

GOLD COAST CHINA - PENWORK

Penwork is something many of us struggle with. I found these notes in an old China Decorator and feel they are pertinent to today. I have added a few paragraphs at the end.

1. Pen tips need to be as FINE as possible and as NEW as possible. This is very important to execute good penwork. I consider a pen point OLD and DULL after I have used it to pen 10-12 glazed plates. Be sure to sand your piece before doing your penwork as this also saves the tips.
2. When the tips have become dull, set them aside for other uses, such as applying enamel etc.
3. Rather than loading the reservoir of the pen point or concerning myself with leaving the "hole" open, I simply squiggle my pen gently back and forth in the small pile of ink.
4. The flow rate of the penwork cannot be speeded up or pushed. It is leisurely applied, **but** if you want penwork lines that start thicker and become thin at the end (such as for stamens or whiskers) then you can put a little more speed and lilt into your pace. The longer you hold your pen point on the piece, the larger the dot or thicker the line.
5. Before setting your pen back in your supply box, I recommend cleaning the reservoir and tip immediately with a soft cloth, instead of dipping it into any solution. This avoids leaving any residue from Turps or oil. If your ink has dried on your pen point, you will have to have to take it off with a little Gum turps. Be sure to dry it immediately with a cloth.
6. When using your pen, avoid holding it vertically – the best flow occurs when your pen is held naturally, but in a more horizontal position. Your motto should be "LOW AND SLOW"
7. **Don't ever apply extra pressure to your pen tip:** If the pen and ink won't flow easily then either your paint mixture is too thick OR your pen point has split. If split – discard it.
8. **Oil mix:** Using a good quality pen oil is imperative for good penwork. There are many brands and mixes on the market. When you find one that works for you – stick with it.
9. **Paint and oil Mix:** Mix paint and oil to a thinner consistency than we do for painting. If it does not flow off your pen, then it is a little too thick. Just add a drop or 2 of Pen oil. If it is too thin it will likely "bleed" when you pen and the colour will also be too diluted.
10. **Penning with Black:** Black has a tendency to chip off. Just be aware of this and do not apply penwork too heavily.
11. **Nibs:** There are many nibs on the market. Be sure to purchase a good quality one. I have 3 nibs in my range. If you are heavy handed a heavy duty pen is best – such as a Hunt 107. If you do very fine penwork the Japanese Zebra nib is excellent. Middle of the range is a cheaper nib from Germany. It is also good quality but not as fine as the Zebra nib.