



# The Ch'I of the Brush: Capturing the Spirit of Nature with Chinese Brush Painting Techniques

*Nan Rae*

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The Chinese have a saying, “From heart to arm . . . to hand . . . to brush . . . to paper.” This epitomizes the concept of *Hsieh-i*, or the “written idea,” the spontaneous, expressive approach to Chinese brush painting known as the Literati, or free-form style.

In **The Ch'i of the Brush**, artist Nan Rae illustrates the fundamental elements and traditional motifs of the Literati style, which seeks to transcend the mere representation of a subject to capture its ch'i, or life force, by using a minimum of brush strokes for maximum effect. In the Literati style, no sketches are prepared and no models are used; instead, the artist paints with rapid, intuitive movements of the brush that convey his or her “mind image” of the subject.

Nan Rae's unique approach to Chinese brush painting combines the grace of the Literati style with an impressionist approach to color. In Part 1, “Preparing for Your Journey,” Rae discusses the creative roots and various styles of Chinese brush painting, as well as the materials, techniques, and state of mind needed when approaching this intuitive painting style. In Part 2, a series of step-by-step worksheets demonstrates how to paint “Enchanting Flowers” (iris, wisteria, magnolia, and others) as well as “Captivating Creatures” (panda, bird, crane, dragonfly, and more). Finally, “Finishing Touches” shows how to mount a completed painting and add traditional Chinese seals.

- Interest in Chinese brush painting is strong
- The presentation of traditional motifs makes this painting style accessible to artists at all skill levels
- Filled with lush, full-color artwork in a charming, sophisticated package

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