

CHEUNG Yee

Suggested class activities for Junior Secondary

Artist: CHEUNG Yee

Level: Junior Secondary

Theme: Re-designing Ancient Chinese Characters

Suggested length: 3.5 hours

Teaching concept:

Sculpture plays both a functional and practical role in the development of Chinese art. Examples include statues of deities, figurines, and ornaments for gardens, monasteries and palaces. One of the pioneers of Hong Kong modern sculpture, CHEUNG Yee has brought together both Chinese and Western elements in his sculpture, using the modern sculpture methods of segmentation and reassembly since the 1960s, along with traditional Chinese elements, such as oracle bone script, tortoise shell and Yijing hexagram symbols, to create sculptures that are highly individualistic in style. He has also created cast paper murals with similar themes.

This course aims to help students learn about and appreciate CHEUNG's sculptures, which are inspired by tortoise shell and oracle bone script. The course introduces features of Chinese culture and shows the students how to add new visual effects to traditional objects using modern art approaches.

Required background knowledge:

1. The students should learn about the ancient Chinese writing.
2. They should have acquired the basic skills of modelling clay (kneading, coiling, using modelling tools, joining and creating clay slabs).

Teaching goals:

1. Learn about and appreciate CHEUNG's cast paper murals through his video.
2. Design fonts that have the characteristics of seal script or oracle bone script.
3. Create fonts with clay.
4. Create plaster moulds by learning the techniques of mixing plaster, de-moulding and mould correction.
5. Learn the technique of paper casting.
6. Learn about and reinterpret characters from ancient Chinese scripts.

Preparation before class:

1. The students should go through the vocabulary provided by the teacher, including the “oracle bone script” and “seal script”.
2. Before class, the teacher should prepare the paper pulp. The amount depends on the size of the containers to be used for paper casting.

Suggested class activities:

1. **Introducing CHUNG Yee and his artistic style (Suggested length: 20 mins)**

Show “Artist Video mp4” and the “Artist Introduction ppt” pp1-3

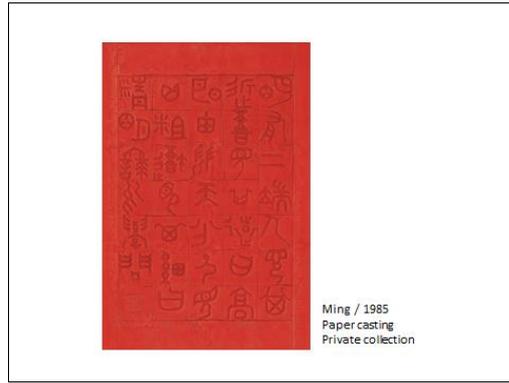
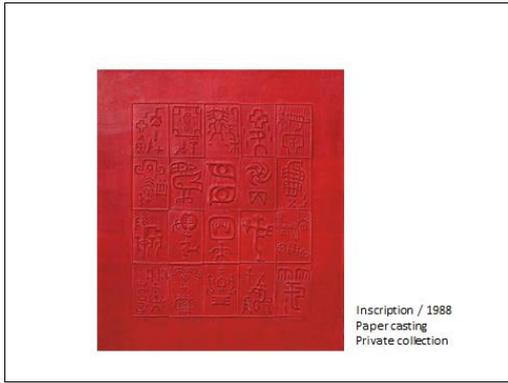
CHEUNG Yee (1936-2019) was born in Guangzhou, China. He graduated from the Fine Arts Department of Taiwan Normal University in 1958. In 1963, he founded the Circle Art Group in Hong Kong with other local artists to promote modern art in Hong Kong. In 1965, he received a grant from the Institute of International Education to study in the United States and Europe. He taught in the Extramural Studies Department of the University of Hong Kong and The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He was a Senior Lecturer in the Swire School of Design of Hong Kong Polytechnic and later Chairman of the Department of Fine Arts of The Chinese University of Hong Kong. He was awarded the Member Order of the British Empire (Honorary) in 1979 and Sculptor of the Year Award by the Hong Kong Artists’ Guild in 1988. CHEUNG’s style merged the simplicity and naivety of traditional Chinese folk art and the plasticity of modern Western art. He was always able to strike a delicate balance in the abstract geometrical construction of his works. He is particularly fond of pure red and black. Basing his choices largely on the textures of the materials, he endowed single colours with a rich variety of content under light from different sources.

2. **Appreciation of CHEUNG’s cast paper murals (Suggested length: 5 mins)**

Show the “Artist Introduction ppt” pp5-7

Suggested Q&A:

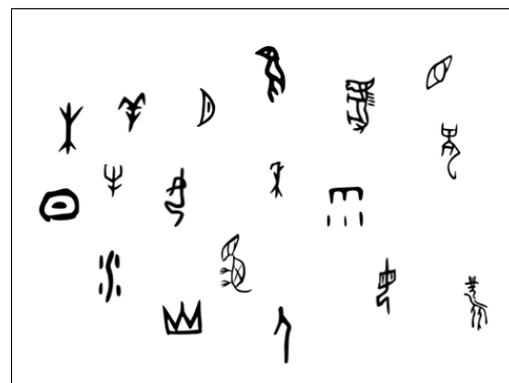
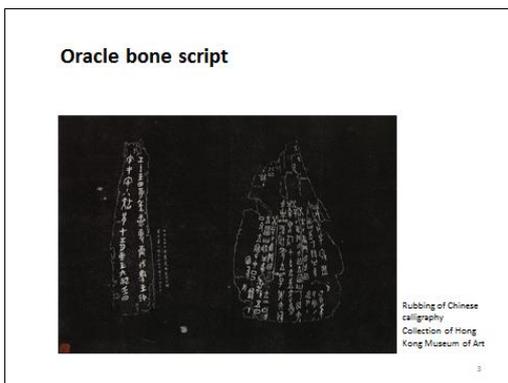
- Show multiple works of cast paper murals and ask students to identify the similarities. (Pure red / black in colour, a composition of Chinese characters (oracle bone script, seal script, running script), a composition of multiple rectangles, relief, etc.)

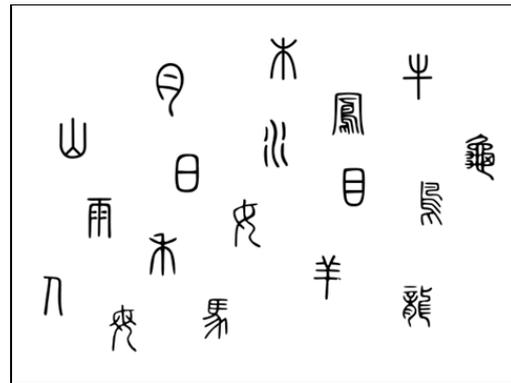


3. Learning about and reinterpreting characters from ancient Chinese scripts (Suggested length: 15 mins)

Show the “Supplementary Teaching Materials ppt” pp2-7

- Show pictures of the oracle bone script and seal script. Ask the students to guess the words and their evolution.





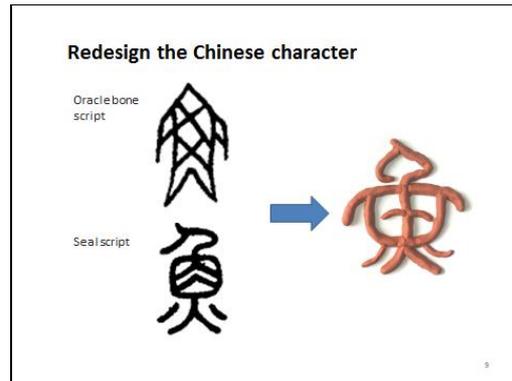
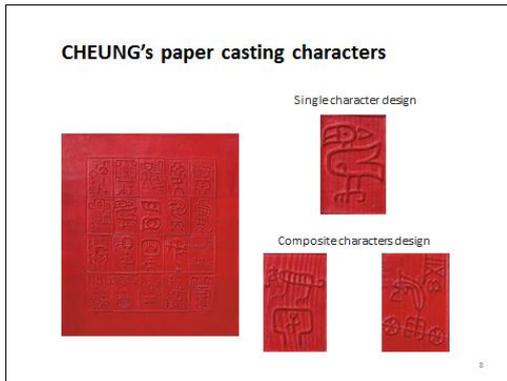
- Summarize the characteristics of the subjects embedded in the characters. These characters are “pictograms”.

Characteristics of the oracle bone script	Characteristics of the seal script
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a kind of pictogram: The characters were drawn according to the subject’s appearance. It was a way of creating words. • It was etched on objects. • The lines of the characters are thin and pointed. • The structure of characters is often disorganised. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • It is a script with Chinese characters. • While writing, you must hold the brush upright. • The lines have a balanced weight. • The structure of the characters is organised.

4. **Class activity (1): Redesign Chinese Characters (Suggested length: 15 minutes)**

Show the **“Supplementary Teaching Materials ppt” pp8-9**

- Show CHEUNG’s cast paper murals.
- The students should use the characters they prepared, make use of the characteristics of the seal script and oracle bone script to design a new font.
- The designed font should have characteristics of the subject.
- The lines and structure of the font should be clear.
- The teacher may select a few students’ works as examples for evaluation and appreciation with the class.



5. **Introduce the art-making process (Suggested length: 30 mins)**

Show the **“Supplementary Teaching Materials ppt” pp10-15**

- In groups, have the students use strips of clay to create the fonts they designed, put them in a container, make a plaster mould from them, and create the effect of lightweight relief for the cast paper mural.
- Demonstrating how to create characters with clay coils:

Creating characters with clay coils

1. Roll the clay into coils with your hands.
2. Create the designed fonts with the clay coils and stick them into the container.
3. Slant the edges of the coils slightly so that they point upwards to prevent the clay coils from sticking to the plaster mould.

Note:

- Make sure that the clay coils are fully stuck to the bottom of the container.
- The joints of the coils should be intact.
- The edges of the clay coils should slant slightly upwards.
- The thickness of each coil should be about that of a finger.

This image shows a clear plastic container with a character made of grey clay coils inside. The character is a stylized 'H' or similar shape. The edges of the coils are slanted upwards.

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- Demonstrating how to create a plaster mixture:

Creating a plaster mixture

Mix the plaster with water

1. The ratio of plaster powder to water should be 3:1.
2. Mix the plaster powder and water thoroughly.

Note:

- Stay close to the clay when pouring the plaster mixture into the container.
- After pouring the plaster mixture into the container, shake the container slightly to smoothen the surface and expel the air inside.



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- Demonstrating how to make a plaster mould:

Making a plaster mould

1. Apply a layer of oil onto the clay word and inside the container.
2. Pour in the prepared plaster mixture.
3. The thickness of the plaster mixture must be at least twice the thickness of the clay word.



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- Demonstrating how to remove the mould and finish it:

Removing the mould and finishing it

1. After the plaster mould has dried, remove it from the container and take out the clay coil. If the coil is stuck with the plaster, use a wooden modelling tool to remove the clay.
2. Remove the extra clay from the surface to make sure the sides of the concave area of the character shape are smooth.
3. Use fine sandpaper to smoothen the surface of the plaster mould. Remove the powder with a paint brush.
4. Wet a sponge, squeeze out the excess water, and wipe the plaster mould once. Wet the sponge again and wipe away the powder and clay. Make sure the surface of the plaster mould is clean.



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- Demonstrating how to cast paper:

Casting paper

1. Place a plastic wrap on the dried plaster mould.
2. Fill the plaster mould with paper pulp. Press the paper pulp into the concave area of the character shape.
3. Dry the paper pulp with a hair dryer. Take out the paper pulp when it is dry.



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- Demonstrating how to colour:

Apply red acrylic paint.

6. **Class activity (2): Paper casting (Suggested length: 90 mins)**

7. **Appreciating the students' works (Suggested length: 20 mins)**

8. **Materials**

Clay, transparent cubical container, plaster powder, water, gloves, plastic bucket, wooden modelling tool, sand paper, paper pulp, hair dryer, red acrylic paint, paint brush, colour mixing dish, cooking oil