

# PRINCIPLES FOR CONTEMPORARY CHINESE LANDSCAPE DESIGN PRACTICE

by

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(Under the Direction of Katherine Melcher)

## ABSTRACT

Chinese classic landscape design is one of the most typical and significant design systems in the world. It displays the integration of Chinese ideas of nature, philosophy, and aesthetics. Differing from the conceptual systems of other landscape designs, its artistic conceptions play great role to traditional Chinese landscape design work. This thesis takes a synergistic approach to investigate the principles used to create Chinese landscape design in contemporary, urban public spaces. Traditional Chinese landscape was inspired and strongly influenced by Chinese philosophy and Shanshui culture. In the history of Chinese landscape design, Shanshui landscape design expresses the Chinese way of understanding nature and the world. In contemporary times, Chinese landscape designers are facing the challenge of creating Chinese-styled landscape designs in a modern way. The use of philosophical, cultural, and historical background research and case studies has been investigated to find out how to create Chinese landscape designs that address Chinese culture and their modern urban needs.

INDEX WORDS: Chinese philosophy, Shanshui culture, Shanshui landscape design, traditional landscape, nature, contemporary time, urban public space

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

China is one of the most ancient civilizations of the world. Its 5,000 years of history show the magnificent features of Chinese culture, including many gorgeous works of art. Landscape design, an integral part of Chinese art, records and represents the soul of China. This thesis offers suggestions for future practices of landscape design by applying traditional Chinese philosophy and the traditional aesthetics of Chinese landscape design to the design of contemporary, urban public spaces based on academic research and case studies. The first section of this chapter will introduce a logical chain to describe where this thesis research is coming from and where it is going. Pragmatic recommendations will be given as a result of this research and the analysis of pertinent case studies.

#### 1.1 WHY do this research?

With the late twentieth-century interaction of China with the West as well as China's "modernization" in the process of embracing capitalism, China's design traditions have changed rapidly in the last few decades. The traditional values expressed in religious and pragmatic ways in landscape design, which were once obvious, now are more elusive.

Chinese culture initially engaged modern Western culture on a broad scale during the first Anglo-Chinese War (the Opium War, 1840–1842 A.D.). This war represented the beginning of the West's influence on traditional Chinese culture, including aspects of landscape design.

Since that time, Chinese landscape design has been experiencing an adjustment away from the use of traditional ways of designing landscapes in order to use a modern Western aesthetic. Modern public spaces in China were first introduced to China in the British concession areas in Shanghai and Tianjin after the Opium War. In the nineteenth century, this influence started to appear in open-private gardens (some private gardens were open for public use) and garden-like parks in China (See Chapter 3.2.6). Today, modern urbanization in China has caused a series of conflicts between Chinese culture and Chinese landscape design. The natural-styled Chinese classic landscape design was lost in the modern concrete forest. On the other hand, China and Chinese culture are barely known to people in the rest of the world. An incomplete or false understanding about Chinese landscape design is common. However, Chinese landscape designers, such as ZHU Yufan<sup>1</sup> and YU Kongjian,<sup>2</sup> are devoted to developing Chinese-styled landscapes by using contemporary practices. There are successful cases in their designing residential public spaces and small-scaled urban public spaces all over the world, including the Vanke 5<sup>th</sup> Village in Shanghai (Shanghai Tianhua Architect, 2010) and the park of Chinatown in Boston (YU Kongjian, 2008), which will be introduced in detail in Chapter Four. Yet, there is little evidence of successful designs of large-scaled urban public spaces in China itself.

The question may be asked whether traditional Chinese-styled landscape design is suitable for planning only small-scaled or residential places but not large-scaled urban public spaces. This thesis will argue against this premise (For more arguments concerning this issue, see Chapter 4.). New Chinese philosophy is a philosophy with a complex evolution, which seeks to know the truth (QIAN Mu 1994, 32). Influenced by Chinese philosophy, classic Chinese landscape design strove to be a landscape design concerned about knowing the truths of the

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<sup>1</sup> ZHU Yufan is a Chinese landscape architect who graduated from Zhejiang University.

<sup>2</sup> YU Kongjian is a Chinese landscape architect who graduated from Peking University and is teaching there as a professor.

nature of the world, which are not limited by scale sizes. Put another way, ways of practicing traditional Chinese landscape design must be possible to implement in contemporary urban places of varying sizes. This thesis hopes not only to find design solutions that represent traditional Chinese styles of landscape design but also to formulate design principles suitable for open public spaces in large, urban areas. Several questions must be answered in order to find ways to create Chinese landscape designs in contemporary society. Where did traditional Chinese landscape design originate? Why and how is Chinese landscape design related to Chinese philosophy? What is “real” Chinese-styled landscape design? These questions will be discussed in Chapters Two, Three and Four.

This thesis will investigate the issues of Chinese landscape design in contemporary circumstances and open a window to help landscape architects (especially those who are not Chinese) know Chinese culture and understand Chinese landscape design so that they can create designs that relate to Chinese culture. The core aims of this thesis are (1) to introduce traditional Chinese philosophy; (2) to examine how traditional Chinese philosophy has shaped Chinese landscape design; and (3) to explore Chinese landscape design philosophy for applications to contemporary practices in large-scaled urban public spaces.

## 1.2 WHAT do we know about this research?

Many designers, including Chinese landscape architects from the late twentieth century to the present, have been looking for ways to create modern Chinese landscape designs from various perspectives. Understanding the differences between Chinese and western landscape designs as well as their similarities has contributed much to this endeavor.

In his article “Application of New Chinese Style in Contemporary Landscape Design,” GUO Kai, a Chinese contemporary landscape designer, discussed the importance of traditional Chinese gardening methods, Chinese cultural symbols, and Chinese planting designs (*The Modern Gardening* 2012, 115–116). In his opinion, traditional gardening methods are the soul of the creation of ancient Chinese landscape designs; Chinese cultural symbols are metaphors of Chinese culture; and the Chinese-styled planting designs explain the traditional Chinese ideas about space. This thesis does not agree with Guo’s because his analysis weakens the relationships among traditional Chinese landscape design, Chinese culture, and contemporary urbanism. These ideas also plant traditional Chinese landscape design stiffly into contemporary urban circumstances with traditional Chinese gardening methods: the use of some Chinese gardening methods may be improperly matched to the scale of the space, and some Chinese cultural symbols may be shaped into forms that misunderstand those symbols (see the case study on the Beijing Olympic Village in Chapter 4).

Some researchers advocate that contemporary Chinese landscape design must balance the relationship between the traditional Chinese-style and the contemporary Chinese-style design environments. LI Wenqin (2012), a Chinese contemporary landscape designer, claims that the elements in Chinese traditional landscape design are used differently in contemporary time than they were in ancient time. For example, with respect to materials, traditional Chinese landscape designers prefer to base their choice of materials on functional needs. Wenqin’s observation corroborates the opinion of Louis Henry Sullivan that “form follows function.” But with the development of modern landscaping techniques, various other materials are available to use so that the traditional materials are no longer the most common choices. In the traditional Chinese paving designs, small stones and bricks are used with plain and simple patterns. The most

complicated paving patterns include images of flora, Chinese characters, and birds on the paved paths. In modern western landscape design, on the other hand, paving design reaches another level, for new techniques supply more choices of paving material and more complicated image patterns. Also, buildings play specific roles in contemporary landscape design, which differ from the roles of buildings in traditional Chinese landscape design. In traditional Chinese landscape design, a group of buildings will define a space as the main component of that landscape design. They define the main function of the landscape design by their own specific functions. In modern time, the buildings are no longer the main components in the urban landscape design. They have stronger individual characteristics, while they control and define spaces by drawing boundaries.

In this thesis, with critical thinking about traditional Chinese landscape designs, the author will discover some new ways of creating Chinese-styled landscape designs in large-scaled urban public spaces by studying the origin of Chinese landscape design and learning from former landscape design experiences.

### 1.3 Methodology

This thesis has two areas of research that explore the origins of Chinese landscape design: (1) its historic and philosophical background and (2) case studies of Chinese painting, contemporary painting, and landscape design practices. In this chapter, the author will conclude by suggesting principles for contemporary Chinese design practices in large-scaled urban public spaces, which are based on modern needs.

Chinese philosophy will be introduced first in order to show the correlations between thought and process in Chinese landscape design. This discussion will address the question of where Chinese landscape design comes from. Chinese philosophies including Taoism and



Confucianism share ideas about the importance of inner peace in the individual. These philosophies believe that the answers for inner peace reveal truths of the world and life, which can be found in nature.<sup>3</sup> Nature inspires Chinese philosophy, and in turn, Chinese philosophy leads to a deeper understanding of nature. Traditional Chinese landscape design, along with media (including 1D-poetry, 2D-painting and 4D-landscape design), helps Chinese philosophers explore the truths about the world and human life. These landscape designs also seek to provide peaceful experiences for people within the natural context. This thesis will give a brief introduction to the history of traditional Chinese landscape design after explaining the related Chinese philosophy. By doing this, the question “WHAT is Chinese landscape design?” will be discussed. Examining the history of Chinese landscape design can lead to seeing the traditional connection of inner peace to environmental harmony. As will be seen, with regards to design, Chinese philosophy and its expression in Chinese art and Chinese landscape designs are never far apart.

The third step of the research for this thesis will be to examine the selected case studies. Three types of case studies are included: (1) examples with approaches of traditional Chinese landscape design; (2) examples with approaches that have been used in contemporary practices; (3) and a classic example of a design for a Chinese landscape with large-scaled space.

Chinese paintings that share the experiences of development with Chinese landscape design gives us another angle to understand the Chinese aesthetic concept of nature in Chinese philosophy, with its multi-point perspective composition. From the restored master plan for landscape design, the thesis is going to explain the approaches that have been translated from the paintings’ aesthetic concept of nature to create ideal Chinese landscape designs with a peaceful ambience. Two Chinese Shanshui paintings as well as the master plan for their restored

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<sup>3</sup>The word “nature” in this thesis is referring to Mother Nature.

landscape design will be introduced as the first part of the case study in order to discuss the two approaches that explain the ideal form of a peaceful land in ancient China.

The second part of the case study in this thesis will discuss the pros and cons of the approaches that have been used in contemporary practices. Those approaches were chosen because they can cover most of the present situations of contemporary Chinese landscape design in their different uses. In this part of the case study, the thesis will summarize and discuss the pros and cons of contemporary Chinese-styled landscape design approaches. In the third part, the case study will come back to focus on large-scaled landscape designs. Using a classic Chinese landscape design example, the third part of the case study in the thesis will explore the methods of space arrangement from a different point of view. Summer Palace, as a well-maintained famous Chinese large-scaled imperial landscape design, which combines Southern and Northern traditional Chinese landscape design methods and represent Chinese philosophy, is a good example for this part of the case study.

In conclusion, based on research, this thesis will lay out some principles from contemporary landscape design to help address the needs of modern life while respecting and taking inspiration from traditional Chinese art and philosophy.

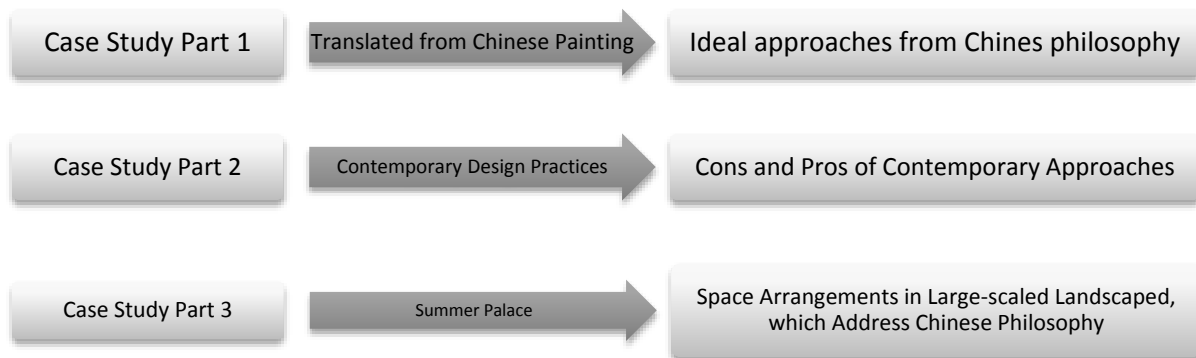


Figure 1.1 Case Study Diagrams

Two pairs of definitions have to be cleared: traditional and classic, contemporary and modern. In this thesis, the traditional objects, such as traditional Chinese landscape designs indicate the objects that follow the traditional culture. The classic objects are the ones that were commonly deemed to be representing traditional culture. The modern time is commonly known as the time since the Industrial Revolution, whereas the contemporary time in this thesis specifically refers to the time since the 90s of the twentieth century.

#### 1.4 Difficulties and Challenges

Much information about Chinese philosophy and Chinese landscape design is available. To clearly introduce the background of Chinese landscape design for understanding its purposes is the first challenge in this thesis research. The massive amount of information and the lengthy history of China mean that discussion concerning Chinese philosophy must be selective.

A second challenge comes from breaking the customary engrained ways of thinking. The histories of Chinese philosophy and Chinese landscape design indicate that ancient Chinese people spent much time looking for and defining the relationship between Human Beings and nature. But by looking for the truths that illumine life, Chinese people's love of nature has followed the Chinese landscape design like a shadow. This passion for nature was expressed differently in different dynasties, particularly in the extensive details of the garden designs during the Qing Dynasty (1616–1912 A.D.). The methods of gardening that were summarized by Ji Cheng, a former master designer living during the Ming Dynasty, in *Yuanye*, a guidance book for gardening, were overused (See these methods in Table 3.1). Not many current Chinese designers realize that this dominance of classical methods is actually contrary to the spirit of Chinese landscape design, which involves peace and simplicity. This misunderstanding of the

history of Chinese landscape design has led to designs detrimental for modern Chinese landscapes for a long time. By seeking a better mix of traditional thoughts and expressions in Chinese landscape design, contemporary design can break the customary engrained ways of thinking, too.

The third challenge to this research is the challenge between long-term study and short-term research. Developing Chinese landscape design in contemporary time is an ongoing study, which needs much reading and many years of practice. The short-term research in this thesis can only offer one little step in the whole process. Further accumulation of information and much study will be needed in the future.

Last but not the least, the research on Chinese philosophy presents limits on the research of this thesis. Chinese philosophy provides a great system for thinking through the meaning of Chinese history. Confucianism, Taoism and Yin-yang theory are very important parts in the field of Chinese philosophy. Even so, some of their philosophical ideas will not be introduced or discussed in this thesis, not because they have no influence on Chinese landscape design. Buddhism, for instance, is one of the largest branches of the Chinese philosophical system. The “Zen”<sup>4</sup> that came from Buddhism strongly influenced the design of Asian temple gardens. The Japanese garden design is an outstanding representation of the “Chan” garden. This thesis is willing to explore some design philosophies and design methods that are exclusively addressed in Chinese landscape design, but Buddhism and many Chinese philosophical theories, though influential, will not be introduced and discussed.

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<sup>4</sup> “Zen,” generally speaking, is a kind of Buddhism practice. It means “retreat.” In Buddhism, monks need to practice retreating in order to clear themselves from their human desires and finally to understand life’s meaning. “Chan” gardens try to create meaningful and peaceful spaces for people to practice retreating within the environment of the gardens.

The other limit on this research is the possibility of multiple answers. The subjective interpretation of Chinese philosophy and landscape design along with its application to contemporary practices in this thesis can be one answer to the question of how to create Chinese-styled landscape designs in urban public spaces, yet it will not be the only answer. The answer in this thesis can be changed and improved in future study, while other answers may be discovered from different aspects and expectations.

Chinese landscape design has a great historical tradition and must evolve with the new demands society is placing on the environment. This ongoing development includes a renewed understanding of the relationship between humanity and nature and of the new demands on natural resources. What the author hopes to do is to create a template for the “new” world of Chinese landscape design. This thesis will not be the end; it is just the beginning.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE CULTURAL BACKGROUND OF CHINESE LANDSCAPE DESIGN

This chapter will begin with a brief introduction to Chinese philosophy that is inspired by nature. Then the thesis will discuss the correlations among Chinese philosophy, Shanshui culture, and Chinese landscape design. This background material will prepare for the study of the philosophy of traditional Chinese landscape design.

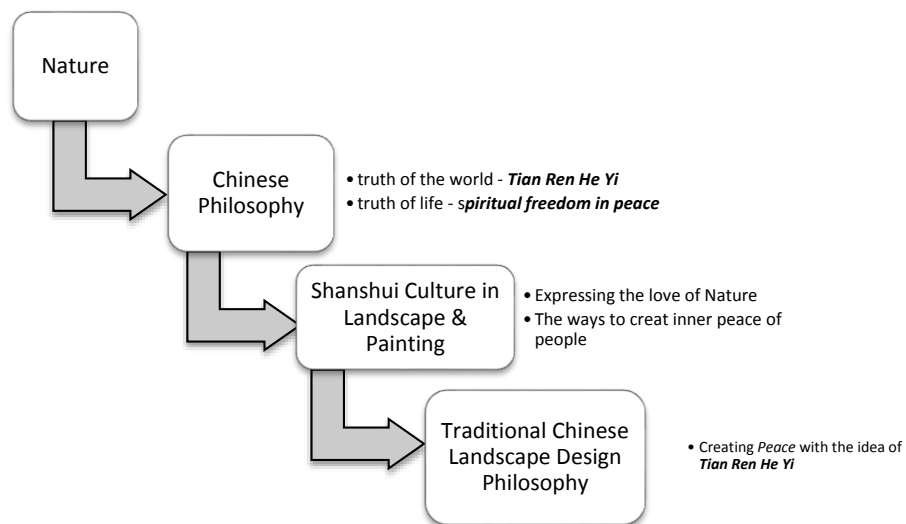


Figure 2.1 Logical Correlations Among Chinese Philosophy, Shanshui Culture, and Chinese Landscape Design Philosophy

In this thesis Chinese philosophy is defined as the philosophy that embraces Taoism, Confucianism, and Yin-Yang theory. Not only are there branches of philosophical theory in the history of Chinese philosophy, but Taoism, Confucianism, and Yin-Yang theory are the national

philosophies that have influenced Chinese culture and Chinese art the most. At the beginning of this chapter, Taoism's influence on Chinese art and Confucianism's strong impact on Chinese art will be introduced. Yin-Yang theory will be further discussed after that. Yin-Yang theory, which provides a way to explaining things in the world, is one of the most important theories that generated from the marriage of Taoism with elements of Confucianism. Additionally, this chapter will discuss a Chinese way of thinking about family that influenced Chinese spatial expectations. In this part of the chapter, the question of what the truths of the world and life are will be answered.

Then, at the end of this chapter, the thesis will introduce the Shanshui culture that was strongly influenced by Chinese philosophy. Shanshui painting and Shanshui landscape design will be discussed in detail.

## 2.1 A Brief Introduction to Chinese Philosophy

In the western world, philosophy is an academic discipline that emphasizes reason and logic as a way to understand reality and to answer fundamental questions about knowledge, life, morality, and human nature (YE X. Shan and WANG S. Ren 2009, Section 1). However, in China, studying philosophy is more like receiving a lesson from the natural world, an explanation of people, and guidance for human's behavior. In short, western philosophy is more about "why," whereas Chinese philosophy is more about "how." The first step of exploration of philosophy in China was also the first effort to understand nature. It was in the rudimentary stage in the Yin and Zhou Dynasties (1600–1046 B.C.) and formed in the Spring-Autumn Period (770–476 B.C.) in Zhou Dynasty. Simply put, nature has inspired Chinese philosophy since the Zhou Dynasty.

Chinese classical philosophy led the way for modern science and technology to develop; scientific exploration in China basically supported philosophical research to achieve the core goal of Chinese philosophy, which is, to find answers to the truths of the world and people.

### 2.1.1 What Are the Truths of the World and Life?

China has a time-honored civilization with a vast territory and 5,000 years of history. The concept of a Chinese nation started during the Xia Dynasty (c. 2070–1600 B.C.), but China was not united as a centralized state until the Qin Dynasty (221–206 B.C.). People in the region shared the same laws and social experiences. In this way, the power struggles among the nobles and the displacement of dynasties were treated as internal conflicts. Under these circumstances, many ancient Chinese people explored the intrinsic features of the human heart.

Being inspired by nature, Chinese philosophers explored the rules of human nature by looking for the truths of the world. Confucianism (儒), one of the earliest philosophical systems of China, was strongly influenced by the theory of *Tian Ren He Yi*.<sup>5</sup> Introduced to people since the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.–220 A.D.), Confucianism was first advanced by Confucius (551–479 B.C.) by writing the text called *Zhou Li* in the Spring-autumn period during the East-Zhou Dynasty (770–476 B.C.). It has developed for generations over the past 2,500 years. Confucianism advocates 天人合一 (*Tian Ren He Yi*), the harmony between man and nature. It was first expressed as a theological theory in the early Shang and Zhou Dynasties (17<sup>th</sup> century B.C. to 221 B.C.). Confucianism refreshed the theory with the idea of human beings' subjective activity. Two aspects characterize this theory: one is the outside environment in the world, that is, Nature; and the other one is the behavioral agent, that is, the human being. Human beings as

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<sup>5</sup> 天人合一 (*Tian Ren He Yi*) is the theory of harmony between humans and nature so that humanity is an integral part of nature.



creatures are a part of nature. During the lives of human beings, nature influences their life-styles and ways of living. At the same time, human behavior involves reacting to nature, which then causes nature to change as well. Hence, the truth of the world is harmony between human beings and nature—*Tian Ren He Yi*.

“Taoism”<sup>6</sup> (道) was introduced to people in nearly the same period as Confucianism. The word Taoism means “a path” or “a reason” in Chinese. It came first from the text *Daode Jing* by Lao Tsu (around 571–471 B.C.). Taoism is a philosophy that describes the ways that the world works—the principles of the world. One of the key theoretical words in Taoism is the word 无, which means “nil,” but does not indicate nothing or zero. The word 无 refers to the original existence of everything in the world and to the substance of the world. It espouses that everything in the world is generated naturally from nothing. It also advocates that the world started from nothing and will end with nothing. Since everything that exists follows the same natural rules, Taoism does not emphasize the outlook of an object, but its essential aspects instead. Taoism regards a theory of 无为 as “non-action” (or “noninterference”). It does not mean doing nothing. It means not changing the world’s essence by altering it unnaturally. This concept of noninterference expresses the notion that human beings should respect the rules of nature and do nothing that goes against nature (*Tao Tsu*).

Based on the framework of Taoism, the ideas of respecting nature and representing nature generally became aesthetic concepts in China. The aesthetic concept of Taoism advocates the treasure of 无 in the arts. According to Taoism, things that follow the rules of nature exist as unpretentious, as natural beauty. It is the highest standard of Aesthetics (*Zhuang Zi*). The natural beauty of art is also considered to be the achievement of reaching spiritual freedom. Freedom

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<sup>6</sup> Taoism is a philosophical system in Chinese philosophy. It is also a national religion in China. To be clear, Taoism mentioned in this thesis only indicates the philosophical thoughts.

indicates beauty as well. A way for individuals to seek spiritual freedom is to get rid of human desires, prejudices, and external “shackles.” This theory reflects that Taoism believes that people who chase personal desire lose their true happiness and inner peace. In other words, only inner peace can bring people spiritual freedom with true happiness, and the truth of life is having that spiritual freedom with inner peace.

Confucianism and Taoism address the questions of what are the fundamental truths of the world and of life: the truth of the world is *Tian Ren He Yi* (including nature and human beings), and the truth of human life is spiritual freedom based on inner peace. Chinese philosophy with the theory of *Tian Ren He Yi* and the idea of people’s spiritual freedom in peace promotes the relationship between humanity and nature. It also determines the basic Chinese aesthetic and artistic endeavors and art creation in the Chinese arts, including Chinese landscape design, as media that reveals and reflects the natural beauty and truths of the world. Yin-Yang theory, which provides a way of explaining how things in the world work, will be discussed in the following section.

### 2.1.2 Further Discussion of Yin-Yang Theory

Yin-Yang theory is commonly known as a way of thinking that developed from Chinese philosophy, which is based on dialectical materialism. It was generated from Taoism and was influenced by Confucianism. It tries to explain the innate character of things in the world. It claims that all things in the world can be placed into two complementary categories, that is, Yins and Yangs, which constitute an irreparable union. For example, the active, warm, bright, or exocentric things belong to Yang, while the relatively static, cold, dark, or endocentric things belong to Yin. Everything in the world has its own Yin and Yang. In Yin-Yang theory, keeping

the concomitant Yin and Yang in balance is the reason that one is one and that the world is one<sup>7</sup> (*Tao Tsu*). Also, to achieve the harmony between humans and nature (*Tian Ren He Yi*), the Yin-Yang balance between humans and nature has to be maintained.

The relationship between Yin and Yang has four characteristics. (1) They are mutually opposing and constraining. By opposing and constraining each other, Yin and Yang try to keep a thing in balance. This counterbalancing is exemplified in the passing of days and nights, which are opposing and constraining each other. If the balance were broken, one with Yin and Yang would break too. (2) They have a mutual rooting effect. One pair of Yin and Yang consists of two sides of one thing. They constitute a whole and come from the whole. They need one another to form one whole. (3) They keep a dynamic balance—a proportional change occurs with the decrease of one, resulting in or from the increase of the other. Because of the characteristic of dynamic balance, Yin and Yang are moving and changing all the time, and thus lead to the fourth characteristic: (4) they reciprocally transform. This characteristic of transformation comes from Yin's and Yang's relative motion. With the decrease or increase of one or the other, to a certain extent, Yin and Yang can switch to each other. In Chinese philosophy it is called, "I am you, I am not you; you are me, you are not me." This notion of Yin-Yang is a profound and determinative aspect of traditional Chinese philosophy and its resulting culture.

The Yin-Yang theory represents the Chinese understanding of the world and things. It also supports the theory of 天人合一 (that "humans are an integral part of nature"). On one level, it represents the dialectical relationship between Taoism and Confucianism in Chinese

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<sup>7</sup> The aspect of "one is one and the world is one" in Yin-Yang Theory corroborates the philosophical theory of *Tian Ren He Yi*.

philosophy. The idea of 无 and 有 (*nil* and *ens*),<sup>8</sup> “the formal” and “the real” in artistic creation, represents the balance of Yin and Yang, too. 无 (*Nil*) and 有 (*ens*) are the two sides of all that exists in the world. We also can say that “the virtual” (*nil*) and “the real” (*ens*) reflect the balance of Yin and Yang in the arts. ZONG Baihua said that artists use the virtual appearances to represent the truth of realities when he articulated Chinese aesthetic concepts (ZHONG Baihua 1981, 48). In this case, Chinese landscape design evokes Chinese aesthetic concepts of the arts, which are needed to keep the endeavor in Yin-Yang balance. For instance, there has to be a balance between ink and blank space (white space) in Chinese painting, and there must also be a balance between open space and enclosed space in landscape design.

### 2.1.3 Spatial Understanding from the Meaning of Family

In addition to *Tian Ren He Yi*, Confucianism also advocates 仁 and 礼. The word 仁, which means “benevolence,” refers to a form of benevolence that reflects the individual’s heart motivated by magnanimity and compassion. This core element keeps society in balance, whereas 礼 is regarded as a tool to achieve 仁, and so is also a method to systematize and organize society. In this way, 仁 can be understood as a principle and 礼, as a methodology. “Family” (家) is the carrier that helps Confucianism demonstrate these theories. In China, the family is regarded as the fundamental unit of society. By extension, a country is considered a big family whose balance and prosperity must be achieved by “family” (家). Individuals in a family need to be 仁 (i.e., “benevolent,” “magnanimous,” “compassionate”) to fulfill the overall interests; using 礼 assures 仁 to the whole community.

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<sup>8</sup> *Nil* and *ens* means the relationship between “does not have” and “has.” *Nil* means “none,” “does not have,” and “not doing.” *Ens* means “some,” “has,” and “does.”

This culture of the Chinese family forms the basis of the national pride of the family-country; therefore, a country is a “family,” and families comprise the country. This dynamic is central to Chinese culture with its intense focus on the traditional family unit. It explains the introverted character of most traditional Chinese landscape designs that are mostly conceived for family gatherings. In Western societies, often the individual is endowed with rights and roles of personal responsibility to the whole society. In traditional Chinese, the family unit takes precedence; its character supports the dynamics of the larger community. For Chinese people, individual activities in their family are more on a spiritual level. An “introverted” space is needed for those activities, which is not necessarily an enclosed space. Introverted space means that the space supplies opportunities for family activities such as walking, boating, and conversing. It does not have to be enclosed to be an individual space. This location away from social activities explains why a landscape design that is located in nature can still be a private space.

The philosophical meaning of family in China allows people to relate human activities to landscape design. Ancient Chinese landscape designers noticed the importance of privacy for people, especially in public places. Their effort in making places that would respect people’s privacy, kept a balance between people and the landscape environment, which would be concrete examples of the philosophical theory of *Tian Ren He Yi*.

## 2.2 Shanshui,<sup>9</sup> Chinese Idea of Landscape Design

Chinese philosophical systems provide a context for ways of seeing and experiencing the world. The individual’s search for inner peace in nature is part of this philosophy and has deeply

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<sup>9</sup> Shanshui is the pinyin spelling from Chinese characters: 山水. The word 山水 refers to the Chinese idea of landscape. Translated from Chinese, the word 山 means “mountains,” and the word 水 means “water.” It is a key idea of landscape that Shanshui does not only mean the mountains and water; it means Nature.

influenced Chinese culture. Shanshui culture, one of the largest branches of Chinese culture in history, deeply influenced Chinese art. The idea of Shanshui is an exploration of Nature by Chinese philosophy, which provides three different art media to restore nature to people: Shanshui literature, Shanshui painting (natural landscape painting), and Shanshui landscape design (natural-styled landscape design). Shanshui culture is a cultural phenomenon that came from nature. The themes of mountains and water inspired Chinese artists to create peaceful spiritual shelters for people in nature.

Shanshui advocates the natural balance of the world and the harmonious relationship between humans and nature. It emerged for the first time during the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.–220 A.D.), or earlier. People added further meaning to it after the development of Chinese philosophy and the inclusion of construction technology in Chinese nature philosophy. SHI Tao, a landscape painter during the Qing Dynasty (1616–1912 A.D.), said “Landscape (Shanshui) is the shape of nature.” Wind and rain comprise landscape’s atmosphere; changes in density are landscape’s paths; changes in length and breadth are landscape’s paces; shades of forests are landscape’s spirit; running water and flowing cloud are landscape’s attachment; squat jumps of hills are landscape’s whereabouts (SHI Tao, 23). Shanshui painting and Shanshui landscape use tools to represent static and dynamics of natural landscapes. For example, Chinese Shanshui paintings skillfully use a multi-point perspective to create elegant and airy aesthetic concepts with ink and blank space. They show the dynamic views of nature in 2D effects (see Figure 2.2). Shanshui landscape designs, on the other hand, invite people to participate with nature in the creation of the spaces and man-made spaces.



Figure 2.2: Temple of Qing Luan by LI Cheng in the North Song Dynasty<sup>10</sup>

Source: [www.shxw.com/zhuankeishu/2008/0311/article\\_462.html](http://www.shxw.com/zhuankeishu/2008/0311/article_462.html)

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<sup>10</sup> In this painting, named “Temple of Qing Luan,” there are three groups of perspectives enclosed with red color. They show the dynamic beauty of nature and Chinese Shanshui painting. The bridge at the bottom is far away from the temple, but the relaxing environment is directly shown by the multi-perspective. In the painting, the temple and other buildings are small, but simple. It shows that nothing can be greater than Mother Nature and that people are a part of it. Painting is a two dimensional media that shows the Chinese way of understanding the relationship between people and nature.

### 2.2.1 Chinese Shanshui Painting and Shanshui Landscape Design

Ancient Chinese landscape designers advocated a natural-styled design for landscape gardens and Shanshui landscape design. Since its development during the Sui and Tang Dynasties (581–907 A.D.), Chinese landscape design has been closely interrelated with Chinese painting. The earliest Chinese Shanshui paintings and Shanshui landscape designs arose during the Wei and Jin Dynasties (220–581 A.D.), but developed to higher levels during the Sui and Tang Dynasties (581–907 A.D.), and reached their height during the North Song Dynasty (960–1127 A.D.). As JIN Xuezhi said, Chinese painting and Chinese landscape design cannot be divided from each other because they both belong to the same artistic category (JIN Xuezhi 2000, Section 2). Through the ages, good painters were also good landscape designers, and a good landscape designer was expected to be able to paint well, too (Xue Liang, 1984).

In Chinese Shanshui painting, artists stress “distant scene” (远景), “distant thoughts” (远思), and “distant spirit” (远势) (YE Lang 2005, Section 3). Artists tried to utilize the aesthetic concept of “being” and “not being” through the combination of ink and blank space (white space). In Chinese painting, mountains are entities, which work with blank space to achieve the concept of distance. Chinese Shanshui paintings superficially lead audiences from the social world to dynamic natural landscapes. In fact, artists are expressing their understanding of 道, that is, “the harmony of humans and nature.” Artists also expect to express their feelings and their understanding of nature in Shanshui landscape design practices.

During the West Han Dynasty (206 B.C.–25 A.D.), noblemen and wealthy people started to build small-scale residences in the nearby hills for pleasure. They also started to use stones to build their own hills. From Sui Dynasty, imperial families used Shanshui-style landscape designs in their imperial gardens. Chinese Shanshui landscape design has developed steadily since then



and has experienced an evolution from simply copying real nature to using a “freehand style.” Designers stopped trying to put a whole mountain and water into one garden. They used parts of the landscape elements to imply a whole (landscape). This shift was the beginning of the confluence of Chinese painting and Chinese landscape design. This freehand style has become a main trend used for Chinese Shanshui painting since the Yuan Dynasty (1206– -1368 A.D.).



Figure 2.3 Photo of three sets of cloud water scenes in Xi Hu

Source: [news.fengjing.com/603021/2843\\_q.shtml](http://news.fengjing.com/603021/2843_q.shtml)



Figure 2.4 Three sets of cloud water painting (one of ten Xi Hu scenes)

Source: [www.zhshw.com/show/xihu/38.htm](http://www.zhshw.com/show/xihu/38.htm)

The relationships between Chinese Shanshui painting and Chinese landscape design can be found from the shared history, the types of artists, the inspirations, and the aims of creative endeavor. Shanshui paintings and Shanshui landscape design both reflect the philosophical understanding of one's relationship with human beings and nature. They also can express the artists' feelings for the environment. Since Shanshui painting is a two-dimensional medium, it is easier for artists to feature their wonderland visually. In this way, Chinese Shanshui paintings became design drawings for landscape design. Shanshui landscape design, as a four-dimensional medium,<sup>11</sup> not only shows the artist's philosophical understanding of the world but also invites people to participate and feel what the artist is thinking, and then find their own spiritual balance in peace. Chinese Shanshui painting and Shanshui landscape design express the affinity between human beings and nature in the world in both idealized and down-to-earth ways (Fuguan Xu 1987).

### 2.2.2 How to Explain Shanshui Culture in Chinese Philosophy

As mentioned at the beginning of this chapter, Chinese philosophy has always taken direct inspiration from nature. Shanshui culture that represents the natural beauty of the world also represents Chinese philosophy. For example, Shanshui paintings show the theory of *Tian Ren He Yi* and create the image of spiritual peace with plain and simple houses surrounded by mountains and clouds; Shanshui landscape designs keep the Yin-Yang balance by balancing the relationship between restored natural landscape and people. The Chinese Shanshui culture is a

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<sup>11</sup> The four-dimensional medium of landscape design normally includes three dimensions with three spatial directions and the fourth dimension of time with participation.

culture of aesthetics, a culture of nature, and a culture of philosophy, and a tool to show the Chinese philosophical understanding of the truths of the world and human life.

#### 2.2.2.1 Shanshui Culture Expresses the Chinese Philosophical Theory of *Tian Ren He Yi*

In Chinese culture, it is a common knowledge that the culture of Shanshui is based upon the fears of the unknown Mother Nature since the beginning of the Wei and Jin Dynasties (220–581 A.D.). The largely agricultural society of China during this time appreciated gifts from nature, but the lack of understanding made nature mysterious and frightful. With increased understanding and exploration of nature, artistic appreciations for nature appeared and replaced people's fears of nature. The modes for expressing these appreciative feeling for natures were rich and varied: literature, landscape painting, and landscape design were included.

In China, philosophers commonly use the art as tools to explore the truths of life. In this sense, the pursuit of aesthetics in China has been more than the activities expressed through artists' emotions. Aesthetics surpasses representation, deemphasizes objects, and considers the spiritual aspects. Chinese painting developed into Shanshui painting during the Sui Dynasty (around 600 A.D.). Artists, like WANG Wei,<sup>12</sup> regarded Chinese Shanshui paintings as expressions of their understanding of philosophy; and they understood landscape design as a method for practicing their theory in actual life.

Chinese Shanshui painting artists are skilled at creating dynamic pictures with multi-point perspectives within the limited size of the scene. They also practice their vision of nature with landscape design methods, like using opposite scenery and borrowed scenery (see Table 2.1)

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<sup>12</sup> WANG Wei (701–761 A.D.), Chinese literator and painter in the Tang Dynasty. He was skilled at writing Shanshui poetry, painting Shanshui paintings, and creating Shanshui garden designs. He designed and built Wangchuan Vila that represented his understanding of Shanshui culture and the hermit spirit. He also wrote a series of Shanshui poems and Shanshui paintings to describe Wangchuan Vila.

to arrange the space (LI Yu 1996). Both visual artists and designers combine concepts of time and space in their endeavors. For the landscape designers, the site becomes a canvas.

The theory of *Tian Ren He Yi* from Chinese artists has also been shown with the addition of human (built) elements, such pavilions, stone carvings, and towers. When Chinese literati combined pavilions, towers, and plaques with nature, the Humanistic Shanshui Style was born. In other words, Chinese Shanshui is not only about nature and landscape design; it is also concerned about landscape with people. Chinese Shanshui indicates that nature and humanity are interrelated and that both are indispensable, and thus it reflects the close relationship of nature and people in Chinese philosophy and practice.

#### 2.2.2.2 Shanshui Culture Provides Methods to Build Inner Balance in Peace

The rules of balance form an important part of the theory of *Tian Ren He Yi*<sup>13</sup> and Yin-Yang theory.<sup>14</sup> These theories maintain that everything has its two sides. The two sides are parts of Yin and Yang (see Chapter 3.1.2). Some researchers such as QIAN Mu (1895–1990 A.D.) think that the Spring-Autumn period (770–476 B.C.), when Chinese philosophy developed, and the Warring States period (475–221 B.C.) represent the theory of keeping balance (QIAN Mu 1931). It was an era of war during both the Spring-Autumn period and the Warring States period. The nation was torn into different regions during the years of the wars. The Chinese people experienced an extremely chaotic society. The active movement of thoughts played an important role in balancing the people's inner peace in the midst of the chaos of the outside world.

On the other hand, because of the theory of *Tian Ren He Yi* that people are an integral part of nature, people have their two sides of Yin and Yang too. In the Wei and Jin Dynasties

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<sup>13</sup> 天人合一 (*Tian Ren He Yi*) is the theory that humanity is an integral part of nature.

<sup>14</sup> Yin-yang theory indicates the Yin sides and Yang sides of things in the world and the world itself.

(220–420 B.C.), the method of searching for truth by coming back to nature created the social tendency of visiting great inspiring and scenic landscapes. Taoism and Buddhism, with religious temples in remote mountains, also attracted literati and other educated people searching for ways to balance their inner peace. The imperial examination system, which had been used since the Sui and Tang Dynasties, covered the whole nation and also brought the trend to be normal among the families in the countryside with an average education.

According to Taoism, building a sense of inner peace along with an appreciation for nature requires fully understanding the relationship between people and nature, the ideal of giving up chasing power, and general craving. It encourages people to understand the meaning of balance in the world. Following the way, despite the tangible parts of nature, people can seek the spirit of nature, which helps them see the real-person<sup>15</sup> inside of them (CHEN Shuiyun 2001, Section 2). In this way, Shanshui culture also creates the way by pointing to the equilibrium that allows the coexistence of nature and human beings and keeps people calmed so that they have a clear mind no matter what happens to their families or their country.

### 2.3 Summary

Chinese culture, with over 5,000 years of history, holds a vast array of human understanding and artistic endeavor. From aesthetic taste to philosophy, from painting to landscape design, Chinese people have connected theories of harmony to the world and the inner peace of individuals. Chinese culture is complex, but it is also simple because Chinese culture is a culture searching for larger truths about the nature of the universe and humanity's role in it.

In this chapter, the author discussed some basic tenets of philosophy and life articulated by Chinese philosophy: (1) the fundamental assertion is *Tian Ren He Yi* that humans are an

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<sup>15</sup> Chinese people believe in the innocence of newborns. A newborn's innocent nature is located in his/her true-heart.

integral part of nature; and (2) the importance and validity of the individual's inner peace. The author also discussed two related philosophical thinking: the family-country theory and Yin-Yang theory. Then this chapter introduced Shanshui culture that generated from Chinese philosophy. Shanshui culture provides different media to express the understanding of *Tian Ren He Yi* and to build people's inner balance through peace. These media include Chinese Shanshui painting and Chinese Shanshui landscape design. Chinese Shanshui landscape design has the duty of creating spiritual peace for people with the idea of *Tian Ren He Yi* and the theory of Yin-Yang.

In the next chapter, a brief introduction to the history of traditional Chinese landscape design that followed Chinese philosophical theories will be made along with more discussion about Shanshui landscape design in history. That history and discussion will lead to finding out what the characteristics of traditional Chinese Shanshui landscape design are, what its design philosophies are, and how they are applicable in the contemporary world.

## CHAPTER 3

### AN INTRODUCTION TO (CLASSIC) TRADITIONAL CHINESE LANDSCAPE DESIGN

This chapter will start with briefly providing the history of traditional Chinese landscape design before the establishment of the new China (1949 A.D.). The history shows the steps that traditional Chinese landscape design took by following the guidance of Chinese philosophy. Then Chinese Shanshui landscape design will be specifically introduced in order to discuss (1) the philosophy of Shanshui landscape design, which was generated from Shanshui culture and Chinese philosophy, and (2) the aesthetic standards of Shanshui landscape design, and gardening methods. The third part of this chapter will provide a brief introduction to contemporary Chinese landscape design.

#### 3.1 Traditional Chinese Landscape Design History

Chinese classic landscape design is a significant part of China's life and the Chinese story. The history of Chinese classic landscape design is also a history of the practice of Chinese philosophy. Chinese landscape designing, with its different forms and uses in imperial landscape design, private garden design, and temple garden design, shows the process of Chinese philosophy over time. Some may say that the process of self-remolding and self-improvement in traditional Chinese landscape design also indicates the inward focused history of China. In fact, Chinese landscape design was supported by Chinese philosophy and found its own way to share

itself with the world. Chinese philosophy determined the beginning of Chinese landscape design and defined its own Shanshui-styled designs in its history.

The earliest embryonic form of designed landscapes in China was found during the Xia (around 2070 B.C.–1600 B.C.), Shang (around 1766 B.C.–1111 B.C.) and Zhou Dynasties (around 1046 B.C.–256 B.C.). “Yuan” (园), “You” (囿), and “Tai” (台) refer to how landscape design was named (CHEN Liang,<sup>16</sup> 1178). Literally, the word “Yuan” indicates the field used for planting. It was also considered the embryo of agriculture activity. The word “You” refers to an area for hunting or raising livestock. The word “Tai” refers to the place for religious ceremonies. The Yous in the Wen-Wang period (the Zhou Dynasty) started the history of the use of open public space in China with the idea of “enjoying with citizens” (与民共之) (LAN Xianlin 2003, Section 1). In the same period, Chinese people started to be aware of such philosophical concepts as human beings being an integral part of nature, living in nature, getting from nature, and showing respect to nature to keep the natural balance of the world—the beginning of *Tian Ren He Yi* theory (humans as an integral part of nature). This theory runs throughout almost the whole history of Chinese philosophy and landscape design.

The forms of “Yuan,” “You” and “Tai” were further developed during the Qin Dynasty (221–206 B.C.). Since the time that the first united country was built during the Qin Dynasty, imperial landscape design, which displayed the power of the emperors’ families, developed quickly. Historic annals dating from the Qin and the Han periods (221 B.C.–220 A.D.), indicate that there were many records of large-scaled architectural buildings and gardens constructed (LOU Qingxi 2003, 34).<sup>17</sup> E-pang Palace (15km to the west of Xi’an, built around 212 B.C.), for

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<sup>16</sup> CHEN Liang (1143–1194) was a Chinese politician, philosopher, and poet in the South Song Dynasty. He mentioned the forms of “Yuan,” “You,” and “Tai” in his Petition to Emperor Xiao Zong in 1178.

<sup>17</sup> LOU Qingxi, a Chinese contemporary architect, graduated from Tsinghua University in 1952. He wrote many books about Chinese architecture and Chinese landscape.



instance, was big enough to hold ten thousand people. The building of over 200 palaces and gardens was planned around Xianyang Palace during the Qin Dynasty.

During the Wei & Jin, the Southern, and the Northern Dynasties (220–589 A.D.), Chinese landscape design made one of its biggest steps in history under the influence of the mature natural-aesthetic theory taken from Chinese philosophy. The Chinese landscape design, with its natural ideal, changed from copying nature to representing nature. The original “Yuan” and “You” were simply trying to copy and to show how nature looked. But the imperial landscape design works that came afterwards, in the period of the Southern and Northern Dynasties were not trying to duplicate nature by planting, hunting, and worshipping deities. The new uses of the land so that entertaining experiences could be provided and enjoyed were taking place while the old, economic, operational uses faded away. Private landscape designs progressed at the same time. With the appearance of religions in China, temple gardens were invented too, which basically were built to rely on the natural landscape. It was the time of the formation of Chinese landscape design and the embryonic form of Chinese Shanshui culture.

Since 200 A.D., during the Wei (220–265 A.D.), Jin (265–420 A.D.), Southern and Northern Dynasties (420–581 A.D.), the formation of the Chinese landscape design system had been formed with the core idea of representing nature. Three main types of landscape design appeared: flourishing imperial landscape design, private landscape design, and religious temple landscape design.

The works that imperial landscape design produced are the temples, which were used as the living quarters for the emperor and as centers for conducting court politics. For more than two thousand years, the Chinese governments or the emperors’ families were the center of Chinese society. Their temples were located in the central parts of the cities so that they could

flash their power upon the country. With the example of Fanglin Yuan in Luoyang (Henan Province) and Hualin Yuan in Kangjian (Nanjing, Jiangsu Province), the imperial landscape design in the Wei and Jin Dynasties, was no longer only for hunting and raising livestock. Small-scaled hills, forests, lakes, and gardens enhanced the natural style of imperial landscape design (See Figure 2.6).



Figure 3.1 The Town of Luoyang during the North Wei Dynasty

Source: [http://www.ctnews.com.cn/lybgb/2010-05/21/content\\_743273.htm](http://www.ctnews.com.cn/lybgb/2010-05/21/content_743273.htm)

During the Han Dynasty, Taoism had been brought to China; and Buddhism had also been introduced. The temple landscape design appeared afterwards; also newly developed imperial landscape designs appeared under the continuing influence of Confucianism. The naturally styled religious gardens, along with the religious activities and the priests' living activities, led toward merging the temples, the natural landscape, and the private gardens together.

Especially the literati's and the nobles' desire to bring their own "nature" back home brought a trend in the design of private residential landscapes during the same time period. Luo Yang in the Wei Dynasty, for instance, had over 200 residential districts. Huge numbers of private gardens were in these districts. People learned and knew how to emulate nature in their back yards so that they could make a better living environment and could decorate it. The developing private landscape designs brought pieces of the land to reach the literati's inner peace and set off a new upsurge of comparing the tempting phenomenon of wealth. Incontestably, the extravagant competition for the design of private gardens also provided an opportunity for the creation of Chinese private landscape designs. Chinese landscape design continuously developed during the Tang and Song Dynasties (618–1279 A.D.), along with the progress of the agricultural economy and technological developments in landscape design construction.

The height of Chinese landscape design occurred from the time of the Yuan Dynasty to the Ming and Mid-Qing Dynasties (1271–1840 A.D.). Both imperial gardens and private gardens grew with different contributions: imperial gardens provided different scales of spaces for a multiplicity of social uses, and private gardens provided closer spaces to people. Most landscape design works still visible were constructed during these three dynasties. It was also a period of cultural fusion among the Han culture and the Mongolian, Manchu, and Tibetan cultures. The best example of this cultural combination in landscape design is the Chengde Mountain Resort, a permanent summer royal landscape design built in 1703 A.D. (See Figure 3.2 and 3.3). It combined buildings and gardens with styles from Mongolia, Han, and Tibet, which were connected with continuous hills and a river. Western landscape design was integrated into Chinese landscape design activities for the first time in the Ming and Qing Dynasties as well. Using Changchun Yuan, a garden in Yuan Ming Yuan ("The Garden of Gardens, built in 1707

A.D.) as an example, the baroque style water fountain was incorporated into the Chinese style landscape design.

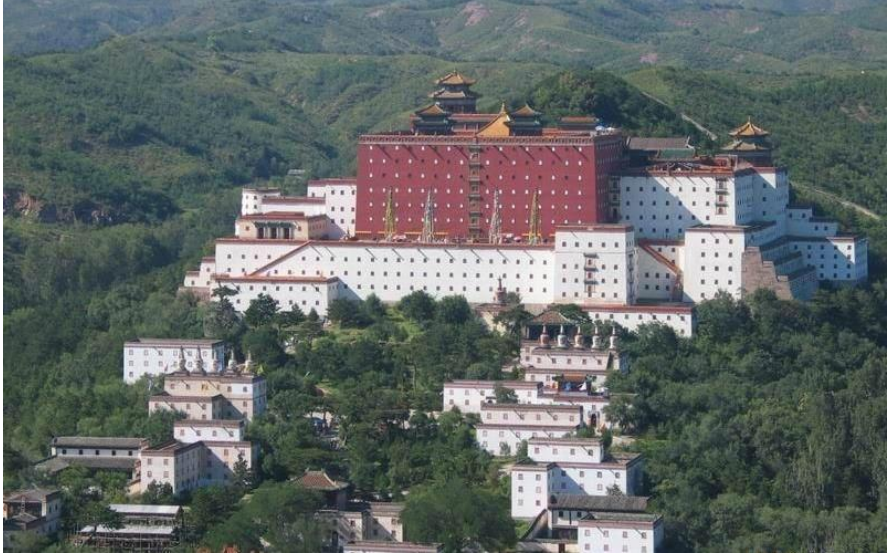


Figure 3.2 Chengde Mountain Resort 1

Source:<http://www.vcheng.cn/show.php?contentid=1197>



Figure 3.3 Chengde Mountain Resort 2, with Scenery

[http://tupian.baik.com/a2\\_24\\_74\\_01300000822820129793743985760\\_jpg.html](http://tupian.baik.com/a2_24_74_01300000822820129793743985760_jpg.html)

At the same time, the design of Chinese private gardens reached its height. Mainly three different kinds of private gardens in three different areas were designed: Jiangnan private gardens, Northern private gardens, and Lingnan private gardens.

The Jiang Nan area, which includes Yangzhou, Shanghai, and Suzhou, is in the southern part of China and has great weather and natural conditions with stones and plants for traditional garden design, which made it possible for residents to design their own naturally styled landscape gardens. Jiang Nan private gardens make small dwelling spaces interesting with their stones, running water, and plants. Among their design methods, designers take advantage of faux stone hills in order to add more layers of scenes. In this case, visiting it rather than dwelling in it is the most important function of these private gardens. Ancient Chinese people like to participate in various activities in the gardens, such as composing poetry and enjoying seasonal flowers. Those activities with spiritual enjoyment were equally important to Chinese people dwelling in them. When the building functioned as a dwelling, the gardens were more prepared for visitors to experience and enjoy them. The residential garden design in the Jiang Nan area of China was more and more prevalent during the Mid-Ming Dynasty (around 1550–1644 A.D.; see Figure 3.4 and 3.5). The wet and warm climate encouraged a rich planting design with different plant textures and seasonal colors and so on. The free-organized buildings kept the yards simple and clean.



Figure 3.4 The Humble Administrator's Garden in Suzhou (Photographed by Yifan Sun)



Figure 3.5 The Master-of-Nets Garden in Suzhou (Photographed by Yifan Sun)

The northern private gardens were basically built by nobles and officeholders and were usually located in former capital cities like Beijing, Luoyang (Henan Province), and Chang'an (now Xi'an, Shanxi Province). Prince Gong's Mansion (1776 A.D.), for instance, is one of the largest private gardens in Beijing (See Figure 3.6). Compared to the Jiang Nan private gardens, northern private gardens appear to be more spacious and direct. The axisymmetric form is commonly used in combination with embellished natural landscape scenes. Being limited by the climate and the lack of water sources, northern Chinese private gardens have less area to water, but a more powerful soft and hard landscape design, with soft features, such as plants, and hard features, such as paving. Because of four distinctive seasons, the northern private gardens are colored by different seasonal features. Whereas the Jiang Nan private gardens are usually simple and clean, the northern private gardens are usually warm and colorful.



Figure 3.6 The Prince Gong's Mansion in Beijing

Source: <http://lwy8908.blog.163.com/blog/static/1751822692010101602758826/>

Ling Nan is an area to the south of Wu Ling (“Five Mountains”) in southern China. Some of the private garden designs date to the early years of the Han Dynasty (202 B.C.–220 A.D.), with unique characteristics already. These gardens are famous for the unique architecture style of cornices, smart space allocation, and the exclusive combination of ancestral halls and dwelling buildings in their garden design. Ling Nan gardens can be found in Guangdong, Fujian province (See Figure 3.7). In the Ling Nan private gardens, dwelling in them is their main function. The subtropical climate and the mountains allow the Ling Nan gardens to display very different characteristics. Natural landscapes of running water and waterfalls inspired the designers to bring water features into the private gardens.



Figure 3.7: The Qinghui Garden in Guangdong

Source: <http://lwy8908.blog.163.com/blog/static/1751822692010101602758826/>



After years of development, traditional Chinese landscape design and gardens were functionally designed for the imperial families, bureaucrats, literati, and officialdoms—the wealthy people in the upper classes of the society. Contemporarily, Chinese landscape design should charm tourists at home and abroad with its decency, dignity, and exclusive beauty, and exert an overwhelmingly crucial influence on promoting tourism and economic development in China.

### 3.2 Chinese Shanshui Landscape Design

Chinese Shanshui landscape design appeared first in the Jin and Wei and Dynasties (220–589 A.D.). It was an unusually active time in philosophical developments. Chinese philosophy started stepping into its mature period with the confluence of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. The appearance of Shanshui culture, as a part of Chinese culture, was an important turning point in the history of ancient China (“The artistic rule of the Wei-Jin Southern and Northern Dynasties garden”). Shanshui landscape design entered a prosperous period from the Mid-Ming Dynasty (around 1521 A.D.) to the Qing Dynasty (1616–1912 A.D.), mainly consisting of the landscape design of Northern imperial palaces and the design of Jiangnan private gardens (see Chapter 3.1).

#### 3.2.1 Shanshui Landscape Design Philosophy

Chinese Shanshui landscape design was strongly influenced by Chinese philosophy, especially Confucianism and Taoism. Two main philosophical ideas enlightened Chinese

Shanshui landscape design: (1) 道法自然 (*Dao Fa Zi Ran*)<sup>18</sup> and (2) 天人合一 (*Tian Ren He Yi*)<sup>19</sup> (ZHOU Weiquan, Section 3).

Chinese Shanshui landscape design is a naturally styled landscape design. The goal of Shanshui landscape design is to create artistic space to help people keep their spiritual balance with inner peace (The other media are Shanshui literature and Shanshui painting (See Chapter 2.2.). Shanshui landscape design marries natural beauty and manmade beauty together to shape watchable, accessible, entertain-able and habitable landscape design space. It shows the development of how Chinese people see natural beauty (ZHOU Weiquan, Section 3). The theory of *Dao Fa Zi Ran* shows the Chinese sense of the natural-artistic, aesthetic concepts in landscape design: the adaptation to local conditions and the recovering of the original simplicity. Only when designers make adaptations to local conditions during design practices, can the design elements (ranging from the natural elements to the manmade elements) fit each other naturally. It is the only way to represent the natural beauty of the design elements. This concept of adaptation to the local conditions draws forth the other concept that Shanshui landscape design, which originated from observing nature, should recover to its original simplicity.<sup>20</sup> On the contrary, the original simplicity of nature can bring people to discover their inner peace and help them keep their spirit in balance from the outside world.

Shanshui landscape design also follows the philosophical idea of *Tian Ren He Yi*. This theory respects human beings' subjective initiative and the order of nature. Because human beings are an integral part of nature, human experience is considered a crucial part of landscape design. Differently organized space and differently located, well-lighted scenery spots can guide

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<sup>18</sup> 道法自然 (*Dao Fa Zi Ran*) means "rules follows nature." It comes from the book *Dao De Jing (Lao Tsu)*. The whole sentence is that human follows land, land follows sky, sky follows Taoism (rules), and Taoism follows nature.

<sup>19</sup> 天人合一 (*Tian Ren He Yi*) indicates harmony between nature and human beings.

<sup>20</sup> Taoism believes that nature is not complexity and that "natural" indicates "beauty with simplicity."

people's visits. At the same time, landscape design spaces have dynamic beauty because of people's visiting and recreational activities. Consequently, in order to practice Chinese Shanshui landscape design, designers need to understand the natural characteristics of the design elements and anticipate people's participation in them.

### 3.2.2 The Aesthetic Standards and Gardening Methods of Chinese Shanshui Landscape Design

The aesthetic standards of Chinese Shanshui landscape design are to be appropriate, to be implicit, and to be rich in the experience of space. The standard of appropriateness represents the theory of *Dao Fa Zi Ran*: design work that disobeys the rules of nature is improper. It also indicates the rationality of the arrangements of space and scale. For example, when looking at scale, the combination of hills and lakes can easily represent the aesthetic concept of Chinese Shanshui landscape design in a large-scaled landscape design space, such as Summer Palace, although this combination is not appropriate for a small-scaled landscape design like a private garden. So ancient Chinese landscape designers created a way to restore natural Shanshui sceneries through rockeries and stepping waterfalls. Also, the rhythm of the seasons is a rule of nature that has to be followed and can be used in landscape design.

The standard of being implicit represents the introverted personality of Chinese people. The over-assertive parts of landscape design can break the peaceful spatial environment. This standard can be achieved through creating winding paths and providing shade through plants and buildings. The standard of making a rich space experience means to create interesting route experiences by skillfully using Chinese Shanshui landscape design methods. To accomplish this aesthetic standard, ancient Chinese landscape design masters created many different ways of gardening. Ji Cheng summarized up to ten Chinese gardening methods (See Table 1).

Table 1 Chinese Gardening Methods (JI Cheng)<sup>21</sup>

Name (CN)	English Translation	Explanation
抑景	Suppression Scenery	Suppression scenery can be found at the entrances or the beginning of a Chinese garden. It provides a cover to enclose garden space from the outside, which shows the introversive characteristic of Chinese gardens.
透景	Perspective Scenery	Scenery that is covered by one or two features at its perspective ray is perspective scenery. This method can emphasize the perspective effect of the scene.
添景	Scenery with additional object(s)	This method is used to put one or several objects between the visitors (standpoint) and a far-distanced main object. This method is used to enrich the layers of a garden design, especially when the main object is far away from the visitors.
夹景	Folding Scenery	This method is used to create a long and narrow space between far-distanced objects and the visitors (stand point). One typical use of this method is the setting of roadside trees.
对景	Opposite Scenery	This method occurs in two scenes that face each other. It emphasizes the dynamic relationship between scenes in a garden.
障景	Obstructive Scenery	Obstructive scenery is similar to suppression scenery. The covering feature in suppression scenery is placed at the entrance of a garden, whereas the covering feature in obstructive scenery can be placed anywhere in a garden except the entrance. This method focuses on the dynamic expression of Chinese gardens.
框景	En-framed Scenery	This method uses different forms of doors in a garden as picture frames for scenes. Shaped garden windows can be used in this method too.
漏景	Leakage Scenery	Leakage scenery was developed from the en-framed scenery. By using different forms of windows, walls, and planting, a scene can be seen differently.
借景	Borrowed Scenery	This method involves borrowing a far-distanced object and incorporating it into the garden design. Common borrowed objects are mountains, towers, and city skylines.



Figure 3.8: An example of folding scenery

Source: [tupian.baik.com/a4\\_11\\_49\\_01300000242726124296498419710\\_jpg.html](http://tupian.baik.com/a4_11_49_01300000242726124296498419710_jpg.html).

<sup>21</sup> Ji Cheng (1582–1642 A.D.) was a Chinese landscape designer during the Ming Dynasty. He wrote the book *Yuanye*, which summarizes the methods and the rules needed for gardening. *Yuanye* is recorded as the earliest gardening book in the world.



Figure 3.9: An example of perspective scenery

Source: [tieba.baidu.com/f?kz=517423674](http://tieba.baidu.com/f?kz=517423674)

### 3.3 Contemporary Chinese Landscape Design

Traditional Chinese landscape design tried to supply a comfortable and thoughtful environment for more than 3000 years in old China. Yet, the same style of design work did not appear to be popular or welcome at the beginning of the founding of new China (from 1949 A.D. to the present). Under the influence of radical ideas (the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution, 1966–1976 A.D.), everything related to old China was regarded as symbolic of backwardness in society. Traditional Chinese landscape design was also included. Western architecture and

landscape design rapidly flooded into China from the Chinese Reform and the Opening Up from the 1980s. The disappearance of Chinese landscape design from their culture woke the Chinese people up during the same time period.

As a valued part of Chinese culture, traditional Chinese landscape design is also a piece of the world's treasures. After a brilliant history in old China, Chinese landscape design is going through a tough period. Western culture flooded rapidly into China, leaving earthshaking changes all over the country. Chinese landscape design has inevitably been impacted by Western design ideas. The Chinese public delightedly accepted the concrete forest and urbanization and then gradually forgot the graciousness of old Chinese landscape design. Modern-styled landscape design is commonly used in China nowadays, and has replaced the local traditional landscape designs. An argument arose that the stone-hills, the zigzag bridges, the towers, and the pavilions were not satisfying the needs of the people in modern time. Chinese designers started to ask whether traditional Chinese landscape design is old-fashioned and whether it still belongs to the modern world. In fact, anyone who has a sense of responsibility for culture would never answer those questions in the affirmative. Chinese landscape design should be retained as a part of Chinese culture, especially since Chinese landscape design has taught valuable lessons about adapting to local conditions (ZHU Jianning 2005, 6-13).

In ancient Chinese theory, landscape design was not only a part of culture but also an art. With long-range exploration and research, a New Chinese Landscape design has been developing since the 1990s. New Chinese Landscape design receives its name from the series of trials to combine modern landscape design methods with traditional Chinese landscape concepts to serve the new needs of society. Methods of the New Chinese Landscape design and their pros and cons will be introduced in detail in the next chapter.

### 3.4 Summary

In this chapter, the author systemically introduced traditional Chinese landscape design history, including the appearance of embryonic forms of Chinese landscape design during the Xia Dynasty, its rapid development from the Wei-Jin Dynasty to the Song Dynasty, and the upsurge of its development from the Yuan Dynasty to the Qing Dynasty. In the second section of this chapter, the author discussed three aspects of Chinese Shanshui landscape design: (1) design philosophies (*Dao Fa Zi Ran* and *Tian Ren He Yi*); (2) aesthetic concepts (adaption to local condition and recovering the original simplicity); and (3) its aesthetic standards (to be appropriate, implicit, and rich in space experiences). Traditional Chinese gardening methods were introduced too. In the last part of this chapter, the author discussed two Chinese-styled landscape design approaches that have appeared in contemporary landscape design practices: reproducing with an original Chinese landscape design layout and reproducing with original gardening methods. Examples and further discussion will be provided in chapter four.

In the next chapter, seven case studies will be further studied. The first two will use the relationship between Chinese Shanshui painting and Shanshui landscape design to discuss two traditional methods of spatial arrangement. Then three contemporary landscape design cases will be presented as examples for Chapter 3.3.1, and case studies will be used to discuss the pros and the cons of contemporary approaches to Chinese landscape design. At the end of the chapter, the case of Summer Palace will be used to discuss the traditional Chinese sense of space in a large-scaled place.

## CHAPTER 4

### CASE STUDIES

In the previous two chapters, this thesis introduced and discussed the historical and philosophical background of traditional Chinese landscape design. Chinese philosophy defines the design philosophies of traditional Chinese landscape design, and the history of Chinese landscape design shows its development as it was guided by Chinese philosophy in developing its design theories and implementing its design practices.

In this chapter, case studies will be examined for these specific purposes: (1) to discuss Chinese Shanshui paintings and the master plan of their restored Shanshui landscape design in order to find out classic approaches for arranging space that address the Chinese idea of Nature and Chinese philosophy (two cases); (2) to discuss four typical contemporary Chinese-styled landscape designs in order to find out the pros and cons of the practice of contemporary Chinese-styled landscape design approaches (four cases); and (3) to discuss traditional Chinese landscape design that addresses Chinese philosophy in large-scaled space, through using a classic example, in order to explore approaches that can inspire future contemporary practice in large-scaled urban public space (one case).

#### 4.1 Shanshui Spatial Arrangement from Chinese Shanshui painting

Some Chinese researchers, such as XIONG Qinghua (Wuhan University of Technology), believe that Chinese Shanshui paintings were not just simply reflecting the painters' spiritual



activities. They are the design drawings of landscape design works. By reading 界画 (“graphs for large-scale architecture building design with multi-points perspective”), we can see the landscape design work in Chinese Shanshui paintings. After translating some of the typical Shanshui paintings, two main approaches in the design of spatial arrangement in Chinese Shanshui landscapes can be summarized: (1) the open and closed spaces and (2) the interconnection of nature elements and artificial elements. This part of the chapter will discuss these two approaches in detail by discussing two typical examples from a comparative research of Chinese Shanshui Paintings and their restored master plan by WANG Yan (Beijing Agricultural University).

As shown in the pictures following, “The Summer View of Xi Shan Painting” (SHENG Mao, 13<sup>th</sup> century to 14<sup>th</sup> century A.D.) is a good example to illustrate the cooperation of open and enclosed space (see Figure 4.1). The Chinese Shanshui painting of “The Summer View of Xi Shan Painting” on the left, and the master plan of the restored landscape design is on the right (restored by WANG Yan). A Y-shaped path connects three attractions. Functionally, the path achieves the traffic needs of this design. But the way of the path works with the mountains on both sides, which makes a series of open and closed spaces on the way.

Secondary resting space can be placed on the way to rich activity space (see Figure 4.2) (restored by WANG Yan). The painting named “Jiangshan Autumn Painting” (ZHAO Boju, 1120–1182 A.D.) shows the relationship between the platform and the path. The platform placed between the buildings and the entrance area plays the role of a buffer space. In this way, it keeps the pace of the path and the views and releases a sense of safety in the tour.

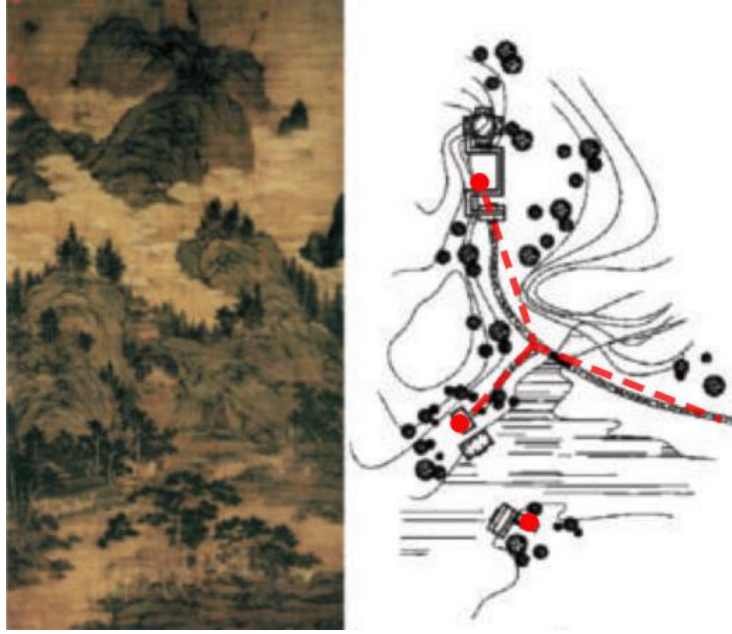


Figure 4.1 Summer View of Xi Shan Painting (left)

and its master plan of the restored landscape design (right) (Restored by WANG Yan, Beijing)

Source: Chinese Traditional Landscape Painting and Landscape Design

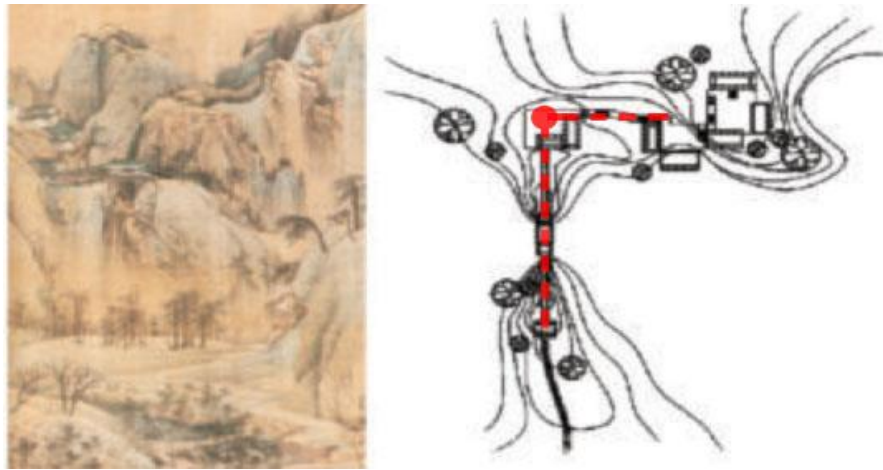


Figure 4.2 Jiangshan Autumn Painting (left)

and its master plan of the restored landscape design (right) (Restored by WANG Yan, Beijing)

Source: Chinese Traditional Landscape Painting and Landscape Design

The other approach seeks to interconnect natural elements and artificial elements. “Xiyin Tu,” which represents a picture of how literati live in exclusion, shows the layers of plantings and buildings.

Chinese Shanshui painting and Shanshui style landscape design reached a high level of development during the Tang Dynasty (618–907 A.D.). Artists achieved much by combining painting, landscape design, and poetry. Wei Wang, for example, who was a talented artist in the Shanshui poetry and painting fields, built a series of villas in Lantian (a village nearby Chang’an). His villas provide a vivid example of making the images in Shanshui paintings real in landscape design. He designed and built over 20 landscape spots in Wangchuan valley. Unfortunately, the original Wangchuan Villa no longer exists. But the research on the relationships between Chinese paintings, poetry and landscape design are a great challenge and opportunity for future study.

In addition to knowing the philosophy and cultural background of Chinese landscape design as well as the relationship between Chinese Shanshui painting and Shanshui landscape design, it is essential to know that the heart of Chinese landscape design leans on (1) a thoughtful relationship between open space and enclosed space; and (2) the interconnection of the elements in nature and manmade (civilian) elements. The cooperation of open spaces and enclosed spaces in Traditional Chinese Landscape design involves the combination of “ink” and “blank space”; “black” and “white”; “dos” and “not dos.” It shows the Chinese understanding of nature’s simplicity and the world’s Yin and Yang. The interconnection of nature’s elements and manmade (civilian) elements shows the Chinese understanding of the relationship between human beings and the nature. Buildings with a Chinese styled landscape design such as pavilions and bridges can clearly be the Chinese cultural elements shown in a place.

## 4.2 Contemporary Chinese-styled Landscape Design

In contemporary time, Chinese designers look for new ways to practice traditional Chinese landscape design. The New Chinese Landscape design is the most influential branch of contemporary explorations.

On the one hand, traditional Chinese landscape design is a combination of Chinese culture and art, representing Chinese philosophy. There are several different ways to try to achieve a New Chinese Landscape design. To apply a traditional Chinese landscape design in a modern context, there are two main approaches that have appeared in contemporary Chinese landscape design practices, which are (1) reproducing a landscape design with an original layout and (2) reproducing a landscape design with original methods.

By using the original layout, landscape design can show a traditional understanding of the relationship between people and space. In particular, the original Chinese method here means Chinese garden design arrangement. The aim of this kind of landscape design is to create a garden in a limited amount of space in order to enclose the relationship of people and their environment. These methods respect the traditional arrangement of plants, water, and landscape design furniture the most. In this way, this sort of landscape design is more like a lab sample of the traditional Chinese garden design.

On the other hand, after thousands of years of experience with landscape design, ancient Chinese landscape design artists summarized certain methods to achieve the spiritual concepts, including borrowed scenery, opposite scenery, en-framed scenery, and obstructive scenery (See traditional Chinese Gardening Methods in Table 3.1). In contemporary time, these methods can be used to work with modern techniques and materials to enrich the hierarchical relationship of

different scenery. It is a way of truly combining modern design elements, including materials and forms of furniture, and the traditional Chinese landscape design methods.

Recombining Chinese gardening methods with a poem and some art elements is also commonly used in contemporary landscape design practices in China. Designers choose a significant object to represent certain Chinese manners in a design, such as a meaningful Chinese character like 华, to represent the Han nationality and China, or a color match like blue and white to represent a Chinese simple style, or a group of plants like bamboo to represent the integrity of Chinese literati. Two ways can be used for this recombination. One way is simply to use significant characters to bring out the crucial point of a concept. The other way is to deconstruct the chosen character and then integrate the pieces into the pattern or the space-controlling system. For example, in the redesign and the reconstruction project of Renmin University of China in Beijing,<sup>22</sup> the designers used the shape of Chinese brush writing 人 (“populace”) to indicate the name of the university 人民 (“Renmin”) (see Figure 4.3).



Figure 4.3 Chinese Brush Writing of “人” (Populace)

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<sup>22</sup> The redesign and reconstruction project of Renmin University of China in Beijing was a project in which the thesis author participated during an internship in EDSA Orient, Beijing, 2012. The other group member was ZHAO Guowei.

Another method involves simplifying the original design element. In contrast to adorning the delicate details of classical Chinese garden design, these designers try to represent the soul of Traditional Chinese Landscape design with simple landscape design characteristics and color-matches. Suzhou Museum, designed by Master Ieoh Ming Pei, is an example (See Figure 4.10). The author figures that the cockamamie detailing in the late stage of the Qing Dynasty cannot represent the true meaning of Chinese landscape design that adheres to the aesthetic concept of recovering the original simplicity.

In the following cases, this thesis will discuss contemporary Chinese-styled landscape design approaches. Four cases will be described: (1) the Beijing Olympic Village (contemporary residential landscape design), (2) The Vanke 5<sup>th</sup> Village in Shenzhen (contemporary residential landscape design), (3) the Park of China Town in Boston (contemporary urban public space design), and (4) the Garden of Suzhou Museum (urban public garden design). All of these projects were designed and built around 2008.

#### 4.2.1 Beijing Olympic Village

The Beijing Olympic Village (Beijing Olympic Athletes Village) is located at the north part of the north-south axe of Beijing (The Chinese designer LIU Jing was the chief designer). It contains a residential district, an international district, and a circulation district. It married different cultural features in the design and highlighted Chinese landscape culture.

First of all, the designers used some symbolic objects and include some traditional Chinese garden design methods in the design. There are screen walls with symbols of pottery, bronze, lacquer, and jade culture at the four Olympic Village gates to achieve the method of obstructive scenery (see Figure 4.4). Symbolic colors are commonly used in the Olympic Village.

Specifically, the symbolic colors of China are China-red, glazed-yellow, Great Wall-grey, jade-white, and Chinese scholar tree-green. Different colors have different meanings. In the Olympic Village, the designers used the symbolic colors (China-red, glazed-yellow, and Great Wall-grey) on the main entrance gate to represent a sense of peace and magnitude.



Figure 4.4 The Obstructive Scenery in the Olympic Village

Source: <http://www.landscape.cn/upfiles/Read/200902/2009021113294196101.jpg>

From the picture shown in figure 4.5, it can be easily seen that the traditional Chinese garden design methods and the symbols of Chinese culture were widely used in the design of the Olympic Village. Yet, there is still an unresolved conflict between the design expectations and reality. Inharmonious is the word that can express the conflict implied in this design piece. The designer expected that the design of the entrance gate with the Chinese seal (outlined in red in

Figure 4.5) would display the Chinese culture, but actually, people who have no background in Chinese culture may not know the meaning of the cubes hanging at the top of the gate. How can a landscape design send a message of culture without easily letting people know the meaning? Or maybe this way of using Chinese symbolic elements is incorrect. The real Chinese culture and the meaning of traditional Chinese landscape design should not be represented simply by some pieces of symbols and landscape design furniture. Chinese cultural elements do not necessarily define the place as Chinese-styled. Chinese-styled landscape design should emphasize the harmonious relationship between natural design elements (arrangement of plants, water, and stones) and manmade design elements (supporting places for visiting and activities). The use of a Chinese-styled construction or building is only for 点睛之笔 (a finishing touch).

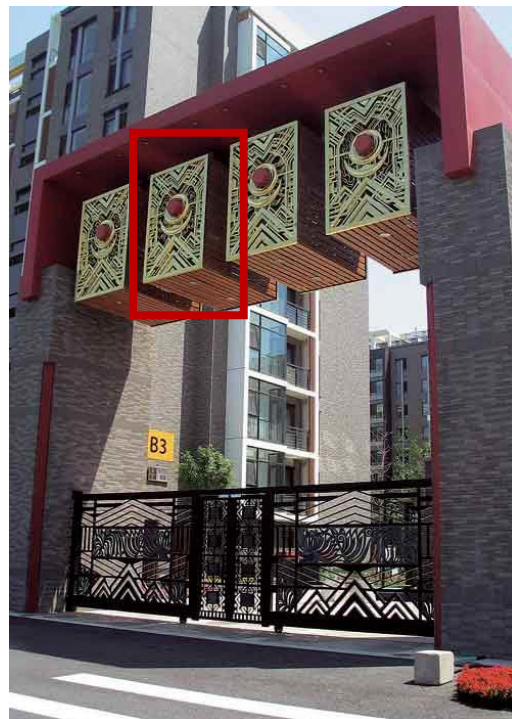


Figure 4.5 Beijing Olympic Village Gate

Source: <http://www.landscape.cn/uploads/Read/200902/2009021113350428213.jpg>



#### 4.2.2 The Vanke 5<sup>th</sup> Village

The Vanke 5<sup>th</sup> Village was designed and built by Shanghai Tianhua Architect in 2010. It is located in Pudong, Shanghai. It is an experiment in combining Chinese and western landscape design approaches. In the Vanke 5<sup>th</sup> Village, designers did not simply copy traditional Chinese landscape design. First, for building designs, they chose to remove some of building methods that are functionally unprofitable for modern use, such as tiles and columns. Instead of complicated structures, there is the simple cooperation of black and white: white walls and black tiles. Designers also tried to inject Chinese elements in the landscape design through spatial arrangement.

The Vanke 5<sup>th</sup> Village also used some methods similar to those used at the Beijing Olympic Village, such as the uses of symbolic characters representing Chinese manners. Because the residential environment has more small independent spaces for activities, the designer did not use complicated graphic patterns. The designers' simple linages work with simple color coordination to fit with the overall construction. It takes some traditional Chinese garden design methods mentioned before as examples (see Table 1), like en-framed scenery (see Figure 4.6) and leaking through scenery (see Figure 4.7). In some places of the community, designers lift up some simple walls, some of which work with bamboo groups. They make good views from different directions and serve as an easy living environment.



Figure 4.6 A View of En-framed Scenery

Source: <http://www.landscape.cn/upfiles/Read/200902/2009021113274463399.jpg>



Figure 4.7 A View of Leaking through Scenery

Source: <http://www.landscape.cn/upfiles/Read/200902/2009021113340631992.jpg>

Planting design is a very important part of design in traditional Chinese landscape design. In the new Chinese style landscape design in the 5<sup>th</sup> Village, designers used simple planting combinations to emphasize outstanding plants. This planting design in the village also highlights the relationship between the constructions and the plants. Simple planting design makes layers of vision (see Figure 4.8) and creates interesting activity spaces (see Figure 4.9).



Figure 4.8 Layers of Planting

Source: <http://www.landscape.cn/upfiles/Read/200902/2009021114032426119.jpg>



Figure 4.9 A Green Sitting Space

Source: <http://www.landscape.cn/upfiles/Read/200902/2009021114052517557.jpg>

#### 4.2.3 The Park of China Town in Boston

The Park of China Town in Boston (2008) was designed by Kongjian Yu, a Chinese landscape architect (see Figure 4.10). China Town Park is one of three new parks in the Big Dig project. Boston's China Town is the fourth largest China Town in the United States. The bad building conditions and the horrible environment of the old town gate area have made it a "problem district" for years in Boston and China Town, as told by local people (YU Kongjian 2009). The China town gate area is a narrow space from north to south. It forms an "L" shape with the axe of Chinatown's main street. The designer selected several design elements such as

China red, bamboo groups, a water fountain, and a stone path. The stone path achieved the function of connecting China Town and downtown Boston. In the park, the fish-shaped, graphite-stone path and the running water have been designed to recall the memories of the hometown (YU KongJian 2009). The sail-shaped sculpture and the reeds are showing the concept of rivers and lakes, insinuating the hometown of the original immigrations from Guangdong and Fujian of China. The square shape and the circle are also used in the design, which reflect the old tale about the round sky and the square earth in ancient China.



Figure 4.10 North Entrance (Photographed by Yifan Sun)



Figure 4.11 Linear Path, Rock Seat and Bamboo Group (left)



Figure 4.12 South Entrance (right)

(Photographed by Yifan Sun)

Because this design was inspired by thoughts about the homeland of Chinese immigrants, the designer is trying to create a cozy and closed space for people. The streamlined space follows the movements of the city's population. Resting spaces along the way with Chinese symbolic planting and more enclosed forms give visitors a fresh and friendly space for public and private activities, which also accord with Chinese people's personalities. This design reveals a sense of Chinese culture. This park is a good example of a small-scaled and closed public urban space

with the use of Chinese design. It is also an achievement after years of practices and trials with Chinese garden design concepts.



Figure 4.13 The Park of Boston China Town, Master Plan

Source: [www.chla.com.cn/htm/2008/0903/17849.html](http://www.chla.com.cn/htm/2008/0903/17849.html)

#### 4.2.4 Garden of Suzhou Museum

The New Suzhou Museum was designed by Leoh Ming Pei, a Chinese American architect, and built in 2006. It is located near the famous Suzhou gardens, called Zhuozheng Garden. Its architecture design is one that marries the Suzhou building style with black tiles and white walls. It shows Pei's understanding of Chinese culture and traditional Chinese architecture. He also gives his definition to small-scaled new Chinese landscape design. He claims that the

original way of arranging stones had reached its peak. The only way to create a new Chinese landscape design is to find a new path. He regards the idea of drawing a Chinese Shanshui painting with white walls as the paper and the landscape as the ink. He also decorated some classical landscape designs with furniture in the garden, such as a zigzag bridge, a stone-bottomed lake, and an octagonal pavilion.



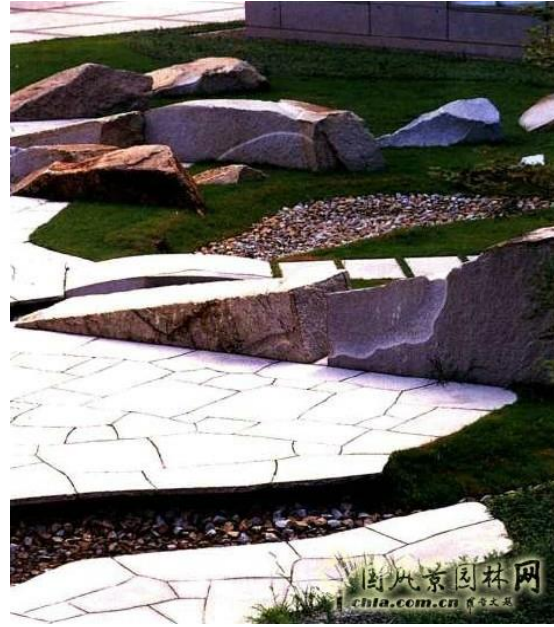
Figure 4.14 Chinese Shanshui Painting in Landscape Design (photograph by Yifan Sun)

The method of drawing Chinese Shanshui paintings with walls and stones to represent Chinese Shanshui culture is a new way of trying to address Chinese philosophy in contemporary time. It gives a new angle for viewing Chinese Shanshui paintings and Shanshui landscape



design. In this way, Shanshui landscape design is created as fine art for aesthetic appreciation. It complements the media of Shanshui culture, particularly by presenting an artistic expression in a 3-dimensional medium. (The other medias are 1-dimensional media, expressed in Shanshui poetry; 2-dimensional media, expressed in Shanshui painting; and 4-dimensional media, expressed in Shanshui landscape design that invites people to walk and participate in it.) On the other hand, it can be an inspiration to explain Chinese Shanshui culture by pointing to the simple relationship between white walls and dark stones, and to explore new ways of creating Chinese Shanshui-styled landscape design with visitors' participation in contemporary time.

The Japanese landscape architect Shunmyo Masuno has a similar idea of creating landscape design in contemporary time. The only difference is that his idea came from "Chan" theory. He sees creating landscape design works as an expression of the inner world. The Japanese concept called "Chan" (that is, practicing Buddhism with meditation) is instrumental for explaining his works. His designs also show his understanding of the relationship between Shanshui landscape design and nature. Following the idea of emphasizing the uniqueness of Japanese landscape design with its peaceful and refined air, he also marries western modern methodologies into his design works (see Figure 4.13 and 4.14). He claims that creating a landscape design that works for people involves creating a quiet space for them to rethink their lives. He also treats the design process as a representation of the designer's heart. Most of his works concentrate on small residential spaces or private spaces that practice his idea of landscape design in the larger scale of urban public spaces.



4.15 & 4.16 Landscape Design from Mr. Shunmyo Masuno

Source: chla.com.cn

The achievement of Shunmyo Masuno's Japanese landscape design in modern time indicates that the misapplication of Shanshui landscape design, with an overemphasis on detailing and gardening methods in Chinese modern landscape design are improper, from the author's point of view. With all that Chinese landscape design has experienced, Chinese designers can also create great modern urban places with traditional Chinese (Shanshui) style after a better understanding of the meaning of Shanshui culture and Chinese philosophy about nature.

#### 4.2.5 Discussion

There are fine handicraft decorations and uses of different kinds of stones described in Chinese landscape design history. Being obsessed with these decorations and garden details, however, has distracted and led attention away from the original concepts of Chinese landscape

design since the late Qing Dynasty until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (see the example of Beijing Olympic Village). It has distorted the meanings of promoting work and made them farfetched. It has also deviated from the rule of simplicity in design.

In the author's opinion, there are three main reasons, why using designs with complicated detailing in Chinese landscape design work is inappropriate. The first reason—and the most apparent one—is its unnecessary function. No matter how beautiful the traditional use of natural Hu stones (Hu stone is a kind of design element in traditional garden design in old China) or how meaningful the patterns of the stones are, they serve more as a decoration in a garden than as an intermediary for representing Chinese philosophy, which is the soul of Chinese culture. Secondly, complicated design details produce pressure on people. In modern times, the fast speed in life styles and the complicated social relationships place much pressure on people daily. In the theory of Yin and Yang, there is a simple, clean, well-designed environment for keeping the balance of harmony. The harder and the more complicated people's relationships are in the real world, the more people need simplicity to create inner peace. The last reason complements the first one in that instead of focusing on something unnecessary, expressing the soul of design becomes secondary in importance after satisfying functional needs. The complicated methods of detailing a design make the secondary important; the relationships between people and space, between humans and nature, are ignored.

On the other hand, Chinese landscape design should focus on the respect of culture instead of showing on the surface. As the famous historian QIAN Mu<sup>23</sup> used to say, "Culture is the life of the country"; yet, he also went on to say, "The country or nation cannot exist and persist without it." The classic sense of worth in China is separated from the utilitarian, although

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<sup>23</sup> Mr. QIAN Mu (1895–1990 A.D.) is a Chinese historian and a scholar, who has studied ancient Chinese civilization. He written many books during his research *The Spirit of Chinese Culture* is one of them.

this separation of self-worth and utilitarianism is contrary to western philosophy. In this way, the Chinese aesthetic standard follows the rule similar to that of Chinese landscape design: surpassing the basic function and achieving the combination of what art and philosophy both are looking for. That also proves the opinion of the author of this thesis that people today, just as promoted since the Qing Dynasty, should abandon the use of complicated design detail. Modern Chinese landscape design has a duty to represent the understanding of relationships between humans and nature or humans and environment in an acceptable way (modern way) after achieving functional objectives.

#### 4.3 A case study of Summer Palace

Because of the need for modern urban public spaces, design works cannot be limited to residential or small-scaled spaces. As a final discussion this thesis will take the Summer Palace as an example to explore approaches for understanding traditional spatial arrangements on a large scale by addressing Shanshui philosophy in the last part of this chapter. The Chinese understanding of nature and the soul of traditional Chinese landscape design will be displayed, while the inspiration for the arrangement for space will be explained in this case. Understanding the Chinese view of space will lead to discovering ways to practice Chinese landscape design methods in modern time regardless of the sizes of the space. Also, this case study can show how the Chinese vision of nature can be practiced in modern landscape design, by marrying traditional design advantages with Chinese culture and philosophy, to continually achieve the goal of creating a peaceful land for people.

##### 4.3.1 Summer Palace

The design of Summer Palace originally sprang from Xi Hu in Hangzhou, Zhejiang province. The Summer Palace lies on the Yanshan Mountain Wanshou Hill, and has a water system in Kunming Lake as the main body. Ancient Chinese landscape design artists made a great achievement by pursuing the theory of 天人合一 (*Tian Ren He Yi*) as well as by their work in private gardens. The Summer Palace is a good example for addressing the theory of *Tian Ren He Yi* in large-scaled landscape design. It is also a large and well-maintained imperial landscape design. It is located in the Haidian district in Beijing, one of the most important political sites in the history of the Qing Dynasty. Summer Palace is a classic example of traditional Chinese Shanshui landscape design because it has one lake and three hills. It is also an important part of “Three Hills and Five Gardens in Beijing.”<sup>24</sup> Several of its garden designs are masterpieces as well, such as the Harmonious Garden and the Garden of Everlasting Spring.

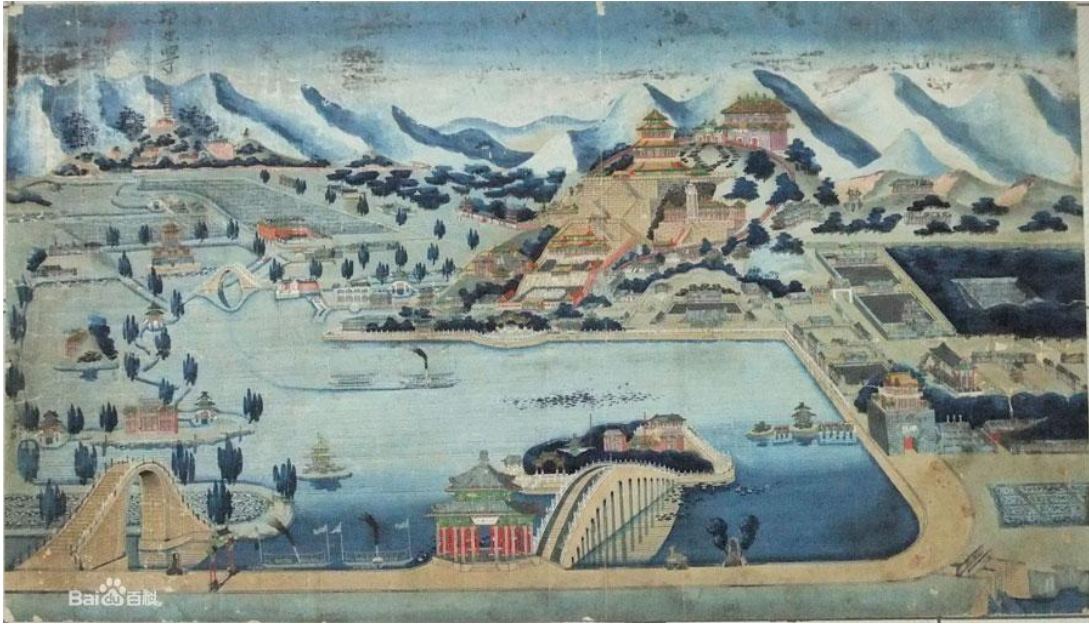
#### 4.3.1.1 The design of Summer Palace

Summer Palace was designed and built during the Qing Dynasty (built approximately in 1750 D.C.) and used to be called Qingyi Yuan. It was destroyed and reconstructed in the late Qing Dynasty (around 1895 A.D.). Three quarters of the Summer Palace were covered with water, in addition to thousands of landscape design buildings and over 20 sets of gardens. To name a few of the most famous ones, the Long Corridor, Marble Boat, and the 17-Arch Bridge are also remarkable landscape design furniture in the history of Chinese landscape design. The Summer Palace is well-known as a perfect combination of natural landscape and artificial

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<sup>24</sup> “Three Hills and Five Gardens” is the general name of the Beijing imperial palaces. The three hills and five gardens were generally built during the Qianlong Emperor period (1736- 1795 A.D.) but were mostly destroyed during the Opium War II. The three hills are Wanshou Mountain, Xiang Mountain, and Yuquan Mountain. There were five palaces built on these hills: Qingyi Yuan (Summer Palace), Jingyi Yuan, Jingming Yuan, Changchun Yuan, and Yuanming Yuan. Summer Palace is the most completely preserved out of these five palaces.

landscape design. The hills and the building district are the political and the dwelling area. The lake, bridges, and islands have formed a district of recreation. Both the gardens and the buildings are not the key points in this case study. Instead, the layers of space that represent the Chinese view of space are the key points.



4.17 The Original Plan for Summer Palace (LANG Shining, 1756)

Source: [baike.baidu.com/view/7379.htm](http://baike.baidu.com/view/7379.htm)

Within the center of Wanshou Hill is found Summer Palace, with its three parts: Kunming Lake, the front hill, and the back hill with a back lake. The Kunming Lake is the main part of the recreation area. The West Bank is a green corridor crossing Kunming Lake and divides Kunming Lake into two parts. There are three islands in each of them, which represent the Fairmount in the ocean in Chinese fairy tales. The 17-Arch bridge reaches an island named Southern-lake Island. The Wanshou Hill, working with buildings, creates a beautiful picture combined with natural and human landscape.

Walking along the banks on the islands is not the only activity at Kunming Lake. Rowing boats on the water is also a recreational activity. In a way, Kunming Lake and the front hill create an open public space for different kinds of activities. It is a mere coincidence with the uses of modern urban public space. Instead of too much decoration or unnecessary landscape design furniture, the combination of water, islands, and bridges support different recreation environments for different groups and evokes different expectations. The lakes, bridges, and water and sun are the real design elements from ancient designers that arrange the space. They lead different kinds of tourists through different spatial relationships. The scenery from the boats and the banks to Wanshou Hill and Foxiang Ge (the central building on the hill) are borrowed sceneries; the ones under the arches of bridges are en-framed sceneries; the ones from the islands to other sides of the Palace are obstructive sceneries (See Table 1).



4.18 The Birds-eye View Perspective of Summer Palace

Source: [baike.baidu.com/view/7379.htm](http://baike.baidu.com/view/7379.htm)

The back hill and the back lake have a series of sceneries very different from the scenery at Kunming Lake. The artificial north bank and the natural south bank form a closer and peaceful space (see Figure 4.15 section 1) behind all of the public spaces that are in the front (see Figure 4.15, section 2). The space between the two sides of the banks represents a quiet natural space with a narrower activity room. Su Zhou Jie (a street by the banks of the river copied from water villages in southern China) is located on the river right behind the Northern Gate. Sometimes, when the visitors have spatial stress from tight places, several wider spaces with little activity-flats can be prepared for visitors for breaks. The narrow street space among the mountains of skyscrapers and the open green spaces every some distances in the city give visitors the similar feeling.

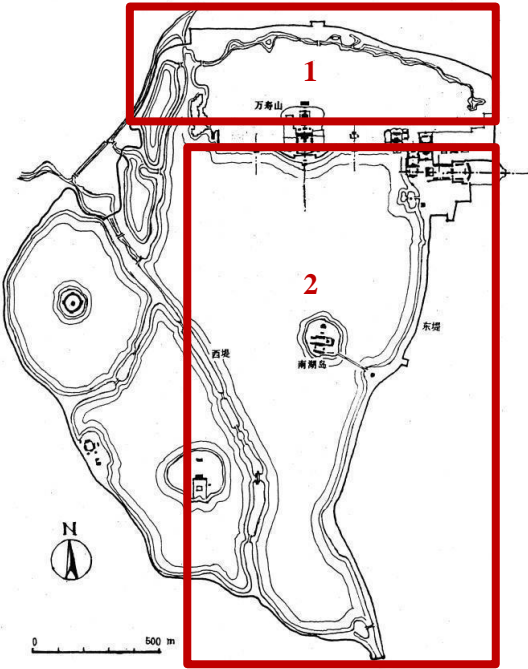
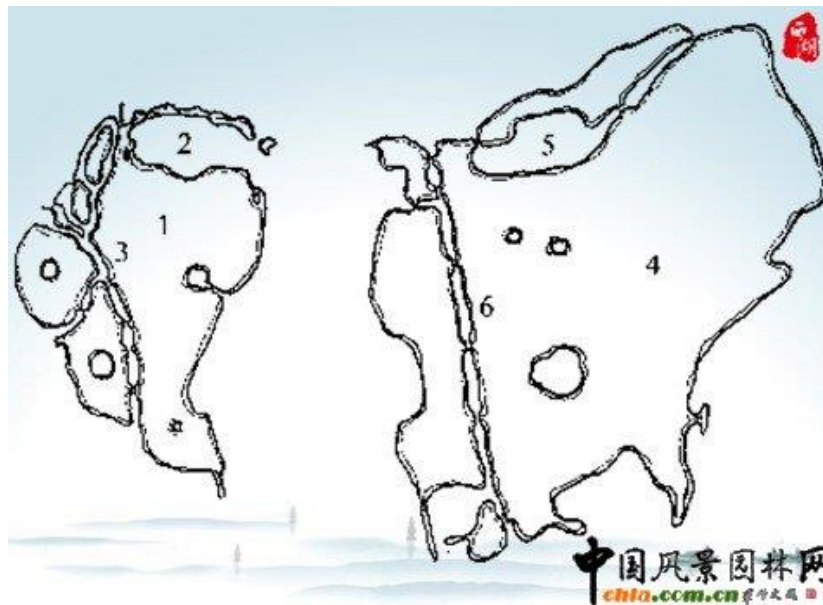


Figure 4.19 The Summer Palace (Master Plan)



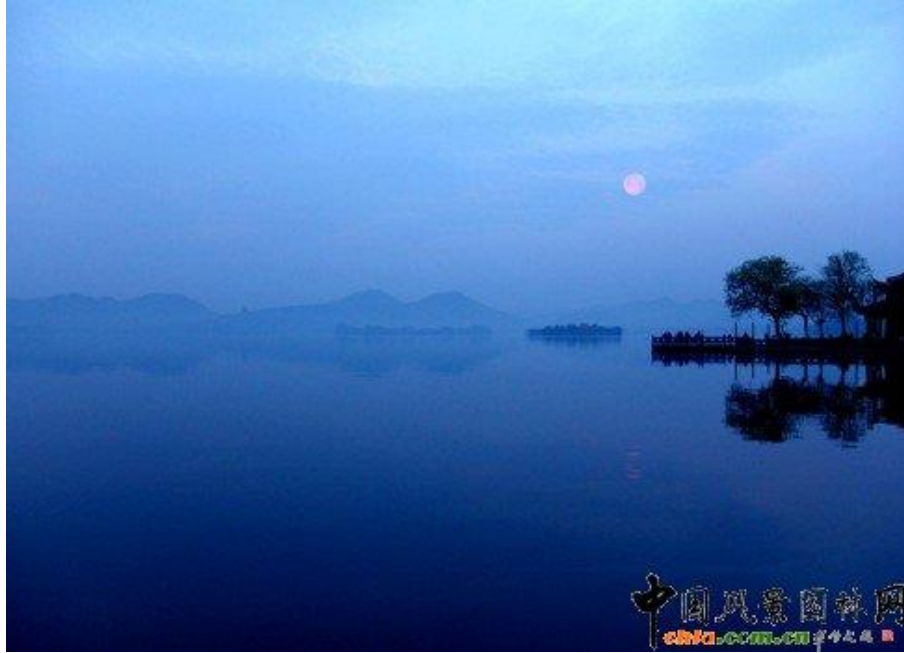
#### 4.3.1.2 The design concept of Summer Palace

The Summer Palace is a remake of the Xi Hu in Hangzhou (see Figure 4.17). Xi Hu is famous for its wonderful work of design and its great combination of landscape design art, paintings, and poems (Shuifa Wang, 2010). A great number of successful works describe the beautiful scenes at the Xi Hu with paintings and poems, such as the Sanqu (a type of verse popular in the Yuan Dynasty), 朝天子·西湖 (Chao Tianzi, Xi Hu), and 西湖图卷” (Xi hu Painting) in the Song Dynasty. The classic landscape design of mountains and water joins in the life of the city by supplying the people a series of peaceful public spaces for activities. There is a saying about Suzhou and Hangzhou that 上有天堂，下有苏杭 (“there is a paradise in heaven, while there is Suzhou and Hangzhou on the earth”), which indicates the peace and happiness the Xi Hu brings to people (see Figure 4.18 and 4.19). It shows most of visions of wonderland that ancient Chinese people imagine about heaven.



4.20 Comparison between Xi Hu and Summer Palace

Source: [www.chla.com.cn](http://www.chla.com.cn)



4.21 Scenes in Xi Hu in Hangzhou

Source: chla.com.cn



4.22 Scenes in Xi Hu in Hangzhou (right)

Source: chla.com.cn

As a very important piece of work across Asia, Xi Hu strongly influenced landscape architecture in Japan and in Korea. Evidence can be found from the old Zhili Palace in Japan in the Edo period (1603–1868 A.D.), which shows a similar spatial arrangement with water and hills. The Palace modeled its form after the Xi Hu, with the cooperation between the water embankment and the island. Xi Hu had a great influence on the building of the Summer Mountain Resort (built in 1703 A.D. in Chengde, now Hebei) as well. The resort created a scene named “mirror in double-lake” by using the method of building a pair of bridges and an embankment to connect the outside lake with the inside.

Needless to say, Summer Palace is the most illuminating of Xi Hu’s studies. It not only applies Xi Hu’s landscape design methods; but also assimilated the idea of “one lake two hills” in it. From the figure 4.17, the geographical relationship between Xi Hu and Summer Palace can be seen. From No. 1 to No. 3 are Kunming Lake, Wanshou Hill, and West Bank; from No. 4 to No. 6 are Xi Hu, Gu Hill, and Su Bank. The pace<sup>25</sup> of the landscape design in Xi Hu has one stressed tone and one light tone, while in Summer Palace there is one stressed tone and two light tones. That makes tours in Summer Palace even more interesting. It defines the pace of the landscape design with the water and the bank system.

The arrangement of the lake and the islands in Summer Palace not only follows the design methods from Xi Hu, the theory of Yin and Yang is also one of the rules it adhered to (See Chapter 2.2). Summer Palace represents the theory of Yin and Yang by the out-looking for a long time. In the Chinese landscape design field, the land form of Summer Palace fits the Yin Yang graph. Yet, that assessment is not convincing to the thesis author. The theory of Yin and

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<sup>25</sup> The “pace” here means “layers.” The author borrows the feeling of music to describe the relationship between the different layers of landscape design. The metaphor saying of “stress tone” and “light tone” is working in the same way. The stress tone here means the focused scene, and the light tone means the scenes that are not emphasized in landscape design.

Yang recommends balances and harmony in the world in a way different than directly copying the graphic of Yin-Yang into a master plan. The original geographic situation on which the Summer Palace was built obeys the theory in Yin Yang Theory that “two have each other” and that there are too many clear boundaries between the land and the water (see Figure 4.18). The separation of land and water causes inharmonic landscape design. Two geographic adaptations help the Summer Palace deal with this problem: (1) the adaption uses land and water as elements to weaken the boundaries when they connect each other with links to banks and bridges; (2) the dugout river behind the hill was also designed for keeping the balance of land and water. Land and water are merged to be one with the new land arrangement.

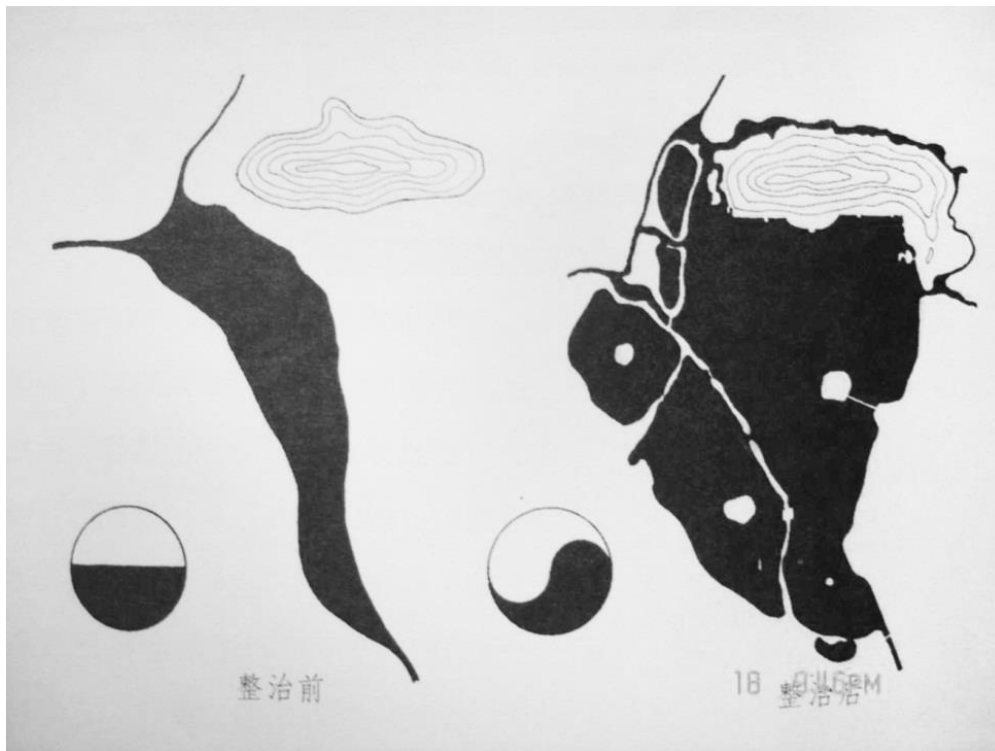


Figure 4.23 Summer Palace with Yin and Yang  
(Original land form on the left and rearranged land form on the right)

Also, in Summer Palace, the three divided water areas show the paces of landscape design: the central part of Kunming Lake, which is surrounded by Wanshou Hill, and the Long Corridor are the strong tones, and the other two water surfaces are the light tones. Water is connected from this side to the other under bridges. The islets are connected to the main land by bridges on the surface as well. Yin Yang theory is represented in Summer Palace by keeping the Yin-yang relationship between Summer Palace's two main sides in dynamic balance—land and water.

#### 4.3.2 Summer Palace in the Modern World

Ancient Chinese artists were good at forming water and hill systems. They tried to create wonderlands in the real world by these two main characteristics on the earth—land and water. It shows a Chinese way of understanding landscape and the world, as well as representing and tallying their views of nature and Shanshui. In Summer Palace, including activities on the lake, multiple possibilities for activity are created: activities for recreation and activities for transportation. In this way, they are not simply water areas and ground areas anymore. They are spaces with potential for activity and spaces with potential for recreation, spaces that can be urban public spaces.

Water is a good element for arranging space in design practices. For a long time, it was believed that a water system works the same as a transportation system does. In fact, this understanding has limitations. After studying the case of Summer Palace, such water systems can be understood as designed as not just for space arrangement. Running water can be used to show a path and to define a district, while a bigger area of water can be used as open activity space.

This way of arranging space with water by defining different kinds of space for different groups of people is commonly used in traditional Chinese landscape design.

In modern times, we do not have much room for water areas in cities. But it does not mean that water is useless for arranging space. Water is still a good medium to help people understand space and define land uses. By the form of a water area, a mainland, and islands, ancient Chinese designers defined four basic land uses in public open space: main activities and transportation around the space (mainland area), transportation from point to point (corridors and bridges), low service open space (water surface), and activity islands (islands in water). These land uses can have a one-to-one correspondence with public open space uses in modern cities. Spatially, in an open space of a city, buildings and traffic are surrounded by public open space just like Wanshou Hill and the embankment around Kun Ming Lake in Summer Palace, Resting spaces designed for city social activities (such as having lunch or public meeting) are islands in water, while transportation channels are the Long Corridor and bridges. The bigger open free space, like a plaza, is the Kun Ming Lake itself. No matter what the uses of landscape design or the scales of areas are, from opening plaza to activity “islands” and transportation connections, they all can be models of design for modern time. From Summer Palace’s space arrangement, the traditional Chinese understanding of space, which represents the soul of Chinese landscape design and Chinese Shanshui culture, can be practiced in modern urban public landscape design.

#### 4.4 Summary

In this chapter, seven cases were introduced and discussed. In the first two cases, by restoring Chinese Shanshui painting, two traditional approaches for arranging space were discovered: (1) arranging the relationship between the open and closed spaces and (2) making an

interconnection among elements of nature and artificial elements. In the second part of this chapter, four experiences from contemporary Chinese landscape design were summarized: (1) respect Chinese culture in landscape design activities by respecting philosophies of Chinese Shanshui landscape design—*Tian Ren He Yi* (the theory that humans are an integral part of nature; (2) alternatively work natural environment with man-made elements into landscape design for controlling space to achieve the theory of Yin and Yang spatially and functionally; (3) follow the rule of simplicity in design; (4) doing Chinese styled landscape design can be just like drawing a Chinese Shanshui painting and working with ink and blank space. From the case of Summer Palace, a different point of view about ancient spatial concepts that were informed by Chinese philosophy was discussed. This concept can be used in future Chinese Shanshui-styled landscape design for space arrangement. In the next chapter, the author will summarize some design principles to help with future practices of contemporary Chinese landscape design.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSION

This thesis has sought to answer this question: what are the design solutions that both represent traditional Chinese styles of landscape design and are suitable for urban public spaces, which are also open and spacious. To answer that question, the thesis had to determine where traditional Chinese landscape design come from, and what principles might help contemporary Chinese landscape design practice in urban public spaces. The objectives of this thesis were (1) to discuss the relationship between Chinese philosophy and landscape design, through literature research, review, and case analysis, in order to explore the origins of traditional Chinese landscape design; (2) to evaluate the approaches ideal for addressing Chinese philosophy and the pros and cons of contemporary design approaches by reviewing cases dealing with painting restoration and contemporary practices of Chinese landscape design; and (3) to explore approaches useful for large-scaled landscape design spaces by using the case of the Summer Palace. In order to answer the question and also complete these objectives, chapter two selectively introduced and discussed the Chinese philosophical background of traditional Chinese landscape design; chapter three briefly introduced Chinese landscape design history that was heavily influenced by Chinese philosophy; and chapter four reviewed two painting restoration cases and four Chinese landscape design cases to suggest design principles for future practice.



By introducing the historical and philosophical background of traditional Chinese landscape design in chapters one and two, the goal of Chinese art can be found in Chinese Shanshui landscape design. That goal is creating peace for people. The spirit of traditional Chinese landscape design addresses the philosophical theory of 天人合一 (*Tian Ren He Yi*), that is, the theory that humans are an integral part of nature. This chapter will review the importance of Chinese philosophy for landscape design and the function of Shanshui culture in contemporary time before making the final conclusions.

### 5.1 Rethinking of Chinese Philosophy

The notion of human beings' separation from nature as they have evolved is fundamental to humanity's understanding of "self" in Indo-European culture. Chinese philosophy claims no such distinctions. Rather, it holds generally that only through understanding one's deep connection to nature can one achieve true self-understanding. Self-understanding (awareness, "no-self,") is based in the realization of non-duality. Because Chinese philosophy is one of the most important influences in Chinese landscape design, clarifications need to be made about Chinese philosophy before any conclusions are drawn. Chinese philosophy reveals rules of the world by admitting differences and generalizing about similarities between humans and nature.

One opinion in modern western philosophy claims that primitive people did not recognize that they themselves were from nature (George Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel). It was civilization, which made the change and helped humans see the differences between humanity and nature. The civilization is an improvement for self-understanding. But Chinese philosophy claims that only when people can find the deep connections and similarities between humans and nature from their differences, can people then reach the real stage of self-understanding. In this way,

Chinese philosophy is a kind of philosophical system that admits the differences and generalizes the similarities between humans and nature. Based on this logical chain, the classic Chinese sense of worth is beyond a utilitarian one. It directly leads to accepting the classical Chinese aesthetic standard as more important than functional achievement. To try to get to the level of *Tian Ren He Yi*, the theory that humans are an integral part of nature, is the main goal of traditional Chinese landscape design.

Chinese philosophy is also a philosophy that emphasizes a process of revelation. Chinese philosophers believe that the deep meaning of the world cannot be shown directly with methods and tools— things that can be seen as empirical evidence. Methods and tools can only explain the differences between human beings and nature. For further understanding, the “true way” (道), can only be found beyond surface. Seeing a bigger vision from a smaller exterior (以小见大) is a method that proves and shows the process of revelation from Chinese philosophy. One can see the secrets of the universe in a kernel. Chinese philosophers use characters smaller than the world to explain the world. Chinese landscape design is one of the mediums for achieving the process of study and exhibiting the truths of the world. Landscape design with its space arrangement shows a bigger vision of the world. The Chinese culture, which upholds collective conceptions, also helps traditional Chinese landscape design build an understanding of people’s activities by creating spaces that engender correlations between the “inner” and the “outer” world.

Does the old Chinese philosophy still work in contemporary time? The author believes the answer is “yes”; People today share the same cosmos as the ancient Chinese people did. The details of our circumstances have changed, yet, the basic truths of the world never change. There are more temptations and distractions, and fewer natural landscapes in modern cities. Too many

impetuous elements can cause stress to people who are already living accelerated busy life styles. Portions of peaceful land spaces are needed even more than before to help individuals and families find harmonious “moments” in their lives. Traditional Chinese landscape design has the goal of creating peaceful and simple space for people to precipitate their moods and to think and contemplate. Contemporary Chinese landscape design can have the same goals as they had before in ancient time. There will be challenges and difficulties along the way to make peaceful Chinese landscape design in modern circumstances, but the core of Chinese philosophy that humans are an integral part of nature will help lead us in the right direction.

## 5.2 Modern Landscape Design from Shanshui

In contemporary times, Chinese designers were confused by Western culture and modern urbanization. The larger-scaled buildings, cities, and land use nowadays appear to be in conflict with introversive Chinese culture. The busy life-style and increasing pressures also create an anxious atmosphere in cities. Traditional Chinese landscape design seems to be helpless in the new social circumstances and admits temptations. Instead of complaining about the changing world and city environment, Chinese designers should accept the inevitable processes of urban development and modern life-styles and explore the possibility of modern Chinese landscape design while understanding the deep meaning of Chinese culture and Chinese philosophy.

The Chinese culture of Shanshui incorporates the Chinese way of understanding nature, space, and philosophy. Shanshui culture inspired two visual arts in history, Shanshui painting and Shanshui landscape design. It plays a very important role in Chinese landscape design. The “literate” landscape design is the peak of the development of Shanshui culture (in the Song Dynasty). The aspiration of aesthetic concepts became more and more a main stream of

landscape design in ancient China (QIAN Mu). Shanshui landscape design is defined as a kind of traditional design style that represents natural sceneries by using specific design patterns and landscaping methods. Yet, there have been some misunderstandings about this definition over the years. Shanshui landscape design actually should be understood as a landscape design that represents the Chinese Shanshui culture in a spiritual way with some essential methods. In this way, on the basis of satisfying functional needs, the goals of a Shanshui landscape design include more than the creation of peaceful and simple landscape designs within Shanshui culture.

Shanshui landscape design goes beyond creating peaceful and simple landscape design art, and provides a way to envision large-scaled landscape design. In contemporary landscape design, scale of a design is a big problem, especially to Chinese landscape design. The Shanshui idea of landscape design may help designers deal with balancing the relationships among large-scaled buildings, small-scaled open spaces, and large-scaled social open space.

Coming back to the discussion about the work of Leoh Ming Pei in the Suzhou Museum, which was mentioned in the last chapter, offers a way to think about future landscape designs. Leoh Ming Peh showed his idea of landscape design by drawing a Shanshui painting on a white wall. In this designer's opinion, there is one exploration we can try for future modern Chinese landscape design activities. A Shanshui painting can be created on a plain wall, and it also can be painted on a plain urban public space—a 3D vision of Shanshui painting. The on-wall Shanshui painting represents the original 2D vision of Shanshui painting. It shows the sense of space with a rock and a blank wall. But there is a disadvantage that can only occur with a 3D vision of a Shanshui painting without the dynamic participation. Although a Shanshui painting with a multi-point perspective shows the dynamic appearance of a picture, a 3D Shanshui painting invites people to join in the environment of the painting and to feel the spirit of the design. The

combination of the buildings and the Shanshui landscape design in an urban public place can be a new expression of Shanshui painting and traditional Chinese Shanshui landscape design. It can create a piece of peace in an urban crowd.

### 5.3 Conclusion with Contemporary Chinese Landscape Design Principles

In this thesis, the historic and philosophical backgrounds of Chinese landscape design has been introduced and discussed. The crucial importance of Shanshui landscape for interpreting Chinese landscape design has been clarified. When it comes to providing concluding remarks, three contemporary Chinese landscape design philosophies emerge: (1) Keep a simple and elegant style; (2) Express Shanshui concepts in an overall space arrangement; and (3) Keep different kinds of spaces in balance by using them for different uses.

#### 5.3.1 Keep a Simple and Elegant Style

A modern Chinese Shanshui landscape design needs to keep a simple and elegant style. Overworking the details and the gardening methods are not the right ways of showing the Chinese Shanshui concept. There are two reasons. First, too much working of the details and the gardening methods disobeys the Yin-yang theory. As mentioned, the core goal of Chinese landscape design is to create a peaceful place for people to rest and think. Complicated and overwhelming decorations divert people's attention. The overwhelming decoration is even more inappropriate in modern times when already too many temptations and too much impetuous social conduct in cities often distract people from their lives. To keep the balance of Yin and Yang, simple spatial arrangements are needed for people to build an inner peace and to offset disadvantages from outside complexities. Secondly, the overwhelming decorations disobey 道,

“the rules of nature,” (or “the principles of the world”). In Chinese philosophy, there is one main concept of noninterference (See Chapter 2.1.3), which advocates doing nothing that goes against nature. It indicates the relationship between 有 and 无 (*nil* and *ens*).

Chinese landscape design should focus on working with simple spatial relationships by arranging a space with simple lines and spatial forms and avoiding too much decoration. It does not mean that the use of well-known detailing and gardening methods of Chinese landscape design are unwelcome in contemporary landscape design practices, but that they should be used with care. Symbolic colors and features can be used in contemporary landscape design, but need to be used only for finishing touches (See Chapter 4.2). Some traditional Chinese gardening methods can easily be used, such as 借景 (“borrowed scenery”) and 夹景 (“folding scenery”) in a larger city scale. But the others, such as 抑景 (“suppression scenery”) and 障景 (“obstructive scenery?”), can be used only with great care in limited space conditions (See Table 1). To create traditional Chinese Shanshui landscape design in contemporary time, designers should arrange space with simple lines and spatial form, by carefully using traditional gardening methods and finishing with Chinese symbolic colors or features.

### 5.3.2 Express Shanshui Concept in Overall Space Arrangement

One should express Chinese aesthetic concepts of Shanshui on the basis of satisfying these functions. There is the original idea of showing a bigger idea with smaller objects (以小见大; see Chapter 2). Both Chinese Shanshui landscape design and Chinese Shanshui painting are forms of media for Chinese artists and literati to show their understanding of life and the world. But since the Qing Dynasty, Chinese traditional landscape design has sunk into a misunderstanding of the parts designed to show the idea of a whole place. In too many cases,

focus has been placed more on the details of the parts than the whole concept. Actually, the way to design with Chinese aesthetic concepts is to create public space by partially showing objects and detailing the design of some parts of the place. For example, by showing the top parts of mountains with stones and plants, an urban public space can give people the aesthetic feeling of walking in the sky and the clouds. It is true that there are more possibilities in residential places than in large-scaled urban public spaces to create interesting small spaces with Chinese detailing.

Creating new Chinese Shanshui landscape designs in contemporary times can be better accomplished by emphasizing the relationship between “land” and “water,” just like the idea of the use of ink and blank space in traditional Chinese Shanshui painting. As mentioned in the example of Summer Palace, the Chinese aesthetic concept of Shanshui is a method of arranging spaces with an open plaza area, an activity “island,” and transportation channels. Shunmyo Masuno said that a landscape design is created not only for fulfilling people’s functional needs but also more for enabling them to rethink their lives (Dry-Shanshui landscape design master: Shunmyo Masuno). The Chinese aesthetic concept of Shanshui, which creates a peaceful open space for people by arranging the space, follows these natural rules: (1) thoughtfully deal with the relationship between open space and enclosed space; and (2) interconnect natural design elements, such as planting and natural stones, with manmade elements.

### 5.3.3 Keep Different Kinds of Spaces in Spatial Balance

Arranging space with the balance of Yin and Yang in space is crucial. A Chinese understanding of the world also meets the concepts of Yin and Yang. Some people explain the Yin and Yang relationship in landscape design as the combination of planting and paving. On the contrary, the Yin and Yang relationship involves the relationship between the different forms of

space, where the “natural” world complements the built environment. For example, the Summer Palace in Beijing mainly has two different types of space for recreation: spaces for groups of people purposefully staying and more open spaces for free activities of random leisure.

Transportation channels are also boundaries of these different spaces. Also, in the spatial arrangement of design work for planning landscapes, the Yin-yang theory may help balance the relationship between the surrounding urban elements, such as buildings and city sculptures, and the landscape design elements, such as garden furniture and garden sculptures, with matched scales.

#### 5.4 Summary

Some may argue that Chinese styled landscape design may not be suitable to some specific places. This thesis finds that this argument has two aspects. On the one hand, some of the traditional Chinese gardening methods and landscape furniture are unsuitable to some specific places from the point of view of their scale and uses. For example, obstructive scenery with its limited scale may not be suitable to use in urban spaces with a large-scaled building environment. On the other hand, with the aim to create peaceful spaces for people, the Shanshui landscape design can be used in an unlimited number of places and in a variety of places in various ways.

The answers to the questions that the author asked at the beginning are found after this thesis research. Two philosophical reasons influenced traditional Chinese landscape design: Tian Ren He Yi (that is, the theory that humans are an integral part of nature) and Dao Fa Zi Ran (that is, the theory that rules follow nature). These philosophical theories also determine how the aesthetic concepts of traditional Chinese landscape design are to be appropriate, implicit, and



rich with special experiences. Three design principles can be especially useful for creating future contemporary Chinese-styled landscape designs. They are (1) to design with a simple and elegant style; (2) to design with the Shanshui concept of expression in overall spatial arrangements, and (3) to keep different spaces in balance in order to create a peaceful land for people's hearts. In this way, based on Chinese culture and philosophy, the goal of creating Chinese-styled urban public landscape designs that address contemporary needs, can be achieved in future practice.

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