Jizi: Journey of the Spirit  
Weisman Art Museum  
Classroom Activities

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Strangest Dream  
Language Arts  
Creative writing.

Step Inside  
Visual Arts, Language Arts  
Creative writing and art making.

Teacher’s Guide
This guide, a framework for facilitating activities that suit your individual educational goals, supports a visit to the exhibition or students’ responses to the art in the classroom. The activities explore the many intersections of the visual arts with tradition, identity, and global world culture. These interdisciplinary activities focus on middle-school level, but they can be adapted for elementary and high school.

Introduction
Thank you for your interest in Jizi: Journey of the Spirit at the Weisman Art Museum. We hope you find these materials to be a valuable addition to your curriculum and museum visit. Our goal is to develop resources that promote discussion of the history and the ideas behind the artwork. Through these conversations we aim to increase excitement for learning and further inquiry about art and culture. We encourage teachers to use these resources as a starting point for their own dialogue.

Activities

Jizi tried, with his *Dao of Ink*, to maintain traditional Chinese aesthetic principles and techniques and combined them with contemporary, increasingly global, forms, to express ideas about the unification of the self and the universe. For Jizi, the question of the self’s relationship to nature is both ages old and of utmost contemporary concern. His landscapes are at once familiar and totally alien, old and new, comforting and terrifying. His choice of monumental scale confronts the viewer with spaces they can enter, even fall into, further intensifying their impact.

We created each lesson with education strategies in mind so you can connect with the standards you are addressing in your classroom. Images and information on each image are located at the end of the lesson. The lessons were designed for middle school but can easily be adapted for elementary and high school.
The PERCEIVE questions direct the essential underlying process of careful observation or perception. This process guides students into an artwork and helps them begin to form meaning. By practicing the habit of increased perception (slowing down to look before judging), students find evidence to build their interpretations and opinions, and they gain an awareness of, and confidence in, their own thinking. Students learn to distinguish observations (the facts, the evidence: what they see) from interpretations (reasoned conclusions supported by evidence: why they say that about what they see). These PERCEIVE questions will facilitate discussions about the artwork. The PERCEIVE questions, images, and background information for each image, is located in the resource section following the activities.

We hope you find our resources for Jizi: Journey of the Spirit helpful and fun. We welcome your comments, questions, and feedback on these classroom materials.

Background Information

Over an almost half century career that spanned a dynamic period of Chinese history, the Chinese painter, Jizi (1942 -2015), created an astounding body of work. In the last quarter of the twentieth century, many Chinese scholars, critics, and artists decried traditional Chinese painting (Zhongguohua) as out of step with an increasingly global world culture. Jizi countered that assertion, arguing that painting could indeed be authentically Chinese in terms of traditional techniques and styles, and still address the present day needs of individual human beings the world over. The art works in Jizi: Journey of the Spirit reveal the artist’s decades long search for this synthesis of techniques, styles, philosophies, and ideas that honor tradition, reinforce the ideal of a universal oneness of all things, and embrace personal expression.

Jizi spent his entire career working to maintain core elements of Zhongguohua while also creating new meaningful contemporary Chinese painting. He blazed that trail through engagement with the idea of spirituality.

In his early years as an artist, Jizi embraced Maoist socialist realism—an ideology that rejected spirituality outright. In the aftermath of Mao’s passing in 1976 and the attending shift in the nature of the party’s concept of socialism, Jizi began exploring means to reintroduce the concept of spirit. After experimenting with a variety of theories and methods, Jizi settled on his own practice, which he called Dao of Ink painting. Dao or Tao, is an ancient Chinese philosophy that emphasizes harmony with nature. Ink painting is an old technique that originated in China, of creating paintings with black ink and a brush.

Caught up in the problem of contemporary art, often read as Western, and its relationship to the long and venerated tradition of Chinese painting, Jizi’s journey was one of commitment to the time-honored and to the inventive—the philosophical and material. Strongly believing that the two approaches could meaningfully coexist, Jizi tirelessly searched for a new way of painting. The works on view in this exhibition are testimony to his struggles and successes.

All of the works in the exhibition are by Jizi and are lent by his family.
The Dao of Ink: Jizi’s Paintings

The ink-washes of traditional mountain and water (山水 shanshui) painting are often regarded as most expressive of traditional Chinese philosophy. With the works in this exhibition, Jizi demonstrates that shanshui aesthetics is still the basis for a principle of a spiritual union that gives each human being a sense of connection to the landscape and the universe. As such, Jizi’s paintings can be seen to address vital contemporary concerns, such as humanity’s relation to and responsibility for the environment and the role of the spiritual in human life. Along with Confucianism, Daoism (sometimes called Taoism) is one of the two great indigenous philosophical traditions of China. Historically Daoists focused on understanding the nature of reality, ordering life morally, and regulating consciousness and diet. Fundamental Daoist ideas and concerns include wuwei (“effortless action”), ziran (“naturalness”), how to become a shengren (“sage”) or zhenren (“perfected person”), and the ineffable, mysterious Dao (“Way”) itself.

Using ideas from both the long Chinese tradition and contemporary thought from across cultures, Jizi successfully created a new manner of painting within an ancient tradition. Jizi creates worlds within worlds, and creations within creations. Scholar David Brubaker says: “The globalization of Jizi’s paintings offers each of us an opportunity to reassess our ideas about unity with nature.” Jizi expresses the breadth of a fundamental idea of Chinese philosophy: “Heaven and humanity are one” (天人合一, tian ren he yi).
Strangest Dream

Learning objective: Students will see beyond the surface story of an artwork and experience different viewpoints through close looking and creative writing.

Education Strategies: In order to gain a new perspective on the artwork, inhabit a specific viewpoint, and explain this perspective, students will be required to:
- describe through all the senses
- connect to prior knowledge
- generate ideas
- make inferences
- shift perspective
- relate to emotions
- Expand vocabulary
- Create metaphors

Classroom Activity

Look at the artworks by Jizi: choose one to focus on.

1. PERCEIVE
   Work through the PERCEIVE card to investigate the artwork carefully.
   What do you notice? What details do you see?
   What does it remind you of? Does it make you think of something you’ve seen, heard, experienced before?
   What feelings do you notice? What is the mood?
   What questions would you like to ask the artist? What does it make you wonder about?
   What do you think the artwork might be about?

2. CONSIDER
   Now imagine that you are going for a walk (or a swim or a flight) into the artwork.
   Think about these questions: Would you shrink or grow when you are in the artwork? Where would your starting point be? Where would you go next? How would you move? What would you see around you? What would you hear, smell, and feel? Think about your mood when you are in the artwork. Is it peaceful, bustling, scary, silly, mysterious? How does your journey end?

3. CREATE
   Now, write about what you see, hear, smell, or touch while traveling. Use the most colorful and descriptive language you can to describe your journey. Use the first line:

   Last night, I had the strangest dream...
   Jump in and see where your story takes you! You don’t need to know the whole story before you start. Find it along the way. Refer back to the image for more ideas if you get stuck.
Our thoughts and ideas always lead us somewhere, and it can be good to just jump right in and start the process of writing. If you get new ideas, change and revise. Artists and writers both rethink and revise their ideas during the process of creating.

4. **REFLECT**
   Ask students to share their story with the partner sitting next to them. Then ask for volunteers to read their piece or a favorite line from it. What details did they observe that they used in their writing? How do these details add meaning and interest to the artwork? How do they add meaning and interest to their writing?

   **Large group discussion:** What differences did students see across perspectives from the various details? Similarities?

Give students background information on the artwork.

Review these questions together as you conclude the activity. Did you find answers for all of the questions raised by this image at the beginning of the exercise? What questions would you ask the artist? Did background information or the writing of other students raise new questions for you? If so, what are they? How can we bring our own life experiences to contribute when we step inside an artwork to understand our own and other’s perspective?
Step Inside

Learning objective: Students will explore answers to the questions: How did Jizi’s work merge traditional Chinese aesthetics with contemporary global culture? How does the artist’s philosophy, the Doa of Ink, (an emphasis on harmony with nature), help tradition and contemporary coexist?

Education Strategies: In order to explore the intersection of tradition and inventive, students will explore an artwork through writing and create their own landscape. Students will be required to:

- generate ideas
- expand vocabulary
- visualize meaning
- make inferences
- determine detail and focus support
- Connect to prior knowledge
- explain the impact of a work of art on understanding a concept

Classroom Activity

Look at the artworks by Jizi. Focus on one artwork as a group or have students choose an artwork to focus on individually.

1. PERCEIVE
   Work through the PERCEIVE card to investigate the artwork carefully.
   What do you notice? What details do you see?
   What does it remind you of? Does it make you think of something you’ve seen, heard, experienced before?
   What feelings do you notice? What is the mood?
   What questions would you like to ask the artist? What does it make you wonder about?
   What do you think the artwork might be about?
2. CONSIDER
Using ideas from both the long Chinese tradition and contemporary thought from across cultures, Jizi successfully created a new manner of painting within an ancient tradition. Jizi creates worlds within worlds, and creations within creations. Artists carefully consider and select the elements composed in their artworks. Some show open spaces and others very close and intimate views.
Now, choose one detail in the image. This could be a mountain peak, a cloud, or even a spot in the sky. Imagine stepping into this image and being this detail. Think about the following questions:
- Where are you, and what is going on?
- What do you see around you?
- What natural and man-made things do you see?
- What does it feel like to be right there?
- What sounds, smells, and textures surround you?
- What would you like to explore?
- Is anyone else with you in the landscape?

3. CREATE: Part I - Poems
Keeping their imaginings in mind, students should write a poem based on their responses to the questions above and including the details they noted earlier. Instruct them to use adjectives to describe the place. Encourage students to use similes to more accurately describe the landscape.

4. REFLECT
Ask students to share their poem with a partner. Then ask for volunteers to read their poem for the whole group.

5. CREATE: Part II - Landscape Paintings
- Ask students to paint a landscape on a horizontal piece of white heavy drawing paper or watercolor paper. Start with gold paint diluted in water as a wash. While it dries, students can create three different gradations of gray using black ink or black watercolor paint. With the black and grays, they can add the details of the landscape.
- In China, a person’s signature is often stamped with a personal seal. Students can make their own seal with a potato. Using X-Acto knives, students will create their own seal designs. Remind them to cut away the flat area around the design so that it stands out from the background.
- When the students are ready, tell them to press the seal into red tempera paint and try printing it on a scrap of paper. Then, have them stamp it onto their paintings.
- After the paintings are dry, have each student write the poem they wrote onto his or her painting. (Tip: Have them write out a draft of their poem on a piece of paper. Then, instruct them to copy it onto their painting in their best handwriting.)
- Create a class handscroll by collecting all of the landscapes and attaching them to a long piece of paper.
- Leave five inches on either end of the paper for the wooden dowels. Since handscrolls are read from right to left, roll the scroll around the left dowel. Attach a piece of string to the right side of the long piece of paper.
- Place the rolled handscroll on a long table; as small groups of students unroll it, view the immense landscape. Hang it up in the classroom across a long wall.
Large group discussion: What differences did students see across perspectives from the various details? Similarities?

Give students background information on the artwork Explain that this text was written by the museum, so it is one “interpretation,” relying on art historical knowledge, of the identity of the subject and artist.

Review these questions together as you conclude the activity. Did you find answers for all of the questions raised by this image at the beginning of the exercise? What questions would you ask the artist? What questions would you ask the subject if you could? Did background information or the writing of other students raise new questions for you? If so, what are they? How can we bring our own life experiences to contribute when we step inside an artwork to understand identity and perspective?
**PERCEIVE Card**

**perceive**

Before you read anything about the image, use your powers of observation to look slowly and closely.

- **What do you notice?** Imagine using all of your senses.
- **What do you recognize?**
- **What feeling do you get from the image?** Is there a mood?
- **What does this image remind you of?** What is going on?
- **What does the image make you wonder about?** What other meanings could there be?
- **What more do you want to know?**
八荒来风/纸本水墨
Zenith Winds
ink on paper
184 x 145 cm
2009
Boundless Land / ink on paper / 184 x 145 cm / 2009
道自然系列十三 - 新世界 /

纸本水墨 /
Dao of Ink Series, No. 13 New World /
ink on paper
248 x 124 cm /
2008
大道长风图/
纸本水墨/
Dao with Long Wind /
in ink on paper /
 193 x 337 cm /
 2011
洞天初开/纸本水墨/
Caves to be Initiated /
ink on paper /
184 x 145 cm /
2009
方舟天来/纸本水墨/
Ark from Heaven /
ink on paper /
124 x 249 cm /
2013.jpg

千里雪霁图一/纸本水墨
Flying Snow No.1 /
ink on paper /
145 x 366 cm /
2010
时间的延展一/
纸本水墨/
The Extension of Time No.1 /
ink on paper /
192 x 280.5 cm /
2013
天地之間/紙本水墨/
Between Sky and Earth /
ink on paper /
184 x 145 cm /
2009
Remote Bright Sun / 
ink on paper / 
195 x 185 cm /
Sky Aura / ink on paper /
195 x 184 cm /
2009