

SLOW ART

with Friends



Lion. 1914. Ink and colour on silk, 63 × 49 cm.
Collection of He Xiangning Art Museum.

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He Xiangning: Ink & Intent marks the largest exhibition of He Xiangning's artworks outside China and the first presentation of her work in Southeast Asia. He Xiangning was a leading ink artist and prominent activist for women's rights. She led China's first rally for International Women's Day in 1924. Featuring over 50 artworks and extensive archival materials, this exhibition situates He Xiangning's artistic activities within Chinese modern art.



He Xiangning painting for a charity sale in late 1931.

Inspired by He Xiangning's art and life, this activity booklet offers three engaging activities designed to make your museum visit enjoyable. Each activity contains exercises in **slow looking**, a practice that encourages you to look a little longer at art.



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How to use this guide?

Use this guide independently or with friends or family. Each activity takes between 15 and 20 minutes.

Activities 1 & 3

can be done with any artworks within the designated sections of the exhibition.

Activity 2

focuses on one specific artwork in Section Two.

The activities need not be completed in order—feel free to mix them up as you like. Even if you're exploring on your own, you can still engage with prompts meant for groups for your self-reflection.

Most importantly, there is no "right" way to look at art. Just enjoy the experience!


Before you begin, take a pencil. You will be prompted to write or sketch your thoughts.

Ready? Flip to the next page and begin your journey!

It's a Real Mood.

Wander around Section One of the exhibition and think about how you are feeling today.

Select an artwork that best describes your current mood.

Observe the artwork closely for  3 minutes.


Try not to look at the artwork label yet!


What do you see?

What small details surprise you?

How does it make you feel?



 As you observe, make written or mental notes for why you chose this artwork to represent your mood.

If you are in a group, spend  minutes sharing your chosen artwork with one another.

**Why did you choose this artwork?
Whose mood is the most different
from yours?**



This section features He Xiangning's earliest works. As she became involved in China's anti-imperialist movement, the artist turned to depictions of mighty animals—lions and tigers—as symbols of courage and vigour. At the same time, her delicate flower paintings suggest renewal and hope that underlined her revolutionary spirit.

Visit the Learning Station at the end of the exhibition to find out more about the symbolic meaning of these recurring motifs in He Xiangning's artworks.



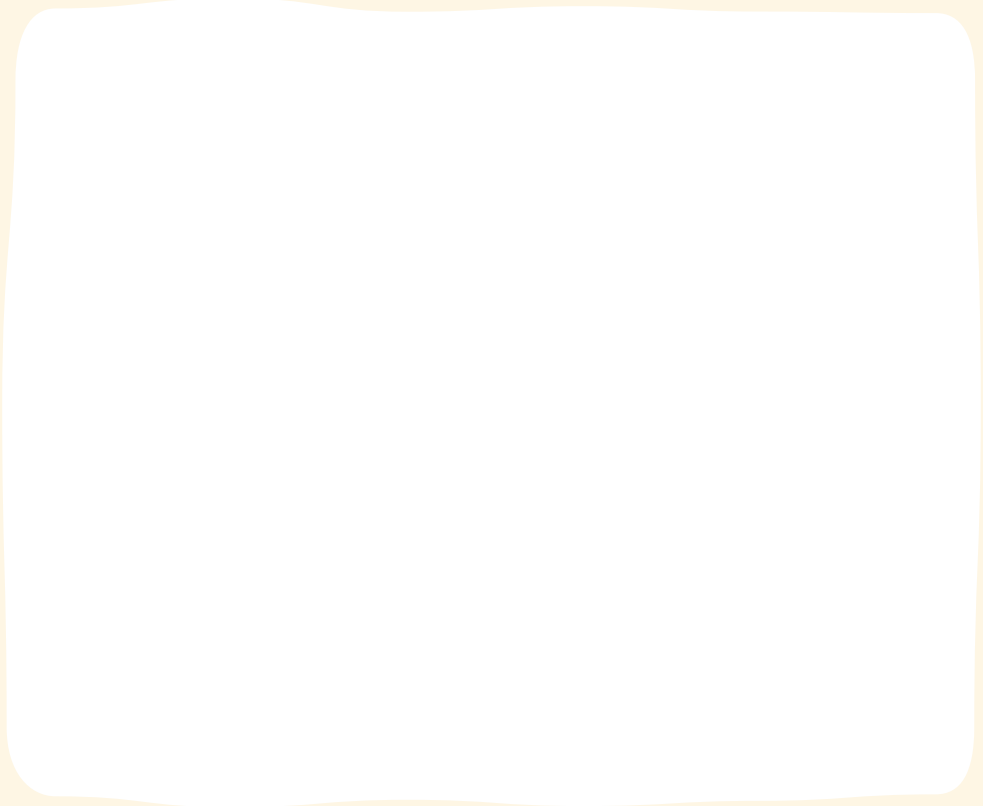
Lion. 1914. Ink and colour on silk, 63 × 49 cm. Collection of He Xiangning Art Museum.



Chrysanthemums. 1913. Ink and colour on silk, 99 × 31 cm. Collection of He Xiangning Art Museum.

- Return to your chosen artwork. If it could be a **symbol** that represents an idea, object or person that holds a unique meaning to you, what would it be?

Draw your symbol or describe it briefly in words.




- Now look at the artwork label. Think about your symbol. What is another title you might give to the artwork?

If you are in a group, spend some time sharing your sketches and titles with one another.

Making Poetry.

Find the artwork titled *Pine and Chrysanthemums*.

Observe the artwork closely for  3 minutes. This is a big painting. Try to get as close—and as safely possible—to observe the details. You can also look at it from different angles.

- After **3 minutes**, if you are in a group, divide yourselves into two smaller groups—Group A and Group B.


Group A will write down as many things as they can see in the artwork. Group B will write down as many words about how they feel towards the artwork.

Work within your groups. Take  5 minutes.

When you are done, share your words within your group. Together, choose 5 favourite words and note them down.

Notice the inscription on the upper right corner of the painting. He Xiangning's fellow activist and well-known poet, Liu Yazhi, composed this poem. The poem narrates revolutionary events and heroes, whose perseverance and fighting spirit are represented through He Xiangning's depiction of pine trees and chrysanthemums. Scan the QR code on the artwork label for the English translation.

Chinese ink tradition values collaboration: poets, calligraphers and painters often worked together to create works that embodied their shared values. As you explore the exhibition, notice other examples of such artistic collaboration.

- Group A and Group B will gather. Using at least 3 favourite words from each group, everyone will work together to compose a poem or a short paragraph. You may also use any other words you like. Take  minutes.

When you are done, recite what you have written together. Each person should take turns to read a portion aloud.

Into the Frame.



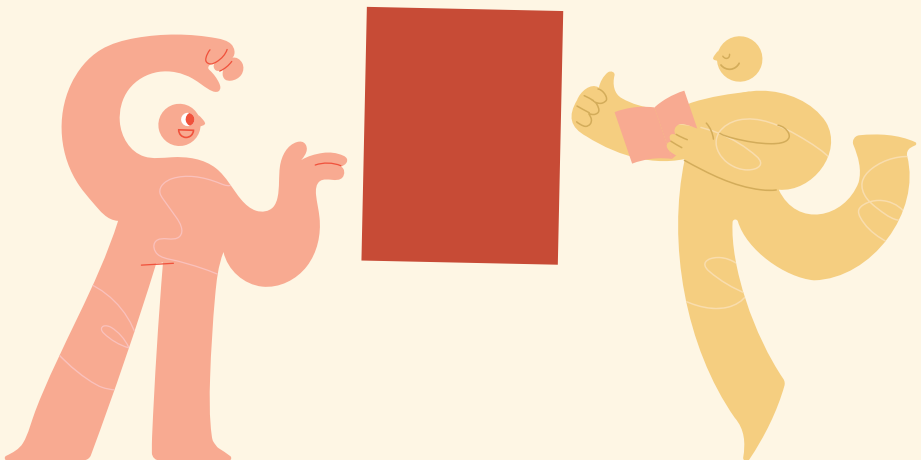
He Xiangning's revolutionary spirit was evident since young. She resisted foot binding, a practice that was customary for girls at that time. Her individualism is further reflected in her remarkable art and life.


Explore Section Four of the exhibition and select an artwork you find intriguing.

Which artwork surprises you?

Which artwork makes you want to look at it a little longer?

Which artwork intrigues you?



- After you have selected your artwork, observe it for at least  5 minutes. Notice what catches your attention and sketch what you see.



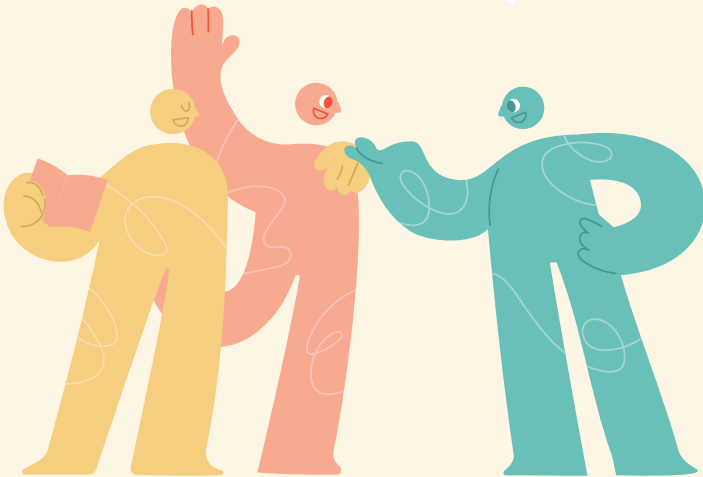
This section displays He Xiangning's later works that showcase her mastery of Chinese ink techniques while incorporating a modern sensibility through the use of vibrant colours and collaboration with fellow artists.

- Think about He Xiangning's aspirations and how she presented Chinese ink painting in a new light. Add something new to your sketch.

Your addition could be something totally bizarre and imaginative, like a spaceship in a Chinese landscape!

When you are done, share your sketches with one another and consider the following questions.

Why did you choose this artwork?
What new elements did you add?
Whose sketch left an impression on you?



**We hope this guide has enriched
your experience of He Xiangning's
art and encouraged your own
creativity along the way.**

We would love to hear your thoughts! Scan
the QR code to share your feedback.



This project was created by National Gallery Singapore (the Gallery) in collaboration with He Xiangning Art Museum. It is inspired by the Gallery's Slow Art Guide and How to Art with Friends programmes. Please visit the Gallery's website to learn more about these programmes.

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