

Samples from the Canada 150 “Unity in Diversity Arts Workshops”

Here are some creative artworks by Grade 7 to 9 students from Toronto Catholic District School Board and Toronto District School Board from the Canada 150 “Unity in Diversity Arts Workshops.”

- The Asian Canadian artist facilitators start the Workshop with a discussion of the yin/yang Tai Chi symbol, emphasizing ancient Chinese philosophy and its impact on traditional Chinese painting.
- The Workshop introduces the students to the unique Chinese art media. The basic techniques start from how to hold a Chinese painting brush, and how to use water and Chinese ink on paper.
- Students learn the basic techniques by imitating samples provided by the facilitators.
- During an average 2-hour Art Workshop, a class of 30 students would use up 100-120 pieces of 11x17 regular newsprint paper, before they are given *xuan* paper to create their final painting.
- The students take their final creative work very seriously. Their paintings usually cover a large social subjects, including urban landscapes, urban animals, cultural symbols, events, self-portraits, and self-confidence, reflecting what Canada stands for now and in the future for the younger generations.

We are proud to present some creative paintings from the Art Workshops in 2017 and 2018:

Amazing Depiction of a Past Event

The Giant Pandas Da Mao and Er Shun arrived at the Toronto Zoo in March 2013 as part of a global giant panda conservation breeding program. With the successful birth of the cubs Jia Panpan and Jia Yueyue in 2015 --the first giant pandas born in Canada!-- many parents took their children to see the Giant and Little Pandas. A student who visited the adorable Panda Family commemorated the unforgettable experience in a Chinese ink painting:



Trees: Canadian Transformations and Children's Books

Chinese Ink Painting is famous for using various brushstrokes to depict trees and landscapes, such as the willow tree. A student quickly captured this spirit.



And the soft and delicate willow tree was quickly Canadianized to the towering hardwood trees standing strong in the cold primeval forest.



Children's Picture Books

One will not forget the famous tree found in Children's books. Here is the tree in Chinese Ink Painting.



In fables and fairy tales, and of course in *Lord of the Rings*, trees are humanized and can talk.

Goldfish and Tai Chi--Disney and Imaginative Combinations

One of the traditional motifs in Chinese ink painting is the depiction of fish, especially carp or goldfish. A painting of fish expresses a good wish for people to have abundant food to feed their family.

A student captures this well with ink on paper.



But there is also a famous fish in children's literature: the Little Mermaid with a touch of androgyny.



The symbol of Tai Chi, the “yang” (light) and the “yin” (darkness) which together make the universe. A student drew the icon with a Chinese brush dipping in the ink, almost a perfect circle.

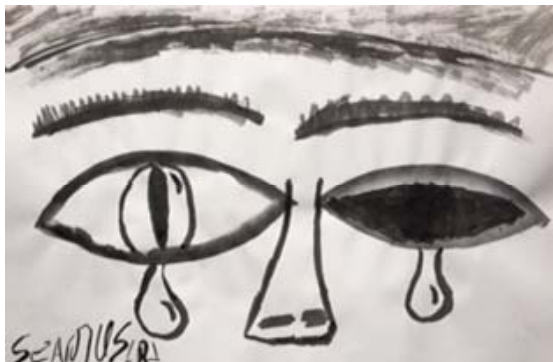
Another student created the Tai Chi icon imaginatively as it is also called the Tai Chi Fish.



Using creative imagination, a student created a Tai Chi Mermaid.



And the spirit behind the Tai Chi, the combination of light and darkness, symbolic of harmony, is quickly applied to show heartbreak, maybe when balance is not maintained.



Or a new way to depict consciousness:

The artist facilitators successfully bring the message of unity in diversity. The students brought the tree and the Tai Chi symbol home.





New forms of Asian Canadian Fusion Art were created right in the classroom, with paintings using the techniques, the spirit and the message from Asian Canadian artistic expressions and creating new works of their own.

Creating Urban Animals with Chinese Art Mediums Acquired

Some students quickly applied Chinese art mediums they have newly acquired to create their favorite urban animals, both house pets and wild lives.



A student drew a rabbit with Chinese ink. It looks impressively strong and healthy. Maybe it is a pregnant wild rabbit in spring.

If one can draw a rabbit, which frequents one's backyard, one can draw squirrels too, which can easily be found in Toronto.



And imaginative renditions of one's favorite pets.



Empowerment | Unity in Diversity

The Unity in Diversity workshops not just teach Asian Canadian artistic skills and cultural expression, or enable students to artistically apply them in their own creative arts. Students use literary arts, music, visual and photography/videography to explore important social themes; to develop further literary and artistic skills to express their vision; and to create an artistic work. Students are empowered through these workshops.



The art workshops enable students to express and assert themselves, to pay a close look at themselves and their cultural backgrounds, as shown in the self-portraits and the dominance of one's name in these pictures.



More importantly, the workshops encourage the students to appreciate each other's cultural heritage as components of Canadian culture to share. To be proud of who they are, especially for the next generation of Asian Canadian women, our Workshops help them build up strong self-confidence, when facing the real world, they will say "they can."

