

 **FIND** *The Character of Characters*



*The Character of Characters*, 2012. Animated film installation, 16 minutes 45 sec.  
Commissioned by the Asian Art Museum of San Francisco for the 2012 exhibition  
“Out of Character: Decoding Chinese Calligraphy” with support from  
The Robert H. N. Ho Family Foundation.

Xu Bing believes the Chinese character “一” (meaning “one” or a stroke in Chinese calligraphy) is the beginning of all things.

 **DRAW** the shape, symbol or character that represents the beginning of all things for you. Why did you choose this shape, symbol or character?

 **CHECK THIS OUT!**

In *The Character of Characters*, Xu Bing explores the origins of writing and the connection between Chinese calligraphy, the role of replication in art and society, and the impacts they have on our lives.

 **DESCRIBE** what you can see in the animation in one minute to a friend. What message(s) do you think the artist is trying to get across? What elements or segments in the animation make you say that?

## ✓ CHECK THIS OUT!

The animation is based on a famous painting known as *Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains* by 13th century artist Zhao Mengfu. In *The Character of Characters*, Xu Bing brings this painting into an animated land where traditional objects and modern icons meet.



*Autumn Colors on the Qiao and Hua Mountains*, Zhao Mengfu (1254-1322), Yuan Dynasty (1279-1368). Handscroll, ink and color on paper, 28.4 x 90.2 cm. Collection of National Palace Museum.

 **HEAR** what the artist says:

*“This animation attempts to express the inner core and strength of the Chinese culture, and its role in the establishment of the new human civilization of the future.”* 

Which format do you like better: animation or the traditional handscroll?  
Why?  **WRITE** it down!

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