

Academy of Visual Arts
Bachelor of Arts (Hons) in Visual Arts Programme

VART 3126 Chinese Seal Engraving: The Expressive Identity

No. of units: 3

Pre-requisite: VART 2126 Chinese Word as Image

Duration: 52 hours

Cluster: Chinese Arts

I.1. Course Description & Rationale (200–300 words):

Seal engraving (*zhuanke* 篆刻) is a highly developed yet much understudied form of Chinese art. Few people have any idea how to appreciate the beauty of a seal's (*yinzhang* 印章) imprinted image, let alone grasp the subtlety of these aesthetic objects. More than simply tools used to imprint one's presence (commonly authorship and ownership) on a painting or work of calligraphy, seals are carefully design works of art that express a variety of cultural and personal values.

This course consists of three parts: study of the theoretical and historical aspects of seal engraving; the practical study of styles and carving techniques; and a hands-on studio art project. Students will be introduced to related topics as social functions of the seal, transformation of seal styles, relationships between the seal and other arts of China, appreciating the seal and its imprint as aesthetic objects, and the seal as a vehicle for expressing self-image and identity.

After a vigorous analysis of styles and compositional types, the class will learn the techniques of seal engraving through demonstrations and guided practice. The course culminates in the creative project where by students will carve their own personal seals that convey through their design of character seals (*wenzi yin* 文字印) and pictorial seals (*tuxian yin* 圖像印) an expression of their self-image or identity.

Seal engraving is an integral form of Chinese art and visual culture. The course not only informs students about traditional Chinese culture, but also challenges them to invigorate the national heritage to express their contemporary thoughts and life. Students will develop independent thinking and problem-solving skills and express creativity as part of the process for creating seals. This course is intended to cultivate a synergy with all other courses of Chinese art history, Chinese painting, Chinese calligraphy, typography, jewellery design, and some aspects of sculpture.

I.2. Course Content:

No.		Hours	%
1.	History and Theories of Seal Engraving: - History of Chinese seal engraving; - Social functions of seals, - Seals as the vehicle of endorsement, authorship and identity; - Seal's literary content as a tool of establishing identification with values, ideology, culture and social groups; - Appreciating the seal and its imprint as aesthetic objects; - Synergy between seal engraving and other arts of China.	16	30.5
2.	Fieldtrip to a local museum/ viewing original works in private collections: - Examination of a quintessential selection of original works of seal engraving throughout the history.	4	8
3.	Practical studio art study (through practice assignments): - Investigation of compositional types, styles and schools of seal engraving; - Study in a range of seal-engraving knife methods (<i>daofa</i> 刀法) and relevant techniques.	20	38.5
4.	Creative Project based on the inspiration originated from the aforementioned theoretical and practical studies.	12	23
		52	100

I.3. Intended Course Learning Outcomes (CILOs):

(Please take note of the PILOs for the overall BA programme in the Programme Document.)

Upon successful completion of this course, students should be able to:

No.	Intended Course Learning Outcomes (CILOs)
1.	Critically reflect theories and various ways of appreciating works of seal engraving;
2.	Generate concepts about the relationship between seal engraving and the expression of identity;
3.	Apply techniques and principles of seal engraving for their own design and execution of seals;
4.	Independently generate a creative strategy to effectively express a strong sense of self-image, identity and identification of values and ideology through producing a series of seals;

5.	Communicate and present creative ideas by using both vocabulary of seal engraving and general terms in written form (artist statement); and
6.	Adhere to standards of professional practice and ethos.

* More may be added.

I.4. Alignment of CILOs with PILOs:

Learning Outcomes	Please indicate alignment by checking '✓' the appropriate box					
	CILO1	CILO2	CILO3	CILO4	CILO5	CILO6
PILO1.1	✓	✓				
PILO1.2						
PILO2.1						
PILO2.2			✓	✓		
PILO2.3	✓	✓		✓	✓	
PILO3.1						✓
PILO3.2						✓

* There may not be 6 CILOs, in which case, just leave columns empty.

I.5. Alignment of Teaching and Learning Activities with CILOs:

No.	Teaching and Learning Activities	CILO	Hours
1.	Presentations with aid of notes and audio-visual media. The instructor will : Present concepts and theories pertinent to Chinese seal engraving.	1, 2, 6	16
2.	Team-working research projects, group presentations and discussions.	1, 2, 6	4
3.	Studio-based practical research. The instructor will: Demonstrate relevant skills, presents relevant examples and offers guidance for student's mastering and application of techniques and principles of seal engraving for their own design and execution of seals. The students will: Practise the require skills of seal engraving in small assignments & independently generate and develop a set of personal creative strategy, which is inspired by theoretical study, to effectively express themselves through artwork production.	1, 2, 3, 4, 6	32

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**More may be added.*

I.6. Assessment:

No.	Assessment Methods/Activities	Weighting	Alignment with CILOs
1.	Student presentations & following group discussions on theoretical topics	10%	1, 5
2.	Practical research projects: 4 small assignments to develop hands-on skills and concepts of seal engraving	20%	1, 2, 3
3.	Creative project: Development of ideas in the creation of a series of seals (at least three pieces), expressing a clear and meaningful central theme and conveying the idea of self-image and/ or identity.	30%	3, 4
4.	Artist statement: Writing assignment that meditate on personal philosophy and the process of developing personal ideas and identity in works of seal engraving	10%	1, 5
5.	Professional Attitude: Professional Attitude does not necessarily define its own learning outcomes, but takes a look at 'how' the other, non-attitudinal outcomes are achieved. Assessment will always be based on direct personal contact with the student. Assessment methods include personal conversations – formal and informal –, class observation, individual and group-tutorials, and such like. Assessment evidence is continuously produced through attendance and participation class-records, public presentations, peer-reviews, evaluation of sketchbooks or visual diaries, personal notes of students and teachers, etc. For more information, please refer to the BA (Hons) in Visual Arts' Programme Document.	30%	6

**More may be added.*

I.7. References (up to 10 books):

Fang Jiekan. 方介堪, ed. Xiyin wenzong 璽印文綜 (*Integrated collection of the characters from ancient seals*) Shanghai: Shanghai shudian chubanshe 上海書店出版社, 1989.

Fu, Shen CY. *Traces of the Brush: Studies in Chinese Calligraphy*. New Haven: Art Gallery, Yale University, 1977.

Harrist, Robert E., and Wen C. Fong. *The Embodied Image: Chinese Calligraphy from the John B. Elliott Collection*. With contributions by Bai Qianshen et al. Art Museum, Princeton University, in association with H.N. Abrams, 1999.

Kuo, Jason C. *Word As Image: The Art of Chinese Seal Engraving*. New York: China House Gallery, China Institute In America, 1992.

Lai, T. C. *Chinese Seals*. Hong Kong: Kelly & Walsh, 1976.

Luo Fuyi. 羅福頤, ed. *Hanyin wenzi zheng 漢印文字徵 (A compilation of the characters from the Han Seals)*. Beijing 北京: Wenwu chubanshe 文物出版, 1978.

Qian Juntao. 錢君匋, and Ye, L. Y. 葉潞淵. *Xiyin yuanliu 璽印源流 (The origin and development of seals)*. Beijing 北京: Beijing chubanshe 北京出版社, 1998.

Tseng, Y. H. *A History of Chinese Calligraphy*. Hong Kong: The Chinese University Press, 1993.

Wang Dongling 王冬齡. *Zhongguo yishu jiaoyu daxi, meishujuan: shufa zhuanke 中國藝術教育大系, 美術卷: 書法篆刻 (The system of Chinese art education, the volume of art: calligraphy and seal engraving)*. Hangzhou: Zhongguo meishu xueyuan chubanshe 中國美術學院出版社, 2005.

Ye Yiwei 葉一葦. *Zhuanke xue 篆刻學 (The Study of Seal Engraving)*. Hangzhou: Xiling yinshe 西泠印社, 2003.

I.8. Academic Integrity:

Students will endeavour to only claim work that they have actually produced themselves. Claiming the work of others is considered plagiarism, and will be dealt with under the academic policies of the university.

I.9. Health and Safety:

Every effort will be made to comply with the intent of Hong Kong's law or acts and the University's policies to maintain a safe and healthy working environment.

I.10. Final Note:

The instructor reserves the right to modify the class and the syllabus or the schedule to adjust to the dynamics of the particular group or to take advantage of opportunities that may arise.