**Chinese painting** is one of the oldest continuous artistic traditions in the world. Traditional painting involves essentially the same techniques as [calligraphy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_calligraphy) and is done with a [brush dipped in black ink](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ink_and_wash_painting) or [colored pigments](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_pigment); oils are not used. As with calligraphy, the most popular materials on which paintings are made are paper and silk.

**Ink wash painting**, also known as **literati painting** is an [East Asian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asia) type of [brush](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ink_brush) [painting](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Painting) of Chinese origin that uses black ink—the same as used in [East Asian calligraphy](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Asian_calligraphy), in various concentrations. For centuries, this most prestigious form of [Chinese art](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_art) was practiced by highly educated [scholar gentlemen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scholar_gentlemen) or [literati](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Intellectual).

**Landscape painting--**Viewing Chinese landscape paintings, it is clear that Chinese depictions of nature are seldom mere representations of the external world. Rather, they are expressions of the mind and heart of the individual artists—cultivated landscapes that embody the culture and cultivation of their masters.

**Flower-and-bird painting:** (subject matters---flowers, birds, fish, and insects) Flower-and-bird painting consists of fine-brush style and freehand style.  They produced paintings of such things as plum blossoms, orchids, bamboo, and chrysanthemums (the four gentlemen), using their subject matter to reflect their own ideals and character.

**The four gentlemen in Chinese traditional painting**

       The [plum](http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/painting-plum-blossom.php) tree is renowned for bursting into a riot of blossoms in the dead of winter. Its subtle fragrance spills forth at one of the coldest times of the year, making it difficult to go unnoticed. Though neither the plum tree nor its blossoms are very striking, they manage to exude an otherworldly exquisiteness and beautiful elegance during the desolation of winter. The demeanor and character of the plum tree thereby serves as a metaphor for inner beauty and humble display under adverse conditions.

       The [orchid](http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/painting-orchid.php) represents the spring. The beauty and grace of the orchid is fragile in form, with no violent tendencies. Like the plum blossom, its fragrance is never overpowering, symbolizing humility and nobility.

       The stalk of the [bamboo](http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/painting-bamboo.php) is hollow, which came to symbolize tolerance and open-mindedness. Furthermore, the flexibility and strength of the bamboo stalk also came to represent the human values of cultivation and integrity in which one yields but does not break.

       The [chrysanthemum](http://www.chinaonlinemuseum.com/painting-chrysanthemum.php) blooms in the cold autumn air and foretells the coming of winter, which symbolizes the virtue to withstand all adversities. It was the favorite flower of the great poet Tao Yuanming (陶淵明, 365-427), a towering figure in Chinese literati culture.

(source: Wikipedia)