



Community Outreach

Oakland VA – Drawing with a Brush

February 2018



Welcome to 2018! The “aerobics” of the brush in “gratitude” was the focus of the Community Outreach program at the Oakland VA on January 17, 2018. It’s almost as easy as (1) ink up the brush, (2) drop and drag the stroke, and (3) lift. Simple for some maybe, but I’ve found the calligraphic practice of “gratitude” complicated, even humbling. There are many paths to gratitude. Fortunately, the Chinese and Japanese kanji for gratitude is laid out in a specific order.

Following a specific order limits choices, allowing the painter to concentrate on the following:

- How and where to hold the brush.
- The feel of the brush when it hits the paper.
- The resistance between the paper and the brush in creating the stroke.
- The look of the stroke when we exhale vs. holding your breath.
- The option to repeat one stroke over and over till we are happy, or just done.

Remember, it’s just practice. No masterpieces required, though they are accepted. The good news is there is no dawdling with ink on rice paper. Speed is part of the process and repetition brings familiarity. By the third pass, a bit of muscle memory can build up, and the brush might dance through certain passages.

Finally, should we accomplish some reasonable facsimile of the kanji for gratitude, there are 1,542,045,928 people on this earth who could read and see our effort towards gratitude. It certainly seems worth trying!

Sheila Cain,
Director Community Outreach



Sheila Cain, teacher, leading the finale, a smiling... giant group painting in circles.

Jaclynne, Libby, Pablo, Joyce and Nancy painting and having fun!



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Martinez VA – Lesson in Perspective

The artists at the Martinez VA began 2018 with an exercise in drawing perspective. Our larger goal this year is for the artists to learn the basics of landscape drawing and painting. We took advantage of a cold, cloudy day to work on this lesson indoors. Special thanks go to Maggie Metcalf for creating the lesson plan and leading the group to creating some fun works of art.

We drew a straight horizontal line across a sheet of paper; then drew ovals of random sizes and placement across the line. Then we drew a head, a face and a body from each oval. Best to do the largest ones first! What resulted was a drawing with a definite horizon line with human figures all at corresponding placement and body size. All participants did well, even if directions weren't followed precisely.

Previously the artists have had a tendency to copy images which was valuable in terms of learning how to work with paper, paint and water. Last year, Victoria Bianco initiated life drawing sessions with great results. Understanding perspective is an important skill for artists. Please enjoy the images as much as we do!



Photography by Victoria Bianco

We would love to have new volunteers join us at the CWA community outreach at the Martinez VA. Please email outreach@californiawatercolor.org. The schedule of classes for the next four months is as follows: January 24, February 14 and 28, March 14 and 28, and April 11 and 25.

Victoria Bianco,
Community Outreach