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History of Shibui Chapter of Sumi-e Society of
America in Mobile, AL

Shibui Chapter of the Sumi-e Society of America

2020

Story of Mary Rodning and Sumi-e

Mary Rodning

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Mary's Story, 2020

It was just the beginning for my life with ink and rice paper. In 1979 Our family began our two year stay on Okinawa.

Soon after arrival I checked out a book by Bowie, "The Laws of Japanese Painting". I was interested in art but had a MA degree in biology. Since I was interested in art, I thought I should try to conquer these laws. My thought was by conquering these laws, I would be able to break them to make my own worthwhile art.

After our first typhoon I was able to locate my sensei. Since I as Hide's first American student, I was given great instruction for a beginner by a great teacher. A Japanese proverb about being a teacher states, "Once a student, always a friend."

Returning to the states, I was asked to teach and form our chapter of the Sumi-e Society of America, 35 years ago. Although I was more interested in painting, it has led to life of expanding adventures. Being on the national board, I was able to stay with Cecil and Allie Uyehara which led to an increased knowledge of the Japanese culture.

Spending a summer in mainland China led by Cheng-Khee Chee, and being able to be instructed by Lu Yen Shou and Zhou HeJun, hiking up Huangshan, while being able to absorb the magnificent scenery and the essence of the scene. I was able to form a lifelong friendship with Susan Frame, a noted American painter in the Asian techniques, but one who knows the strokes so well that the techniques can metamorphosize into her own vision of her subject.

To add to my being nurtured in the East/West art world, was Sun Wok Kim, noted Korean calligrapher and neurosurgeon with his valuable instruction and acceptance of my English calligraphy. This connection took me to Korea, Taiwan, New York, Florida and Paris.

Residing and working near the Gulf coast city of Mobile, I was able to be taught by Satomi Kamei, great teacher, but perhaps more importantly a wonderful and supportive friend, whose art influenced by the East/West art reaches to highest level.

Living in a small camellia/azalea nursery community, also with a strong connection to the East/West life is always enriching. The original plants were brought to the states from China and Japan.

I could not have planned for a more interesting life.

with my
brush,

has been