

OU Da-wei

Suggested class activities for Junior Secondary

Artist: OU Da-wei

Level: Junior Secondary

Theme: My amusing epigram

Suggested length: 3.5 hours

Teaching concept:

The Chinese literati take pride in excelling at poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal carving. OU Da-wei's profound knowledge of these four types of art makes him a modern literati artist. OU is sensitive to his daily life, where he finds inspiration for his poetry, calligraphy and seal works in his surroundings, personal experiences and global issues. He excels in infusing a modern style and spirit into traditional and ancient art forms.

This course improves students' understanding and appreciation of traditional Chinese art through appreciating and studying OU's art. The students will create works related to everyday living using traditional Chinese materials and methods.

Required background knowledge:

1. The students should be able to write with an ink brush.
2. They should have prior experience using a carving knife.

Teaching goals:

1. Learn about OU's poetry, calligraphy, painting and seal work through his video.
2. Learn about and appreciate OU's use of seal script and its composition in seal carving.
3. Appreciate the meaning of short texts in leisure seals.
4. Learn about the characteristics of *zhuwen* (red character style) and *baiwen* (white character style) seals.
5. Learn about the creation and use of reverse images.
6. Learn master seal inscription techniques.

Suggested class activities:

1. **Introduce OU Da-wei and his artistic style (Suggested length: 3 mins)**

Show the “Artist Introduction ppt” pp1-3

Born in Guangzhou in 1947, OU Da-wei was a student of Wu Zifu at a young age. Well-versed in poetry, Chinese calligraphy, landscape painting and seal carving, he received the Urban Council

Fine Arts Award – Calligraphy (1989) and Seal Carving (1998), etc. He was also awarded the Hong Kong Arts Development Council Award for Artistic Development in 1998.

OU's early calligraphic works are characterised by a natural naiveté, his freeflowing, vivid cursive script catching the eye of his audience in recent years. His landscape ink wash paintings emphasize expressive brushwork, while his signature seal carving is marked by its maturity and simplicity.

2. **Video viewing guide (Suggested length: 2 mins)**

- Pay attention to the characteristics of OU's calligraphy and seal making.
- Source of inspiration.

3. **Play the “Artist Video mp4” (Suggested length: 5 mins)**

Select parts of the video depending on your focus, pausing as needed to explain the content or ask questions

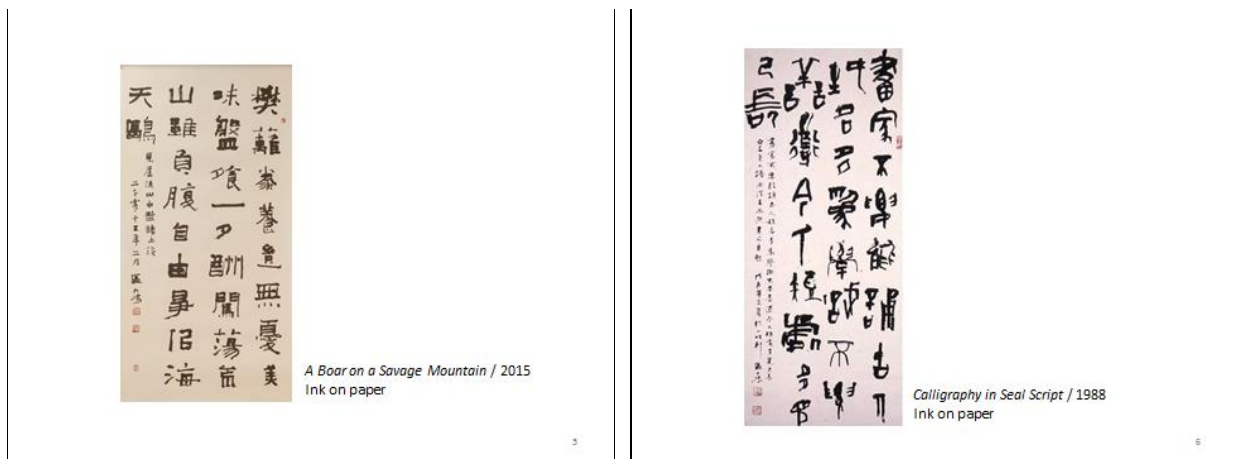
Suggested Q&A:

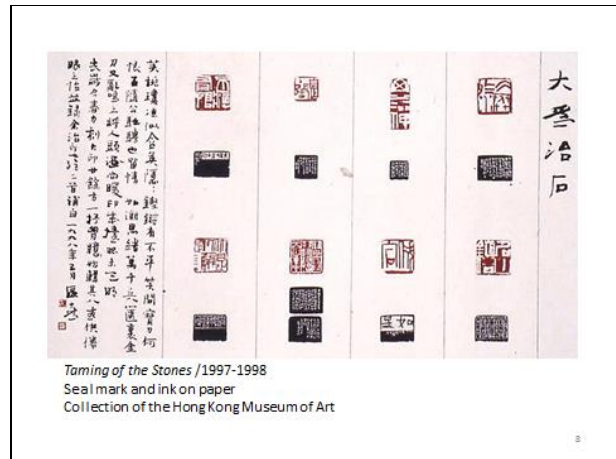
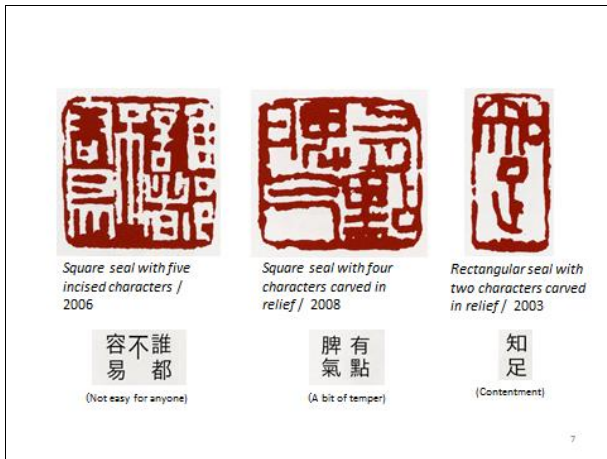
- What are the characteristics of his calligraphy?
(The composition of the words resembles that of a drawing. When writing, OU does not follow the traditional order of strokes, but decides on the order in terms of aesthetic standards.)
- What is his source of inspiration?
(Interesting and memorable scenes in life.)
- What is a common spirit in his artworks?
(Humour.)

4. **Appreciation of OU's works (Suggested length: 10 mins)**

Show the “Artist Introduction ppt” pp4-7

- Explain to the students that the learning goal of this lesson is calligraphy and seal making by OU.





Guide the students to appreciate in the following steps:

- Description: Describe the characteristics of Ou’s calligraphy and seals.
(Calligraphy: the thickness, moisture and colour intensity of the strokes vary, as do the size and spacing of the characters.)
(Seals: the seal script is written with an ink brush, the visual effect within the frame is rich, there are cracks on the characters due to carving.)
- Explanation: What are the similarities in OU’s calligraphy and seals making?
(The themes are mainly speaking of philosophy or for leisure. The fonts are interesting, the characters resemble drawings and expressed in a playful style.)
- Evaluation: Do you like his works? Why?

5. Exploring the seal works (Suggested length: 15 mins)

Show OU’s seal works and the **“Supplementary Teaching Materials ppt” pp3-6**

- Explain the inscription contents in two commonly used seals: Name seals and Leisure seals



Inscription contents in the seals

Name seals

- They serve as signatures.
- The fonts are rather formal and structured.



Square seal with three characters carved in relief / 2009

Leisure seals

- There are implications in the messages.
- The fonts are rather lively and diversified.



Oval seal with three characters carved in relief / 2008

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- Differences between *zhuwen* and *baiwen* seals:

Differences between *zhuwen* (朱文) and *baiwen* (白文) inscriptions



Square seal with four characters carved in relief / 2002

天妙
開想
(Out of My Mind)



Square seal with four incised characters / 2003

歡滿
喜心
(Contented)

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Zhuwen (朱文)

- also known as red character style or *yang* carving
- the area of the characters is kept, while the empty area is carved out
- the characters are carved in relief in the seal



Square seal with four characters carved in relief / 2002

Baiwen (白文)

- also known as white character style or *yin* carving
- only the area of the characters is carved out
- the characters are incised in the seal



Square seal with four incised characters / 2003

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- Pay attention to the font, composition and alignment of the seals. The seal script characters are often arranged so as to fully utilise the space, so that a rich visual effect can be created in print.

6. **Introduce the art-making process (Suggested length: 20 mins)**

Show the **“Supplementary Teaching Materials ppt” pp8-14** or part the **“Artist Video mp4” 08:30-11:05**

Note: The following demonstration uses a formal stone seal. Students can use plaster blocks instead in the creative process.

- Mark the seal’s shape:



1. Press the stone seal on a *xuan* paper to leave a mark of the seal’s shape.

- Make a draft:



2. Draw the squared frame of the seal with an ink brush according to the mark on the paper.

3. Write the words within the frame. You may refer to OU’s style of seal script and write the strokes in varied thickness and spacing.



- Transfer the image:



4. When the ink is dry, place the paper side with words on the stone seal.

5. Moisten the paper a few drops of water.



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6. Place a piece of tissue paper on top and rub the paper to transfer the words on the stone .

7. Start carving after the words are printed on the stone. Decide whether to make a *zhuwen* or *baiwen* seal.



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- Engraving:



8. This shows how to make a *zhuwen* seal. Carve out the empty space between the characters.

9. Be careful when carving. Do not use too much force. Carve slowly.



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- Stamping with seal paste:



10. Before making the print, clean the surface of the seal mark. Rub the stone seal on seal paste until the paste covers the carving completely.

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- Stamping:



7. **Class activity (Suggested length: 120 mins)**

- The theme is “My amusing epigram”. Have the students to create a short saying that expresses an idea in a clever, funny way.
- Complete the engraving process in *zhuwen* or *baiwen* methods.
- Limit to four to eight Chinese characters to create a leisure seal with personal style and humour.

8. **Appreciation of the students’ works (Suggested length: 10 mins)**

9. **Materials**

Writing brush, ink, *xuan* paper, seal stone (or 4 x 4cm plaster block), seal engraving knife (or carving knife) and seal paste