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**Alan Lau, *Crows and Persimmons (for Mu Chil Fa-Ch'ang and Frank Okada)***  
circa 2008, sumi and mixed media on paper, 53 1/2 in × 54 1/2 in, Gift of Colonel John and Mrs. Mary Young by exchange, 2015.17.02



**Look closely at Alan Lau's *Crows and Persimmons*.**

Tip: Use a viewfinder from a piece of paper, like in the photo on the left, to help explore all sections of this artwork!

Photo courtesy of TAM Educator Vanessa Harriss

**Discuss with a partner:**

What do you see? Are there certain shapes, patterns or marks that stand out to you? What looks familiar or recognizable to you? How would you describe the different ways the artist applied ink and art materials onto the paper?

**Reflect:**

What connections can you draw from the title of this artwork and what you have explored? What do you think inspired the artist to create this artwork?



**Alan Lau** grew up in Paradise, California where his grandmother taught him calligraphy.

From then on, Lau began to study traditional *sumi-e* and *nanga* brush painting after a trip to Japan.

*Sumi-e* (pronounced soo-mi-eh) is the

Japanese word for ink-brush painting and *Nanga* translates to "Southern painting" which refers to the Chinese term for amateur artists. Both of these ancient styles of ink painting originated in China and were later adopted by Japanese artists that were truly inspired and

influenced by each styles' philosophies.

In 1980, Lau settled in Seattle where he continues to make work inspired by these ink brush techniques using different surfaces like Japanese rice paper.

Photo courtesy of ArtXchange gallery



## Exploring Mark Making

Artists sometimes use a variety of tools to create their art like sticks, drinking straws, and other objects from their homes. Each tool has the potential to make different kinds of marks!

1. First, take your brush and dip it in some water.
2. Dip your brush into watercolor or ink. Then make a few shapes on your paper. What shapes stand out to you in your artwork?
3. Try different tools that you have around the house and repeat steps 1 & 2. For example, if you use a straw, you can put some watercolor paint on the end and slowly blow air through the opposite end onto the paper to see what happens.
4. Try another tool like a stick. Dip it into your watercolor or ink. Then draw with each end to see what kinds of different lines you can make. See how many tools and how many different marks you can make!

### Suggested materials:

- ink, watercolor, or food coloring
- paintbrush
- paper
- straw
- water cup
- stick

use whatever you have at home!



## Learn More!

Alan Lau, *Hello Little Bean Sprout (for the Kee Family)*, circa 1998, *sumi* and mixed media on paper, 53 1/2 in x 54 1/2 in, Tacoma Art Museum, Gift of Colonel John and Mrs. Mary Young by exchange, 2015.17.01

Lau's marks are expressive and dynamic. He often weaves in watery layers of ink and pastels to create these abstract artworks. Alan Lau was greatly influenced by the Asian

influenced modernism of the Northwest School when he moved to Seattle. He is also a poet, journalist, and key figure in the Seattle Asian American cultural scene.