FAN CHANG TIEN

Rhythm of the Southern Brush

范昌乾
南方笔韵

STUDENT ACTIVITY GUIDE

Recommended for Ages 7 to 12



NATIONAL GALLERY SINGAPORE

Detail of *Coconut Palm and Mynans*. 1973.
Chinese ink and colour on paper, 121 × 60.5 cm.
Gift of Chan Kok Hua, from Qiu Zhai's Collection.
Collection of National Gallery Singapore.

What is this exhibiton about?

Hello and welcome to National Gallery Singapore!

Today, we will explore paintings by Fan Chang Tien. He used bold, expressive brushwork to capture nature and everyday life with Chinese ink. Through his paintings, we will learn to observe and appreciate the world around us.

Who was he?

Fan Chang Tien was born in Guangdong, China in 1907. He was a Chinese ink artist and teacher who liked to paint birds, flowers, fruits, bamboo and landscapes. He moved from China to Thailand, and later to Singapore in 1956.





Why is he known as “the gardener”?

Fan Chang Tien was known as “the gardener” not only because he loved painting nature and was an avid garderner, but also because he seeded his love of art in many others.

Let’s take a closer look at the paintings in this exhibition.

For Fan Chang Tien, bamboo symbolised the qualities he valued: integrity, resilience and adaptability.

Choose a bamboo painting and observe it closely.
What do you notice about the way he painted bamboo?

Write or sketch what you observe.



Young Bamboo and Rock. 1973.
Chinese ink on paper, 135.4 × 34 cm.
Collection of National Gallery Singapore

The bamboo in the painting makes me feel

_____ because _____

_____.



Fan Chang Tien painted birds, flowers, fruits and plants from everyday life. Through expressive ink brushstrokes, he showed the beauty and joy found in nature and simple moments.

Can you find the following words in this word search?

BAMBOO
CHRYSANTHEMUM
COCONUT PALM
MYNAH
ORCHID
PLUM BLOSSOM
SHANSHUI *
SPARROW
SWALLOW

These are common subjects that can be found in many of Fan Chang Tien's paintings.

M P L U M B L O S S O M A
X Y M X A N Y U E A D E I
C U N S P A R R O W Y E D
W U C A C C I Y E O R F H
Q O R C H I D J W I R W V
S W A L L O W X Q I D H H
C H R Y S A N T H E M U M
M V R I Y S L U M S G T K
B A M B O O F S S Z U F U
C O C O N U T P A L M U G
U S H A N S H U I R H U U
V G X W E N H H H V I T D

**Shanshui*, which means mountain-and-water in Chinese, refers to landscape works typically painted in ink.



Fan Chang Tien. Detail of *The Gathering of Poets*.
1971. Chinese ink and colour on paper, 59.6 × 119.8 cm.
Private collection.

山水 (*shanshui*) means "mountains and water." However, a shanshui painting can have much more than just mountains and water!

If Fan Chang Tien painted Singapore today, what might he see?

Would he paint the Singapore Botanic Gardens, HDB blocks, the ocean view at Sentosa, the skyline at Marina Bay Sands or something else? Share your ideas here:

What's a seal?

A seal is a carved stamp. Artists have traditionally used seals to add their names to Chinese ink paintings. Sometimes, the seal features the artist's name. At other times, the seal will feature information related to the artist's values or beliefs.



Chinese seal



Seal of Fan Chang Tien

Can you find Fan Chang Tien's name seal in his paintings? How does it look like? Try sketching it here.

Design your own seal.

1. Write your name: _____
2. Which letters do you like the most? _____
3. You can simplify these letters. Turn them around, squish, stretch or join them together.

4. Next, add a symbol or shape that represents you.

5. Lastly, draw your final seal in this box.

Find the stamping station in the exhibition.

Pick your favourite stamp and stamp it in this white rectangle!



I chose this stamp because...

Like a garderner who helps plants grow, Fan Chang Tien was a teacher who nurtured his students into artists. Think of a teacher who has supported your personal growth. They can be someone from any time in your life. **His/her name is:** _____

They helped me to grow by...

- ☐ Teaching me something new
- ☐ Helping me when I struggled
- ☐ Encouraging me
- ☐ Believing in me
- ☐ Fill in your own answer: _____



What is something you'd like to say to them?

Dear _____,

What discoveries have you made today at National Gallery Singapore?



I used to think that _____
_____.

Now, I think that _____
_____.

This activity sheet is published by the National Gallery Singapore on the occasion of *Fan Chang Tien: Rhythm of the Southern Brush*, 16 Oct 2026–31 Jan 2027.

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