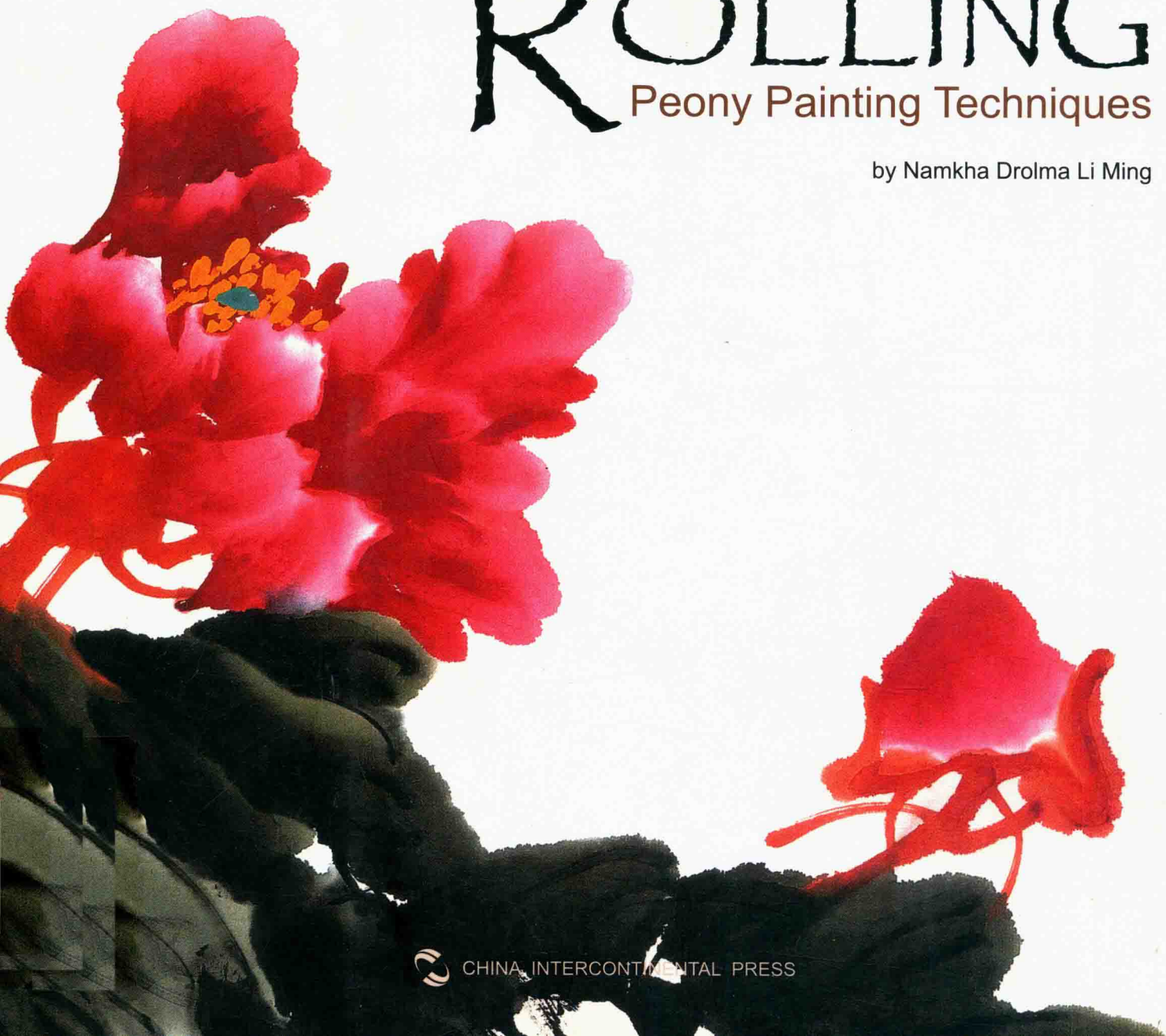


Chinese Painting for Beginners

ROLLING

Peony Painting Techniques

by Namkha Drolma Li Ming



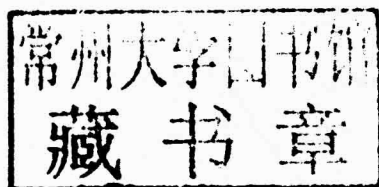
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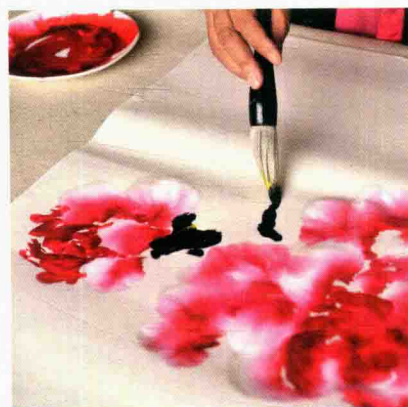
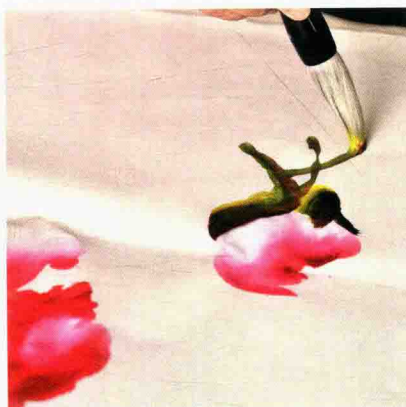
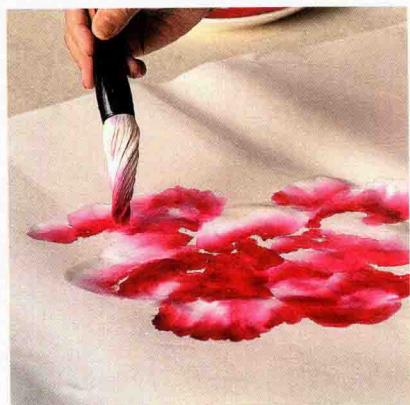
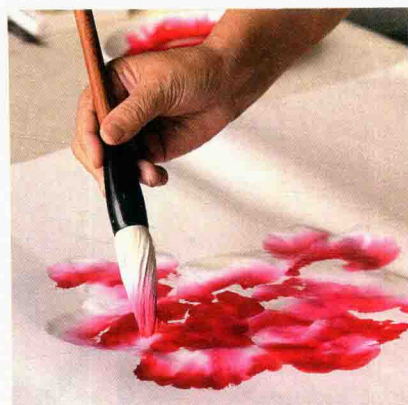
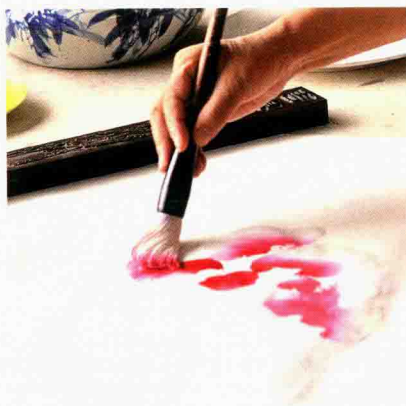
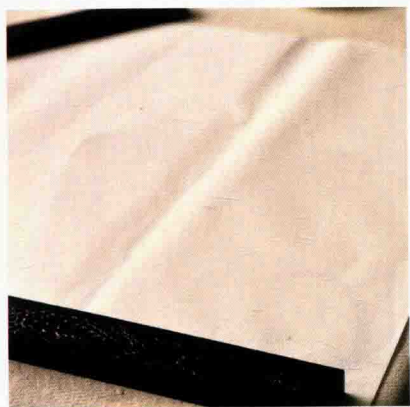
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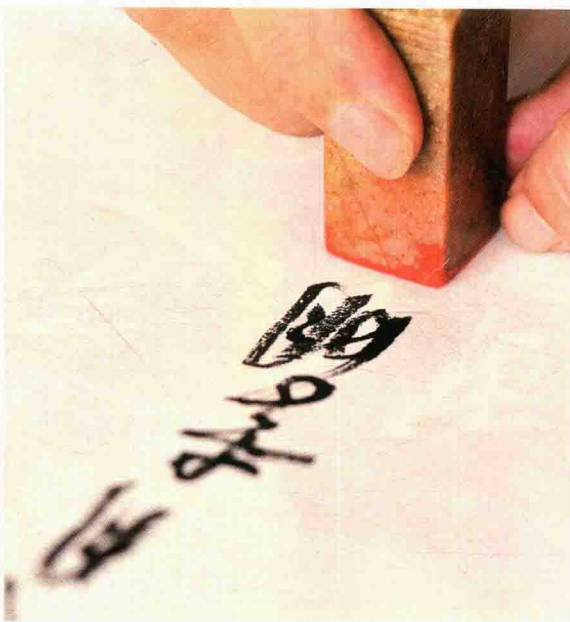
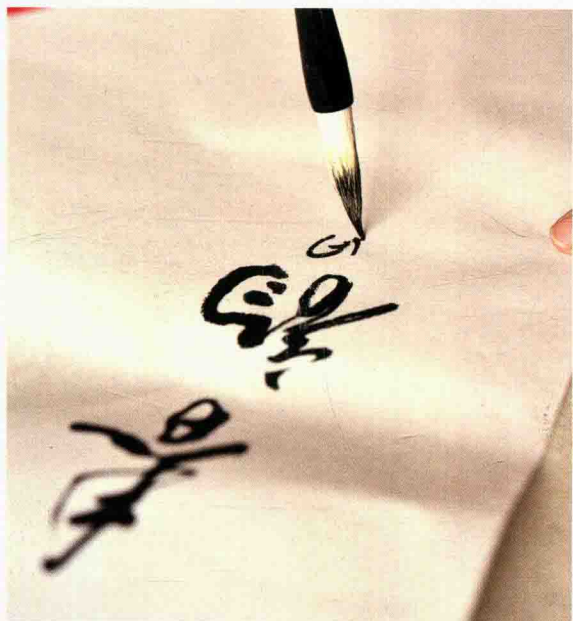
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春韵

甲午夏月李朋





About the Author

As a Chinese national flower, the peony is the essence of elegance and magnificence. The famous flower-and-bird painter Namkha Drolma Li Ming is good at Chinese peony painting, thus winning great favor internationally. Her works are regarded as full of peace and happiness and symbolize prosperity and auspiciousness.

She currently serves as a Council Member of the China Calligraphy and Painting Association and Business Director of the Huaguang Institute of Arts under it, Vice President and Secretary-General of Chinese Garden Artists Association, and Executive Deputy Secretary-General of the Chinese Painting Research Institute.

She has gradually formed her unique artistic style through much practice. She draws with grand but delicate rolling strokes, vividly showing the gradation effects of petals, and making up for the limitation of the "Point-clustering Technique", which fails to show a natural color gradation. Her works, with thick and heavy colors and vigorous strokes, truly reflect nature itself - full of dynamic vitality with a grandiose imposing manner that provides a strong

aesthetic feeling and emotional expression. Her painting achievements and works are frequently publicized in the media, including *People's Daily*, *China Press and Publishing Journal*, *Guangming Daily*, *World News Journal*, *China Famous Calligraphy and Painting* and CCTV. Her biographical sketch and works appear in works such as the *Dictionary of Chinese Celebrities of Modern Painting and Calligraphy*, and the *Dictionary of Calligraphers and Painters of the World*. Her works including *Listen to the Rain*, *King, Sunglow*, *Spring Morning*, *Mo Kui (Purple Champion)*, *Gui Fei Zui Ge (Lady Yang Immersed in Singing)*, *Da Di Tu Jin (Gold Generating from Land)*, *Breezy Fragrance*, and *Most Fragrant Flower* are widely collected at home and abroad; her huge work *Spring Everywhere in Harmonious China* was acquired by the Chinese People's Revolutionary Military Museum in 2006; her work *Blooming Flowers in Lasting Spring* was hung up on the Tian'anmen gate tower in the heart of Beijing, and her work *Auspicious Flowers Blooming at Home* is displayed in the Great Hall of the People; works such as *Blooming Auspicious Flowers* and *Natural Beauty Without Dusts* have been acquired by foreign leaders including the presidents of the Philippines and Indonesia, and the Japanese Prime Minister. In recent years, her five works including *The Most Beautiful Flower of World* and *Peace and Prosperity* were given as national gifts to the dignitaries including Mr. Joseph Deiss, President of United Nations 65th General Assembly, UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, and former U.S. President Bill Clinton by the martial arts delegation of the General Administration of Sport of China during a visit to the United States in August 2011.

Namkha Drolma Li Ming has repeatedly participated in and has won prizes in the China Art Competition. She was selected as the "Leading Person of 2005 in Chinese Painting and Calligraphy" and was awarded the honorary title of "Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Master" by the judging panel. She won the Golden Tripod Award with her work *Peony* in the National Calligraphy Art Exhibition and was awarded the honorary title as being one of the "100 Elite of Chinese Art" in October 2005. Published works include *Flower-Bird Paintings by Li Ming*, *Selected Works of Traditional Chinese Painting by Li Ming* and *Peony Rolling Painting Techniques*.





Contents

Peony in Color Painting- Elementary Theory of Peony Painting by
Namkha Drolma Li Ming / 1

Tools and Materials Used for Chinese Paintings / 9

Painting Techniques of a Single-layer Peony / 20

Painting Techniques of a Multi-layer Peony / 30

Painting Techniques of Peony Profile / 34

Painting Techniques of a Cloud Peony / 38

Painting Techniques of Yao Huang Peony / 42

Painting Techniques of the Bud / 46

Painting of the Calyx / 50

Painting of the Limb / 54

Painting Techniques of Leaves / 58

Works Appreciation / 63



Peony in Color Painting

- Elementary Theory of Peony Painting by Namkha Drolma Li Ming

By Liu Shizhong

There is a very interesting phenomenon in the history of Chinese painting, namely unity in the theme artists intend to express. That is to say, a painter usually devotes all his/her energy and intelligence to a certain subject and achieves fame by such specialization. This phenomenon is especially prominent in flower-bird painting. Such examples of Chinese painting are too numerous to mention. There are probably two reasons why each painter prefers to choose one specific subject: First, being personally very fond of the subject; second, having a good knowledge of subject's features so they can paint with high proficiency. Only in this way is it possible for painters to create eternal paintings. One such example is the modern famous female artist Namkha Drolma Li Ming (hereafter referred as Li Ming), well known for her peony paintings.

The peony is probably the most famous inhabitant of the Chinese garden because of its plant characteristics and cultural connotations. Peony is China's unique perennial deciduous under-shrub and precious petite woody flower. It is rich in colors (such as red, purple, pink, white, blue, green, yellow, black and complex color), with hundreds of varieties according to color and shape. When blooming, peony is fragrant

and elegant in a blaze of bright colors. It is known as a “national beauty with a heavenly fragrance” and “the king of flowers”, symbolizing auspiciousness and prosperity. As a poem says, “Only the peony is really beautiful and shocking the capital when blooming.” It not only wins public favor, but was also the favorite of flower-bird painters and men of letters in past dynasties.

Chinese painters have presented the beauty of peony for thousands of years. As early the Northern and Southern Dynasties, and Sui and Tang dynasties, painters were devoted to it. Since then, numerous peony painters and masterpieces have kept emerging for generations. So far, there are still many contemporary painters specialized in drawing the peony with high artistic achievement, among whom Li Ming is one of the best.

Her fondness for peony derives from her childhood experience. She came from a world-renowned home of the peony, Heze, a city in Shandong Province, which was called Caozhou in the ancient times. With hundreds of years of peony cultivating history, this place has been attached with the compliment of “Peonies in Caozhou top those in Qi and Lu states (nowadays Shandong Province)” since ancient times. Peonies in Heze feature straight stems, lush leaves and dignified and gracious flowers, and are hailed as top-grade ones amid all kinds of peonies. As she lived in this “peony garden”, Li Ming became enraptured from childhood. “I remember two peonies were planted in my yard, including a white peony and a Weizi (a kind of hybrid peony). I often loosened the soil and watered them, and observed and sketched them all year round.” From such close contact leading to love, both the appearance and the spirit of peonies became deeply rooted in Li Ming’s mind.

With the passage of time, the impression became increasingly clearer and stronger, and finally turned into the artistic image on paper.

For bird-and-flower painting, especially freehand bird-and-flower painting, painting of peonies, just like painting of birds and the other flowers, it is easy to start but difficult to improve and even harder to draw well. It is especially difficult to create paintings with style and connotation. Because the peony has large green leaves and rich colors, a painter, without profound cultural attainment and artistic accomplishment as well as serious attitude, perhaps can only create gaudy, artificial and even graceless paintings. It can be said that, with such big petals and slight changes in styles, the peony is the most difficult flower to paint. Besides, many painters lack the experience of sketching from nature, being incapable of grasping the essence of the object. That is to say, they cannot achieve the “unity of nature and humans”. Yet, this is the one basic requirement for a mature Chinese painter. Apart from that, the peony often symbolizes wealth, prosperity, luxury and grace. Therefore painters always tend to draw colorful and enthusiastic paintings consciously or unconsciously, when it becomes easy to slide into a kind of over-zealous state. With little knowledge of culture and art, many painters also lack the fondness for the object, which makes the paintings full of complex and bright colors and corny artificiality instead of aesthetic sentiment. This is the reason why so many people draw peonies but few can present good works and form personal styles. However, Li Ming paints with emotion and fondness for the object. Her paintings, first of all, present emotions and then strokes and objects. Just as she said: “Art is emotion, and the result of feelings. While focusing on traditional painting skills, painters should not focus on the superficial and mechanic depiction of objects, but

should pay attention to the aesthetic reference and romantic charm. Although a painting is based on the object, the painter should integration of his/her emotions.” Emotional input has accompanied Li Ming during her observation and experience of peonies for decades. She has said with deep feeling: “Only through careful observation and experience and by combining the spirit of nature with one’s heart, can a painter present a perfect and integrated painting highlighting the spirit and charm of the object.”

Therefore, from the start one can feel the artistic image filled with emotion in her peony paintings, instead of the simple depiction of the plant or colors. Her paintings are, of course, different from the corny paintings produced by self-entitled “masters of painting peonies”. The colorful and brilliant peonies have become the carrier of her spiritual world. She expresses her longing for harmonious nature and happy life through painting the peony. It can be said that Li Ming has elevated the painting of peonies to a higher spiritual level, so that her paintings show an elegant style and an aromatic ambiance. Her peony paintings show the wealth, grace, auspiciousness and happiness while expressing a scholar’s style.

Emotional input is not only reflected in the theme and content of the painting but also in the artistic form. For Chinese paintings, brushes and ink, the essential elements, also reflect thoughts and emotions of the painter and interact with the watchers. Just as Yun Shouping, the bird-and-flower painter in the Qing Dynasty, said: “Brushes and ink have no emotions but painters should use them with emotion; paintings should be able to stimulate watchers to generate feelings.” Famous painting theorist Shen Zongqian once expressed the same

thought: “The use of brushes and ink should be based on one’s emotions and be deeply connected with one’s spirit.” This exactly reveals the mystery of use of brushes and ink in Chinese paintings. Li Ming has the same viewpoint: “Practice of using brushes and ink takes a very long time. To reach the highest level of using brushes and ink, a painter should gradually perfect his/her personality and accomplishment throughout life. Brushes and ink should not only be used to reflect the beauty of the object’s form and structure but also the painter’s spiritual and aesthetic world. So, if a painter wants to endow rich meanings to brushes and ink, he or she has to explore more forms and styles to express life. The painter should continuously practice the use of brushes and ink and display more zeal for life.” We find Li Ming has devoted her understanding of the traditional culture and the aesthetics in Chinese painting to her use of brushes and ink and has connected the object with her own feelings. In order to better express “national beauty and heavenly fragrance” – the image of the peony - she combines the style of literati paintings with the colors in folk art, and uses more composite colors while preserving single colors. She also focuses on the gradation of colors, making use of the comparison between them. According to some features of watercolor, she splashes water on certain parts of the flowers to create a harmonious and colorful picture. She has also invented the technique of the “rolling brush”. By laying the colorful brush on paper and rolling according to different flower forms, she can express the color gradation and different forms of the petals with the tip, the body and the end of the brush, so that her paintings are characterized by the harmony of the whole as well as subtle changes in certain parts. Therefore her paintings are colorful and rich, reflecting peonies’ colors and grace, as well as her emotions. It can be said that Li Ming develops and enriches the peony painting techniques with her “rolling brush”.

