

Basic Detail Report



Ink Stick

Date

1715

Medium

Ink and paint

Description

Ink sticks were used by artists and scholars. These sticks were created by burning natural material to produce carbon. The residue of this burnt material was then collected and mixed under controlled conditions with glue made from animal skins or bones. After the mixing process was complete, the compound was heated for many hours and repeatedly pounded. Several different additives could be introduced to the compound at this time, including musk to cover the smell produced by the decomposing bacteria within the compound. At this point,

the compound would be in a paste-like state and could be pressed into molds. After the material had hardened, the ink stick was ready for use. Ink sticks were produced in various shapes. Designs such as dragons or writing would be carved into molds and were often decorated with gold leaf and paints. To use an ink stick, one would pour water into the well of an ink stone, dip the ink stick into water to moisten it and then grind the stick in an even circular motion around the bed of the inkstone to combine the material with water. The ink would be ready to use when it was thick and oily. Variations in tone could be produced by diluting the ink with additional water.

Dimensions

8 1/2 × 4 × 1 1/4 in. (21.6 × 10.2 × 3.2 cm)