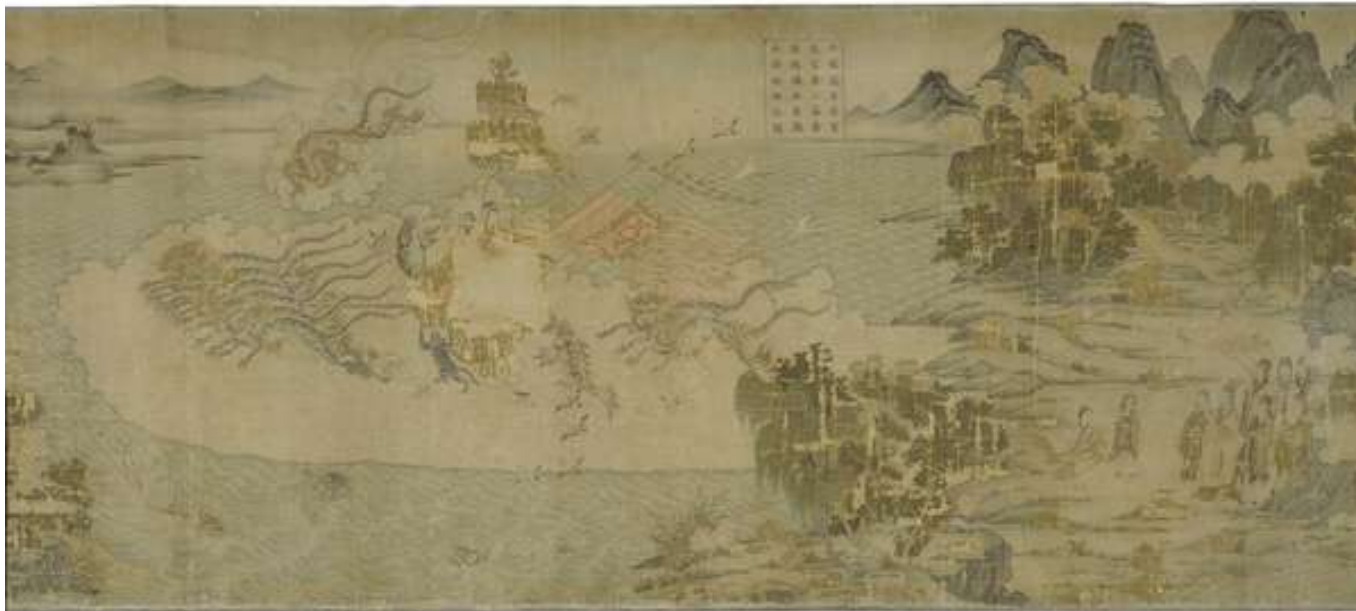




Three Sisters Bamboo Painting



\$1295.00



This painting signified two important advances in Chinese painting. The first was the invention of a continuous pictorial story in which the characters keep appearing, and the second was the development of landscape art. Hills, trees, and streams etc. are not painted as isolated entities but as components of a coherent physical environment. More than that, it has been suggested by art historians that the landscape elements often served a double role as representation and visual metaphor.

When the prince saw the nymph, for example, he described her through a series of analogies:

**She moves with the lightness of wild geese in flight,  
With the sinuous grace of soaring dragons at play.  
Her radiance outshines the autumn chrysanthemums;  
Her luxuriance is richer than the spring pines.  
She floats as do wafting clouds to conceal the moon;  
She flutters as do gusting winds to eddy snow.  
From afar she gleams like the sun rising from dawn mists;  
At closer range she is luminous like a lotus rising from clear waves.**

The metaphors: geese, dragons, lotus, pines etc describe the nymphs' beauty and the landscape is an integral part of that description: mists and clouds, winds and snow. For the first time beauty was described in both a poem and a picture and the landscape was used to illustrate and illuminate the feelings of the prince. The Tang dynasty artists that followed used this style to great effect.