

# The Aesthetic Characteristics of Song Garden Based on Zhuxi "Outlook"

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**Abstract.** The Song garden is a microcosm of Song aesthetics. Zhu Xi Aesthetics is a typical representative of the Song Dynasty. "Aesthetic outlook" is the core category of Zhu Xi aesthetic spirit. This article analyzes the Song Dynasty landscape art features based on Zhu Xi aesthetic "Outlook" theory, in order to fully interpret the beauty of Song Garden.

## 1 Introduction

Song Dynasty exists in Chinese five thousand years of history with its unique historical position. "With the evolution and progress in thousands of years, the apex of the Chinese national culture was achieved in Song Dynasty." [1] In this culture time which reached the peak of perfection with the highly aesthetic passion, aesthetic creation and aesthetic implication [2], garden, as one of the important content, has infiltrated of extensive thought of aesthetics, especially the Zhuxi aesthetics opening and laying the style of freehand brushwork in traditional Chinese garden and fully coming into the mature stage of Chinese classical gardens.

## 2 Zhuxi "Outlook"

Zhuxi aesthetics is a master in the Song Dynasty aesthetics, the core thought of which is the theory of aesthetic realm namely the "Outlook" aesthetics. [2] "Outlook" theory tends to temperament, style and times spirit of the aesthetic subject. It is clear that the "Outlook" has more philosophical meaning. When it comes to the aesthetic ideal, Zhuxi took "Natural Outlook" to describe the ultimate beauty of artistic ideal [3].

The "Nature made Outlook" artistic ideal in Zhuxi's artistic philosophy mainly contained seven aspects of connotations, namely natural interests, plain taste, implicit meaning, real pattern, powerful force, easy way and pass through vein. Anyway, the ideal realm of art in Zhuxi's heart has bland taste but with deep meaning, power but with natural style, real pattern but with calm and makes as a whole.

## 3 The artistic features of "Outlook"

Jin Xuezhi once said in his book of "Aesthetics of Chinese Gardens": a garden mainly relies on three elements, namely building, landscape (or spring and stone), flowers and trees. Leaving any one of these three elements, it cannot be regarded as a typical garden [4]. It is no doubt that Zhuxi's "Outlook" aesthetics tries to interpret the artistic conception of gardens in Song Dynasty through the garden site and its layout, flowers and trees planting, rocks, spring, construction and other factors showing freehand beauty of gardens in Song Dynasty. They mainly demonstrate the following characteristics: simple, natural and interesting, powerful, implication and elegant.

### 3.1 Simple, natural and interesting

The connotations of natural interests, plain taste and real pattern in Zhuxi aesthetics demonstrate simple, natural and interesting features through the site selection, layout, planting, rockery, spring, fishes and birds which forms a sense of nature and intimacy in the gardens particularly prominent in the private gardens in the Song Dynasty.

### 3.1.1 Site selection and layout

The natural interest of Song Dynasty Private Gardens presents the combination of garden itself and the external natural environment [5]. Site selection of gardens puts more attention on local potential and takes natural geographical factors to reform. The constructions inside the garden are distributed reasonably with ingenious combination and arrangement so as to fully gain the garden landscape easily, which makes the landscape inside and outside become a harmonious one. It can be verified from the description that the building usually constructs higher than the trees so as to view the landscape outside the garden when reading Chinese classical literatures. "Famous Gardens in Luoyang" has some words to describe the site selection of Water North Hu's Garden, namely it is at the foot of Mang Mountain and besides to the Chan River. This is the description of the geographical environment which is situated at the foot of a hill and beside a stream. In the garden, the houses are along the shore and the buildings are distributed according to the natural environment so it can catch the landscape of the water, pavilion and flowers [6]. Water North Hu's Garden takes the scenery of Mang Mountain and Chan River into the architectural pattern and the spaces like pavilions, houses into the natural scenery through the combination of landscapes inside and outside the garden. At the same time, there are some buildings to be cold, hot, rain and wind shelter and recreation places which makes highly combination of aesthetic and practical functions and demonstrates natural artistic effect with garden environment so as to gain a beautiful realm.

### 3.1.2 Planting

The simple and natural interest of garden also presents in a large number of planting. Planting a large number of plants into the form of forest like forest of peach, bamboo and plum, etc., it can construct a sense of space to experience a different scenery. Sima Guang's one-man paradise is shown in Figure1. In the north of Reading Hall, there is a pool, the central of which has an island planted with bamboo. In the bamboo forest, it ties up the bamboo shoots to construct a closed space like fisherman's room named fishing temples which is taken as a shelter to provide rest place when fishing [7].

### 3.1.3 Rockery, water, fish and birds

Su Shunqin wrote in the "Canglang Pavilion": the owner of the garden often takes the boat and play on the pavilion wearing light clothes, and once coming to the pavilion, he always forgets to go back and just drinks the wine, composes poems and enjoys the wild life with fishes and birds [8].

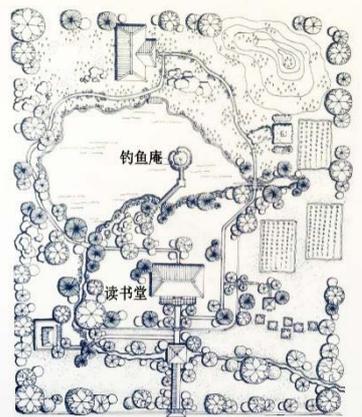


Figure1 the plane of one man paradise (pained by Baobao Li)

## 3.2 Spectacular, powerful, smart and smooth

The power, smooth in Zhuxi's Aesthetics is presented by the hills, stones, flowers and plants as well as the spring in Song Dynasty Garden showing the messiness and smooth, which forms a sense of spectacular in the garden.

### 3.2.1 Rockery, stone, flowers and plants

Genyue, Huizong personally involved in the design and construction, is the representative showing the highest achievement of royal gardens. As shown in Figure2, in the yard, the main body is the mountain valley and there are also a variety of ridges and peaks cave, pavilions, trees, grass. And garden also dug up the "Goose pool", "Wind pool" and great pool [9]. It is not difficult to see

that the feeling of wealth and luxury with artificial utmost scale is never the pattern the royal garden emphasizes. It emphasizes more on the combination of the poetic and artistic flavor and artificial landscape. Making the hill, stone, water, flowers and trees into a whole is the highly summary for the magic nature and style.



Figure2 Plane of Genyue (pained by Zheng Zhuang)

### 3.2.2 Hills and waters

Building of hills and waters are spectacular, massive, smooth, the most prosperous one of which is Hu Garden. Natives in Luoyang said: if there is more humans in the garden, then less plants while if more waters, then less pavilions. Only Hu Park has all the elements above. It is shown in Figure3, when climbing into the green pavilion in deep bamboo forest, it may obtain a feel of otherworldly when looking out and it can feel the landscape of flowers, green plants, waters, fishes, bees, etc.[10]. Different season will see different scenery. It reflects the mature garden architectural concept, which tries to contain the scenery of waters, rockery, spring, stones, forests and birds.

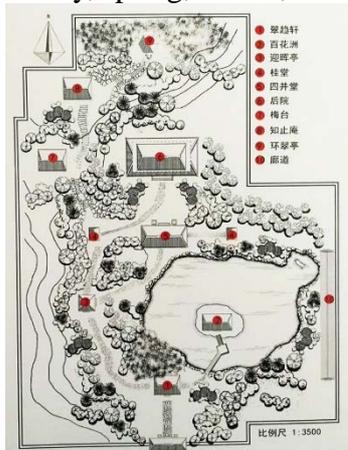


Figure3 Plane of Hu Park (pained by Liangwei Men)

### 3.3 Elegant, implicit and smooth

The implicitness, easiness in Zhuxi's Aesthetics is presented by the building title and hills and waters showing the elegant and implicit features. The garden becomes a place for the owner to enjoy the beauty of mountains and waters and to pursue life ideal with leisure.

#### 3.3.1 Building title

Taking buildings to decorate the natural landscape is usually a way to express the aesthetic elegance both with natural landscape and human landscape. Song dynasty scholar Changwen Zhu named his building as "building for poems", "pool for ink" and "stream for pen". He described that in the top of the hill, there is a Qintai. The west of Qintai is the "building for poems". The scholar often played the instrument and composed poems in the building. The bottom of the hill is a pool, the center of which is a pavilion named pool for ink where the owner always appreciated the works. At the shore of the pool, there is a pavilion named "stream for pen" which can clean the pen [11]. The landscape of garden constructed by pond, pavilion, the gurgling of water is an elegant ideal place for the owner.

The Jade and Exquisite in Canglang Pavilion is also verify it. Canglang Pavilion in Suzhou has a small house named the Jade and Exquisite in bamboo forest. The name is from a poem of Su Shun Shunqin. The indoor bamboo furniture with outdoor bamboo put each other to be echo. In the indoor small room, there is some bamboo in and outside the window sweeping the secular world. The title of The Jade and Exquisite shows elegant conception vividly.

### **3.3.2 Hills and waters**

Song Huizong tries to achieve the ideal landscape of Taoist "Abode of the Immortals" in the royal gardens. Recorded in the "Genyue", stacked hill has formed the scene where seems to be in the mountains and at the bottom of the valley. In the mountains, there are a large number of artificial waterfall, seeking a smoky fairyland scene to detached secular purpose.

## **4 Conclusion**

The beauty of the garden is the interpretation and the carrier of the aesthetic rule. We stand in a rational perspective to the appreciation of the Song Dynasty landscape by rigorous aesthetic framework of Zhuxi's aesthetic then it refines the freehand mature characteristics of Zhuxi's aesthetics "Outlook" theory on Song Dynasty landscape: simple, natural, interesting, spectacular, smooth, smart, implicit and elegant. It has some enlightenment for the contemporary landscape design through the depiction of wonderful aesthetic and artistic brilliance of Zhuxi's aesthetics on the Song Dynasty garden.

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