



TERMINOLOGY OF CHINESE NATIONAL PAINTING ART  
(Guohua)

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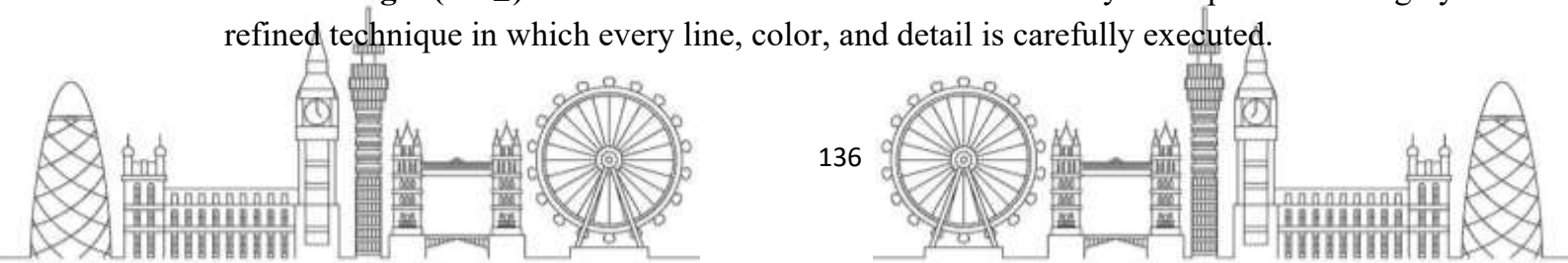
**Abstract** *This article provides a systematic analysis of the main terms, concepts, and theoretical foundations of Chinese national painting art — Guohua (国画). The “Six Principles” (Liufa) of Xie He, the Gongbi and Xieyi styles, the genres of Shan shui, Hua niao, and Renwu, the “Four Treasures of the Study” (Wenfang Sibao), and other central terms are thoroughly examined. Based on Chinese and international scholarly literature, the historical development, aesthetic content, and contemporary significance of Guohua terminology are evaluated. The research results demonstrate that Guohua is not merely a collection of technical terms, but a living expression of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics. The article can serve as both a theoretical and practical guide for art historians, students, and cultural enthusiasts.*

**Keywords:** *Guohua, Chinese national painting, Shui-mo hua, Gongbi, Xieyi, Shan shui, Hua niao, Renwu hua, Liufa (Six Principles), Wenfang Sibao (Four Treasures of the Study), qi yun sheng dong, Chinese aesthetics.*

**Introduction** Chinese national painting art — Guohua (国画) — is one of the oldest and richest art forms in the world, with a history spanning more than 2,000 years. Guohua is primarily manifested in the “shui-mo hua” (水墨画) style, which is created using ink (mo) and water (shui). It possesses not only pictorial but also profound philosophical and aesthetic meaning. This art form is closely intertwined with Chinese culture, Daoism, Confucianism, and Chan Buddhism. In the context of modern globalization, the terms and concepts of Guohua hold significant importance not only in Chinese art studies but also in the history of world art. This article examines the main terms and concepts of Guohua from a scientific and theoretical perspective.

**Main Part** The core of Guohua terminology consists of the following key terms and concepts:

1. **Guohua (国画)** — literally means “national painting” or “state painting.” This term is used to distinguish traditional Chinese painting techniques from Western painting (yang hua).
2. **Shui-mo hua (水墨画)** — painting created with ink and water. It is the most fundamental and symbolic style of Guohua.
3. **Gongbi (工笔)** — “meticulous brushwork” or “detailed style.” A precise and highly refined technique in which every line, color, and detail is carefully executed.





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4. **Xieyi (写意)** — “sketching the idea” or “freehand style.” An expressive and spontaneous technique that conveys the artist’s inner emotions through just a few brushstrokes.

5. **Shan shui (山水)** — “mountain-water” landscape genre. It expresses the grandeur of nature, the smallness of human beings, and philosophical harmony.

6. **Hua niao (花鸟)** — “flower-and-bird” genre. It symbolizes the delicacy of life, growth, and transformation.

7. **Renwu hua (人物画)** — figure painting genre. It depicts historical figures, legends, and scenes from everyday life.

8. **Wenfang Sibao (文房四宝)** — “Four Treasures of the Study”:

○ **Bi (笔)** — brush;

○ **Mo (墨)** — ink;

○ **Zhi (纸)** — special Xuan paper;

○ **Yan (砚)** — inkstone.

9. **Liufa (六法)** — the “Six Principles” formulated by Xie He in the 6th century:

○ **Qi yun sheng dong (气韵生动)** — spirit resonance and life movement;

○ **Gu fa yong bi (骨法用笔)** — bone method in brushwork;

○ **Ying wu xiang xing (应物象形)** — correspondence to the object;

○ **Sui lei fu cai (随类赋彩)** — application of color according to the category;

○ **Jing ying wei zhi (经营位置)** — composition and spatial arrangement;

○ **Chuan yi mo xie (传移模写)** — transmission by copying.

These terms form the fundamental criteria for creating and evaluating Guohua works.

**Literature Review** A number of fundamental works exist on Guohua terminology. Xie He’s “Gu Hua Pin Lu” (古画品录 – Classification of Ancient Painters) is considered the first primary source of Guohua theory. In modern Western literature, Oswald Sirén (“Chinese Painting: Leading Masters and Principles,” 1956–1958) and James Cahill (“Chinese Painting,” 1960) have provided in-depth analyses of Guohua terms. Among Chinese scholars, Wang Bomin (“Guohua yishu gailun”), Zhang Daqian, and Fan Di’an have studied the modern terminology of Guohua. In Uzbekistan, materials from the Tashkent State Institute of Arts and the Uzbek-Chinese Cultural Center examine Guohua terms within the context of cultural relations. These sources enable a comparative study of traditional and contemporary interpretations of Guohua terminology.

**Analysis and Results** When analyzing Guohua terminology, its main characteristic is revealed through the principle of “emptiness and fullness” (xu shi 虚实). The artist encourages the viewer to think deeply through the empty spaces left unpainted rather than through the painted elements alone. This approach sharply distinguishes Guohua from Western art.

The analysis yields the following key findings:





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- The Gongbi style represents technical precision and perfection, while Xieyi embodies spiritual freedom and spontaneity.
- The Six Principles (Liufa) remain universal criteria for evaluating Guohua even today.
- In the modern era, Guohua terminology is merging with digital art, abstraction, and ecological art, creating new forms of expression.
- Studying Guohua terms in Uzbek art education contributes to enhancing cultural diversity and developing aesthetic thinking.

**Conclusion** The terminology and concepts of Chinese national painting art (Guohua) are not merely technical tools but a profound expression of Chinese culture and philosophy. Xie He's "Six Principles," the main genres, and the "Four Treasures of the Study" have made Guohua one of the richest pictorial art traditions in the world. By preserving these traditional terms while introducing innovative approaches in the modern context, the global significance of Guohua continues to grow. A deeper study of Guohua terminology in Uzbek and Central Asian art scholarship will strengthen cultural dialogue and enrich aesthetic thought.

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