Puget Sound Sumi Artists

January 2026 PSSA NEWSLETTER

Next virtual meeting:

January 6th, 2025, 11:00 AM – 12:30 PM

墨美術

Newsletter Editor
Christelle Tomasini

Mailing Address
PSSA
Postal Mail Box #141
6824 – 19th Street West
University Place, WA 98466

Website
www.sumi.org

Social Media
Puget Sound Sumi Artists

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Program: "The Year of the Horse"

Presenter: Yuming Zhu

https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87342545955?pwd=NXdYcLKjnfrW5IVEsR7ahU9WxYcepU.1

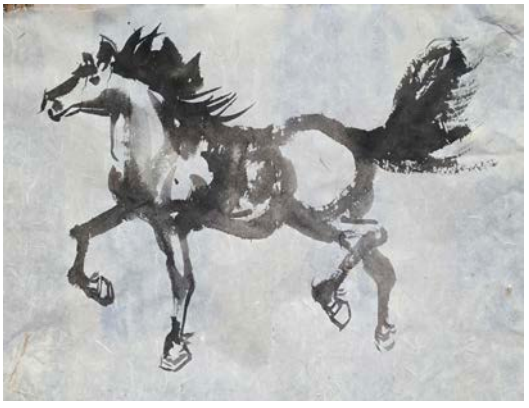
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To celebrate the Year of the Horse, Yuming Zhu, PSSA member and accomplished art teacher, will show us how to write the character of Horse in ancient Zuan (seal carving) style and draw horses in Sumi style. His focus will be on conveying the power of the horse through energetic brushstrokes.



In Chinese tradition, the Horse, the seventh zodiac sign, symbolizes freedom, power, speed, loyalty, and success. Those born in the Horse year are known for their energy, independence, and enthusiasm. Chinese New Year horse idioms revolve around speed, success, and vitality. The most popular one is "马到成功" (mǎ dào chéng gōng), which means "success as soon as the horse arrives," symbolizing immediate achievement. Another popular idiom is "龙马精神" (lóng mǎ jīng shén), which means "the spirit of the dragon and the horse," representing boundless energy, resilience, and youthful vigor. Phrases like "万马奔腾" (wàn mǎ bēn téng) describe a magnificent, powerful, and surging scene, symbolizing prosperity and a dynamic start. Lastly, "快马加鞭" (kuài mǎ jiā biān) means "whipping a fast horse," urging for greater speed and effort to spur on progress.



Originally from Shanghai, China, Yuming began studying under art masters at a young age. After getting his B.A. from China, he came to the U.S. and earned his M.A. in 1991 from Sonoma State University. See more of his artwork on his website: www.yumingfineart.com.

2026: The Year of The Horse

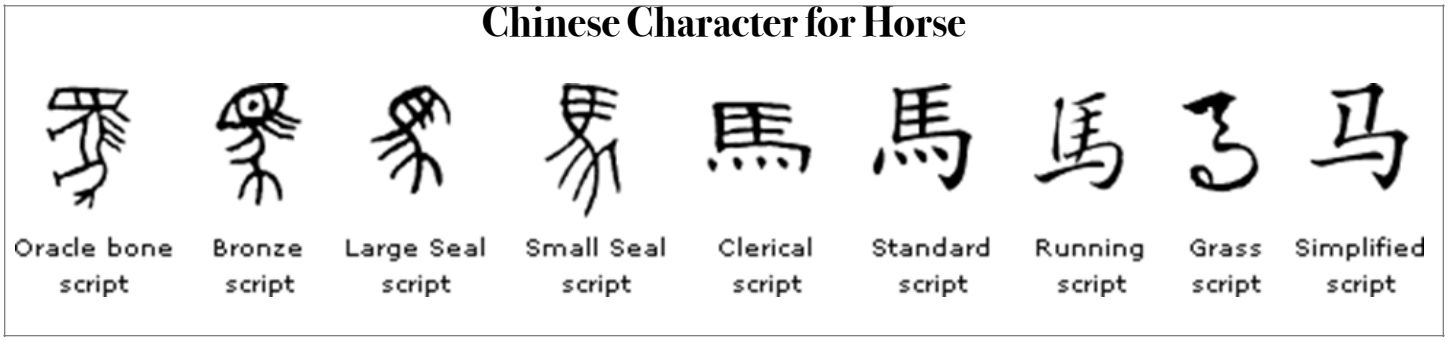
By Alice Liou

The Chinese zodiac begins on February 17, 2026, with the Year of the Horse, characterized by energetic movement, enthusiasm, and individual drive. This sign is about freedom, action, and doing things your way.

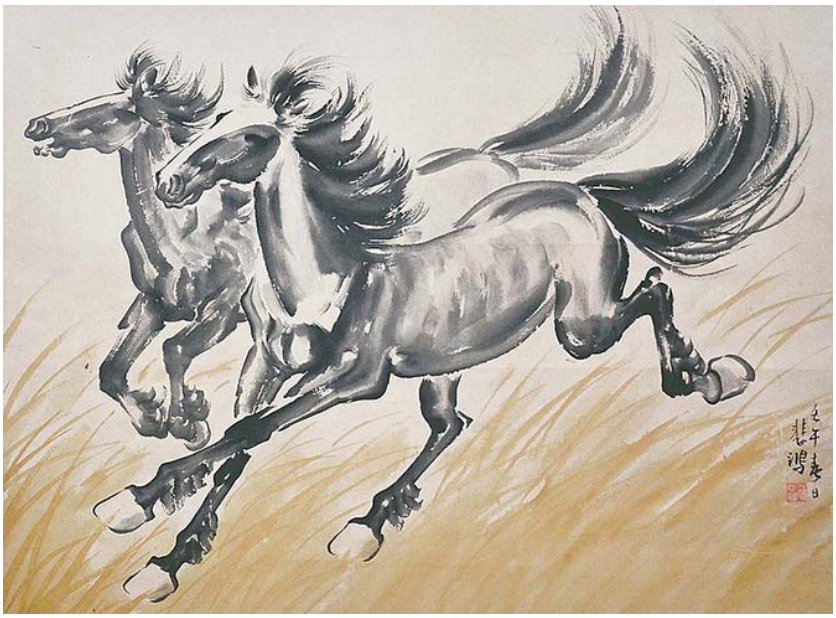
If you've been wanting more purpose or guidance, the vibrational energy of this year might propel you to take that leap you've been considering.

In the Chinese Zodiac, the horse earned its distinguished place through speed and unwavering endurance. Historically, horses were the backbone of ancient society, indispensable transportation, agriculture, and military prowess. This crucial role elevated them to powerful cultural symbols representing power, nobility, and ambition.

From ancient battlefields and imperial stables to poetic verses and celebrated scrolls, the horse has consistently served as a powerful muse for Chinese artists and scholars throughout history.



Xu Beihong (1895-1953) is one of the most accomplished Chinese artists that specialized in painting animals. Among the many animals he had rendered, the horse is undoubtedly his best-known subject.



Xu Beihong, "Two Racing Stallions," 1942. Ink and color on paper.

For those who would like to learn more about Xu Beihong's horse paintings, you may find many articles and images published online.

Here are some examples:








Mindful Moment

Yohaku no Bi: The Quiet Power of Empty Space

In a world that urges us to fill every moment, every page, and every silence, the Japanese aesthetic concept of **yohaku no bi** offers a gentle counterbalance. Translated as "the beauty of remaining space," **yohaku no bi** is the art of embracing emptiness

– not as absence, but as presence. It is a cornerstone of traditional sumi-e ink painting, and a mindset that extends far beyond the brush.

The untouched white of the paper is not a void; it is a breathing space that gives the ink its meaning. A single stroke becomes more powerful when it is allowed to live beside silence. Like a pause in a piece of music, the open space creates rhythm and tension. It invites imagination. It lets the mind wander softly beyond what is seen.

Where Western art often focuses on addition – color, detail, density – sumi-e achieves depth through subtraction. **Yohaku no bi** is a dialogue between ink and emptiness, teaching us that what we do **not** paint is just as important as what we do. More than a visual principle; it is a way of seeing the world.

It reminds us to:

- **Leave room for possibility**, rather than controlling every detail.
- **Value pauses**, instead of rushing to fill them.
- **Embrace imperfections**, because simplicity reveals the hand of the artist.
- **Find clarity** by clearing space instead of adding more.

Yohaku no bi resonates with the fundamental essence of Japanese Zen aesthetics: the appreciation for understated beauty, unforced elegance, and natural harmony – an invitation to take a moment to reflect.

Yohaku no bi offers a timeless reminder:
Beauty doesn't always come from what we add. Often, it comes from what we allow to remain.

Seasonal Subject

Pine - The Evergreen Heart of Asia

Across the diverse cultures of Asia, few natural forms have inspired as much reverence as the **pine tree**–known in Japan as *matsu*, in China as *song*, and in Korea as *sonamu*. Its evergreen needles, long life span, and ability to flourish in difficult terrain have made it a universal emblem of endurance, inner strength, and spiritual vitality. Despite regional variations in meaning, the pine consistently appears as a tree that refuses to wither, even in winter's most severe trials. As a result, it has become deeply woven into Asian philosophies, aesthetics, and rituals.

Japan: Matsu as a Living Emblem of Resilience and Good Fortune

In Japan, the pine tree occupies a central place in cultural symbolism, representing **longevity, steadfastness, and auspicious beginnings**. Its evergreen nature makes it an enduring reminder that life persists through hardship. This theme is celebrated most visibly during the New Year season through **kadomatsu**, gateway arrangements made of pine and bamboo. These arrangements welcome benevolent spirits and invite good fortune for the coming year.

The pine also shapes the visual aesthetics of Japanese landscape art and garden design. Pruned pines in traditional gardens do more than decorate space–they express ideals of **discipline, endurance, and refined beauty shaped by nature and human intention**. In classical imagery, the pine often appears alongside cranes and turtles, forming a triad of longevity symbols that together evoke a harmonious, flourishing life.

China: The Pine and the Ideal of Moral Constancy

In Chinese culture, the pine is elevated to a symbol of **moral integrity, steadfastness, and the quest for immortality**. Its role

as one of the **"Three Friends of Winter"**—alongside bamboo and plum—positions it as a natural embodiment of perseverance and virtue: the pine stands unwavering while other trees wither.

Within Daoist traditions, the pine is associated with the **immortal realm**, often depicted near mountain hermits or sages who pursue transcendence. Its resin, longevity, and rugged form contributed to beliefs that the pine possessed life-extending properties, both symbolic and medicinal.

Confucian scholars, too, embraced the pine as an emblem of **upright character**. In ink paintings, pine trees leaning against wind and snow became metaphors for scholars who maintain their principles despite adversity. Thus, the Chinese pine represents not only physical endurance but also **spiritual and ethical steadfastness**.

Korea: Pine as Protector and Symbol of Loyalty

In Korea, the pine tree (*sonamu*) is celebrated as a symbol of **loyalty, constancy, and protective strength**. Historically, pines were planted near homes, palaces, and temples to safeguard against misfortune and to establish a sense of stability. Their persistent green foliage symbolizes enduring devotion—an ideal highly valued in Korean literature and social ethics.

The rugged landscapes of Korea, where pines cling to rocky hillsides and windswept coasts, reinforce this imagery of unyielding resilience. In poetry and painting, the pine is often portrayed as a noble companion to scholars, monks, and heroes—individuals characterized by integrity and quiet strength.

Despite variations across cultures, several themes unite pine symbolism in Asia:

- **Longevity**: Its long life and evergreen foliage make it a natural emblem of enduring vitality.
- **Perseverance**: Thriving in wind, snow, and barren soil, the pine embodies resilience.
- **Moral Integrity**: In many traditions, its straight trunk and steadfast nature symbolize upright character.
- **Scholarship and Aesthetics**: Pine trees appear in countless paintings, gardens, and literary works as symbols of inner cultivation.
- **Auspiciousness**: The pine is widely seen as a bringer of good fortune, peace, and protection.

Ultimately, the pine's meaning across Asia extends far beyond botany. It represents a shared cultural aspiration: to live with endurance and integrity, rooted firmly in the earth yet reaching resiliently toward the sky.

Brushstroke Technique

The Dry Brush (Kasure)

In sumi-e, technique is never separate from meaning. Every brushstroke carries both physical texture and inner intention. One of the most expressive techniques used to convey age, resilience, and natural rhythm—especially in pine trees—is *kasure*, the dry brush —a brush with minimal moisture and ink. Rather than gliding smoothly across the paper, the brush catches on the surface, producing broken, grainy strokes. These irregular marks allow the white of the paper to emerge naturally through the ink. "Kasure* allows suggestion over description.

Using a dry brush for pine needles creates:

* A sense of air and movement
* Natural variation in thickness and density
* A weathered, wind-touched appearance

For bark, *kasure* excels at expressing:

* Rough, cracked surfaces
* Vertical striations formed by time
* The feeling of an old tree rooted through generations

In pine needles and bark, “kasure” expresses the essence of endurance through simplicity and restraint, and honors the strength found in imperfection.

Christmas Party













EXIT










Haiga Adventure Report

In attendance: Sara Blauman, Bill Fay, Dorothy Matthews, Bob Matthews, Susan Roberts, Cathy Tashiro, Jeanne Young

Chapbook Date Placement
The group discussed and decided to remove the date from the cover of future chapbooks; the copyright date, i.e., © 2025, and mention of second or future printings will be on the credit page.

Share a Published Haiku or Haiga at the Meeting
As we are a study group, **Susan** suggested we each bring a published haiku or haiga to the meeting and briefly discuss what made it publishable. The best way to improve your skills in writing haiku/haiga, is to read them. (Note: Meeting will still include sharing 1 or 2 of your own haiku/haiga.)

Bill Fay provided a demo of what this may look like using the following haiga which were exhibited at the Johnson-Humrickhouse Museum:



ancestors/centuries of light/
cast upon me

Susan Lee Roberts



a faint outline
through the stillness of leaves
a sigh from somewhere

Carolyn Van Long



touch-and-go helipad...
her years
on this earth

Poet: Kala Ramesh
Artist: Prabha Mallya

Online Haiku resources: The Herons Nest, you can sign up to have one sent to your email each day; Cold Moon Journal; Modern Haiku. Haiga resources: Daily Haiga, Contemporary Haibun Online. There are many other resources available online if you do a Google search.

2026 Project
After much discussion, we decided to do two activities: a chapbook, with the theme of "leaves" and an experimental activity of collaborating with Commencement Bay Haiku group and PSSA artists to create joint-authored haiga.

2026 Haiga Adventure Chapbook
We decided the theme will be "leaves" in its broadest sense. It could be plant/tree leaves, it could be table leaves, leaves (pages) of a book, etc. Leaves can also be a verb.

We also discussed the possibility of using tan renga. **Cathy, Dorothy, Bill** and **Susan** agreed to do research to see how to make that happen. (Several years ago, tan renga was used in the chapbook.) More to be revealed at January's meeting.

2026 Haiga Adventure Collaborative Activity

In an effort to involve PSSA members in some way, **Bill** suggested we set up a collaboration where those PSSA artists who wanted to participate in this 'experiment', would submit an image or two which would be sent to the Commencement Bay Haiku group whose members would write a haiku. The haiku poet and artist would need to agree on the final haiga. whose members would write a haiku. The haiku poet and artist would need to agree on the final haiga. We will bring this up at the next PSSA board meeting.

Bill and **Susan** tested what a collaboration might look like using two of Susan's images:





2026 Presentation

We plan to share the chapbook at the Nov 3rd PSSA meeting. We may also share what we learned from the Collaboration Project and make our recommendation for future projects.

What to Bring January 20th

1 published haiku or haiga
1-2 of your own haiku/haiga to share

HAIGA - Call for Artists

Studio 103 issued an Art Call seeking artwork that explores the intersection between visual arts and the written word. They collaborated with Ann Spiers who offered her poem, "Enso: Open, Closed" to be the muse for the project. Submission for the artwork is due January 30, 2026. The show will run March 6-28 and includes three cash awards. Click here for more information.

Studio 103 is in Seattle's Pioneer Square. Poet Ann Spiers holds a Master's in Literature and Creative Writing from the University of Washington and was a founding editor of The Seattle Review. She is deeply involved in environmental and literary communities.

Members News

Maureen Herward - Wrapping packages with rice paper workshop at the Pittsburgh Botanical Garden

Maureen shared information about Sumi painting to the crafters, who meet biweekly at the Pittsburgh Botanic Garden to work on their individual projects, share tips, techniques, and solve problems as many age levels were represented.

Eight people attended. Five people took advantage of learning how to wrap holiday gifts with unusable old rice paper practice paintings. Meanwhile, two observers "knitted away" listening and observing, and one attendee did both sequentially. While not a large group, all were eager to learn and asked questions.

Her part was sharing information about Sumi art and passing around a completed wrapped box with ribbon and flowers to show what we would be doing. Everyone had a chance to feel the paintings and select what they wanted to use or take home to try. The class also took everything to another level; e.g., a young woman wrapped a myriad of gardening items such as garden gloves (bought at the Gardens' gift store) into a large rice paper painting and didn't need a box.

Classes

Sumi-E classes with Selinda Sheridan:

In-person Sumi class on Mondays (11:30AM - 1:30PM) via the Lakewood Senior Center.

https://cityoflakewood.us/parks-and-recreation/senior-activity-center/#activities

Classes take place at: Fort Steilacoom Park Pavilion, 8714 87th Ave SW, Lakewood, WA 98498

$65 for 6 weeks to non-members of the Lakewood Senior Center.

Contact:

Elizabeth Scheid, escheid@cityoflakewood.us or Debbie Washburn, dwashburn@cityoflakewood.us, (253) 983-7786.

Online Shodō classes with Lois Yoshida:

The classes are held each **2nd Tuesday of the month from September to June from 10:30AM to 12:30PM.**
The yearly fees are $100 that need to be paid directly to PSSA treasurer, Bob Matthews.
You can either pay using PayPal (PSSA PayPal account is: pugetsoundsumiartistswa@gmail.com) or send a check to:
PSSA, PO Box PMB 141, 6824 19th St W., University Place, WA 98466
If you are interested in attending Lois' Shodō class, please send her an email at loisyoshida@gmail.com

Things to Remember

1. Plan to attend the Sign of the Year Program with Yuming Zhu on **January 6th, 11:00am – 12:30pm**
   https://us06web.zoom.us/j/87342545955?pwd=NXdYeLKjnfrW5IVEsR7ahU9WxYcepU.1
   Meeting ID: 873 4254 5955 Passcode: 612918
2. Join Lois Yoshida's Shodō Online Class on January 13th from 10:30AM to 12:30PM. Pay your dues to the treasurer (see payment process on page 10). Send Lois an email at loisyoshida@gmail.com to get the Zoom link.
3. Consider attending Haiga Adventure Group online meeting on January 20th (10:30am-12:00pm) to learn more about Haiga (a simple sumi painting accompanied by a short poem).
   Contact Susan Lee Roberts at susan@spiritofsuccess.us for more information and Zoom link.
4. Members who want their art page developed or changed on sumi.org, please send Christelle at christellesumie@gmail.com your bio and 4 or less art images.
5. For the February 2026 newsletter, please send your articles, art images and announcements to Christelle at christellesumie@gmail.com by **January 22nd, 2025.**

Mini Book Mania

with Sally Penley on Zoom (class will be recorded)





Saturday, January 24, 2026 10:00 – 1:00 PDT

Cost: $77

Description: In this 3-hour workshop, you will learn to create (and fall in love with) five charming little book structures, from a tiny folded book and mini concertina structure to a hard-cover perfect-bound book that fits in the palm of your hand. One of the books is even jewelry-worthy! These miniature books will pull at your heart strings.
Class will be limited to 24. *No art experience necessary.*

How it will work on Zoom: Two weeks before class, Sally will mail a kit with all the makings for the five books and a supply list (see below). Just before class, you will receive an email with the bookmaking instructions and a Zoom link to enter the class.
Note: Participants outside the U.S. will be asked to pay for postage on the mailed kit.

Supplies: You will supply the following:

- Scissors and craft knife with a sharp blade
- Metal ruler and small cutting board
- Bone folder
- Double-stick tape (recommend Sookwang ½" tape on Amazon)
- Glue stick and/or PVA glue
- Optional: ½" or ¾" decorative Washi tape
- Old catalog or phone book for gluing base

All other project materials will be provided in the mailed kit.



To register: Go to sallypenley.com to pay securely online, or mail a check to: Sally Penley, P.O. Box 7367, Olympia WA 98507. Sally will send you a registration confirmation.

Questions? Contact Sally at sallypen@me.com

Sumi Marks Sampler

with Sally Penley on Zoom (class will be recorded)



Saturday, March 14, 2026 10:00 – 1:30 PDT
Class fee: $70

Description: In this 3.5-hour workshop, you will be introduced to (or revisit) various techniques for mark making with rich, black sumi ink and walnut ink. We will create several sheets of textural marks and capture the best small marks clusters to place in a "sampler" book that you will make. We will explore various tools (both commercial and handmade) and visit some new areas of contemporary sumi art. *No art experience required.*

How it will work on Zoom: Two weeks before class, Sally will send you a materials kit via snail mail that will include some tools, a viewfinder and the makings for the sampler book. Shortly before class time, Sally will email the handouts and a Zoom link for entering the class.

Tools / Supplies:



- A basic pointed Sumi brush (several sizes, if you have them)
- Pointed pen and other favorite writing tools
- Foam brush, 2" wide
- Sumi ink (e.g., Yasitomo or Moon Palace)
- Walnut ink
- 2 or 3 small saucers for holding sumi and walnut ink (like small dipping sauce dishes)
- Various papers—some smooth, some textured like cold press watercolor paper
- Craft knife, metal ruler and small cutting board
- Double-stick tape (recommend Sookwang ½" tape, available on Amazon)
- Water container
- Plastic mat for work surface (e.g., "chopping mats" from Dollar Tree)
- Paper towels

To register: Go to sallypenley.com to pay securely online, or mail a check to: Sally Penley, P.O. Box 7367, Olympia WA 98507. Sally will send you a registration confirmation.

Questions? Contact Sally at sallypen@me.com