

## The tangible and intangible value of the Suzhou Classical Gardens

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**Abstract:** The comment of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization to the Classical Gardens of Suzhou is that Classical Chinese garden design, which seeks to recreate natural landscapes in miniature, is nowhere better illustrated than in the nine gardens in the historic urban of Suzhou. They are generally acknowledged to be masterpieces of the genre. Dating from the 11th-19th century, the Gardens reflect the profound metaphysical importance of natural beauty in Chinese culture in their meticulous design. There exists special relation between tangible heritage and intangible of humane spirit of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou. The Gardens were not only a tangible product, but also an important carrier of the Chinese traditional culture. The Classical Gardens of Suzhou created a kind of urban living environment and architectural forms, embodying the ideas of the urban design and the living style, showing the people to pursue the profound spiritual comfort of the living environment, also were interrelated to the local custom. The intangible heritage of humane spirit is a good example that the people and the nature are in perfect harmony; also it is impacting on the tangible and spiritual requirements of today.

The Classical Gardens of Suzhou, including the Humble Administrator's Garden(i), the Lingering Garden(ii), the Master-of-Nets Garden(iii), and the Mountain Villa with Embracing Beauty(iv), were inscribed on the World Heritage List by the UNESCO's World Heritage Committee at its 21st session, Naples, Italy, on December 4, 1997. Three years later, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee at its 24th session, meeting in Cairns, Australia, on November 30, 2000, the Canglang Pavilion(v), the Lion Forest Garden(vi), the Garden of Cultivation(vii), the Couple's Garden Retreat(viii), and the Retreat and Reflection Garden(ix) were added to the World Heritage List as the supplementary project of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou. The appraisal of UNESCO to the Classical Gardens of Suzhou is that Classical Chinese garden design, which seeks to recreate natural landscapes in miniature, is nowhere better illustrated than in the nine gardens in the historic urban of Suzhou. They are generally acknowledged to be masterpieces of the genre. Dating from the 11th-19th century, the Gardens reflect the profound metaphysical importance of natural beauty in Chinese culture in their meticulous design.

### **I The Classical Gardens of Suzhou is the combination of the tangible heritage and the intangible heritage.**

Among cultural heritage properties, the gardens is a unique cultural phenomenon and also is the product of the development of human civilization. The Gardens are the cultural products, and also the carrier of the traditional culture. Composed of various material forms, the Gardens contain a lot of social and humane factors. So the Classical Gardens of Suzhou is the combination of the tangible heritage and the intangible heritage. In 1954, the International Federation of Landscape Architecture held the fourth general assembly in Vienna, G.A.Jellicoe, the British gardening experts, in his speech said that the three factions of the world gardening history are China, West Asia and Ancient Greece. These oldest areas have had splendid ancient cultures. The history of the world gardens tells us that from the beginning of the birth, the Gardens have to meet human physical and spiritual needs. During the development of the gardens, the material construction and the cultural connotation were always closely linked with each other, the tangible heritage and the intangible heritage, which the gardens contained gradually, achieved a perfect harmony. As the tangible and spiritual heritage, the Classical Gardens of Suzhou are good examples of the world gardening, and the Gardens have influence on the tangible and spiritual requirements of today. This shows that the research on the relation between the tangible and the intangible heritage has both historical and practical significance.

#### **1. Garden is a general cultural form and phenomenon.**

Being a kind of tangible, the Gardens is a fragile carrier of culture, because of all kinds of reasons, especially

the wars and the natural disasters. After thousands of years, there are few original gardens survived. For example, in China, almost all the gardens, which had splendid history, had gone, such as Six Dynasties, Tang Dynasty and Song Dynasty. Even the Royal Gardens in Beijing of Ming and Qing Dynasties, there are only a few gardens surviving such as the Summer Palace, which was repaired in Late Qing. So the Classical Gardens of Suzhou, which is well preserved at present, have become the representatives and examples of the traditional Chinese classical gardens that people can know and study the tangible heritage, intangible heritage and the relations between them. The emergence and the development of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou are not an isolated and static physical phenomenon, but is one aspect reflecting the development of the Chinese tangible and spiritual civilization, such as politics, economy, thought and culture etc. As a special type of heritage, the Gardens are the main elements of Suzhou as a historical and cultural urban, and the meaning of its construction covers many aspects of natural and social sciences fields. The existing Gardens are well preserved and the structure is undamaged. So the Gardens have become the tangible component for us to research and understand the Chinese architecture, gardening, botany, hydraulics, and environmental science. Also the Gardens are the important reference to research and understand the cultural patterns, such as history, society, humanity, aesthetics, philosophy, and folk custom. The influences on the world, the Gardens are the rare kind of tangibles, which reflect the Chinese gardening's influence on the world gardening and culture, especially in the East Asia. The Classical Gardens of Suzhou is a general cultural form and phenomenon, the cream of Chinese gardening art, and cultural complex, which is the combination of the old and the new. They reflect the human's thought of being close to nature and the pursuit of rebuilding a better environment. In the history of garden development, the Gardens, which include all kinds of achievements created by human civilization, were the foundation of the modern garden and the mother of the landscape architecture. Today, the architects and designers are drawing inspirations from the classical gardens, and building human environment is learning from the classical gardens in post-industrial era. It can be said that the culture of Suzhou Classical Gardens is the inexhaustible spiritual wealth all of humanity.

## **2. Garden carries plenty of information of the Chinese traditional culture.**

Suzhou is an old city of 2500 years' history and located near the Taihu Lake, the south of the Yangtze. Both the natural conditions and the geographical environment are extremely advantageous. In 514 BC, Wu state established its capital here. From then on, Suzhou was always the economy and culture center of south China. In gardening, architecture, arts and crafts, and paintings, the level was high and the masters came forth in large numbers. Especially in the Ming and Qing Dynasties, the officials whether retired or not, and intellectuals were all the creators both of the tangible and intangible wealth. In pursuit of beautiful living environment, they provided necessary social and cultural conditions for the development of the Gardens from tangible to the spirit. While intellectuals and painters participated in the gardening, some conceived, some designed. Their participation made the Gardens full of typical flavor literati, then a unique Garden Cultural System was born, which carried a lot of Chinese traditional cultural information both tangible and intangible. One of the important features of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou is that the tangible gardening elements are not only the exquisite arts of the Gardens, but also including much information of history, culture, philosophy and science. The gardening elements, such as the name of the Gardens, boards, the parallel couplets, calligraphy stele, carvings, decorations, flowers and trees, and rockeries, some of them embody the philosophical concepts and ideas of Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, some of them promote life philosophy and cultivate people's sentiments, some of them decorate the landscape and make tourists express their feelings through ancient poems. What is more important is that the Gardens are residential gardens; the building regulations reflect the local living way and custom of the south of Yangtze. From the building regulations, we can understand and research folk-custom of the south of Yangtze.

The architecture and rockery are tangible existence; also reflect people's emotions. The gardeners express their spirit through combining all these elements in art. Its expression as follows:

**First**, the gardeners extensively used the rhetorical tactics of Chinese literature, such as analogy, symbolization, personification, antithesis, exaggeration and etc, the gardeners named the Gardens and scenery spots implicitly and decently. So tourists can appreciate its poetry before entering the Gardens, for example, the Canglang Pavilion. The names of scenery spots are always devived poems or essays, such as the Watching Pines and Appreciating Paintings Studio of the Master-of-Nets Garden\_etc. A few words may contain a historic story and a piece of ancient Chinese ethic and ideology.

**Second**, with poetry and other literary forms, the gardeners made the atmosphere of gardens more elegant so that the Gardens became a kind of art. The natural scenery will unfold in the Gardens, such as wind, frost,

rain (xii), snow, fog, stones, water, flowers, trees, the sound of wind, rain, birds and insects, and the shadow of moon and trees. When tourists are appreciating the Gardens, they will naturally think of the sentences in the poems, because all these natural scenery occur in the Gardens and there are many poems describing natural scenery. The natural scenery and objective scenarios constitute the imagination of space together. For example, the Stay-and-Listen Pavilion of the Humble Administrator's Garden was built near the pond, so the gardeners named the pavilion with the famous sentence. Going to this place, the tourists can feel lonely because of the sentence, and the scenery that the pond is full of the fading lotus leaves becomes a piece of poetry. The poems in ancient China were highly developed and children needed to learn how to make a poem and to recite masterpieces. What is more, the poets' participated in the design of gardens; it goes without saying that the names of the scenery spots are very poetic.

**Third**, sufficiently using other arts, such as planting, decoration, stone sculpturing, drawing and music etc. Though comprehensive using of these arts, the forms and contents of gardens are more and more diversified. The owners of the Gardens can enjoy, feel and comprehend the Gardens, from local to the whole, from small space to large space, from limited to unlimited, from tangible to intangible.

**Vegetation:** The flowers and trees, especially those old trees named living fossil, are irreplaceable sources. The flowers and trees have been personalized. Though skillfully organizing the plants, the sight of the Gardens become lively, thus a comfortable environment is created. The chrysanthemum, plum blossom, lotus, orchid and Chinese flowering crab apple, are all seen as the man of character in the flowers. Many buildings and the scenery spots were named after the plants around them. For example, planting Chinese scholartree outside the door had been the pattern, Similarly, people planted Magnolia flower, peony and sweet osmanthus in front of the halls to pray for good fortune and wealth, because of the pronunciations or the colors. In small space, the plantain and green bamboo were planted, because their colors and cultural meanings showed the noble character and good taste of the owners.

**Calligraphy and Poem:** In the Classical Gardens of Suzhou, calligraphy steles on the walls are very common and precious. In ancient time, the gardeners put the arts of calligraphy and poetry together, and engraved them on the line stones. The calligraphy steles preserve intact the original handwriting of the calligraphers, and show the humanistic spirit of the garden's culture. In the calligraphy stele, there are a lot of historical data, the design ideas of gardens, the process of gardening, the information of changes of gardens, the model calligraphies, the poems and articles and the stories of owners. The boards and couplets, which made of valuable woods, bamboo, and craved on the stones, are the title scenery which is the unique characteristics of Chinese gardens, the words on them were written by the famous, and guild people to enjoy the culture of gardens.

**Furniture:** The interior arrangement in classical gardens shows strong humanistic spirit and local custom. The furnishings in the main buildings, such as the living room and the study, displayed symmetrically, that is the standard of etiquette. At the same time, the material and size of the furniture also can show the owners' identity, status, wealth and cultural quality. While the furniture in other buildings are more free and lively. The furniture in small rooms is small in size, exquisite in style and coordinately arranged. Usually, art collections are used to decorate the rooms; they are board, couplet, painting, china, etc. These collections are compatible with the cultural atmosphere, and describe the surrounding scenery of the buildings. The interior arrangement in classical gardens also shows the spiritual pursuit of the owners. A number of antiques are displayed on the tables, such as porcelain, jade, Cloisonne Enamel, stone, bonsai, a wide range of the display is not only the daily life of personal supplies, but also stationeries, vary from person to person, have strong personal characteristics of the owners. In Wen Zhenheng once said that, such as gardening, drinking, making poems, collecting books and antiques are the things that you do in your leisure time, and you can't take away when you were dead. But your taste and flavor can be seen from these things. The ancient intellectuals thought highly of the individual self-cultivation. That was a good way to show their self-cultivation through arranging the furniture in the Gardens where they're lived.

### **3. Garden embodies the spirit of traditional Chinese culture of harmony between the nature and the human.**

The most important and profound spirit of traditional Chinese culture is the idea of "Tian Ren heyi", that means the nature and the human are in harmony. Suzhou is the famous paradise in ancient China, and the Classical Gardens of Suzhou is the typical place to show the harmonious idea. If we understand the nature and ideal as Tian(heaven), and understand the urban life as Ren(human), then the ideal environment including natural tangibles in the city is the Paradise, which is the harmony between the nature and the human. Suzhou gardens show the natural environment of tangibles, but look forward to the ideal of the

sublimation of the real world. The real life and the ideal are combined, so that the Classical Gardens of Suzhou realize the combination of the reality and ideals, and make a significant contribution to the human habitation civilization. In the ancients' minds, the paradise is true, where flowers and trees shouldn't fade, and the delight of mountains should change day and night. The paradise is a kind of comfortable and convenient living environment. Outside the doors, the carriages and horses are busy and you could go into the real life, but inside the doors, there are another vision, birds are singing and flowers are blossoming. The materials and spirit are put together, and the nature and human are in harmony.

#### **4 .The Freehand Landscape Gardening is the cream of Chinese traditional art.**

From the Wei and Jin Dynasties (AD 420-589), China's private gardens in the south of the Yangtze tended to be scholastic. After nearly thousand years evolution, integrating the feelings into the landscape had become the hobby of the scholars and intellectuals. Landscape poetry and landscape painting had become eternal theme and the source of inspiration of the literati poetry and painting. Because of using the landscape poetry and painting to the gardening, the Gardens became the freehand landscape gardening. In Ming and Qing dynasties, located in the south of the Yangtze, Suzhou area was in budding capitalism, and its economy developed, the handicraft industry and business was very prosperous, and the residential garden had reached a new peak. In order to express the feelings of the landscape, the gardeners used a variety of artistic practices to organize the spaces, such as borrowed views, opposite views, framed views, the decorative and functional alteration and the abstract and concrete alteration. Then the landscape artistic effects formed, which were "making the less triumph over the more" and "revealing the bigger through the smaller". Also the traditional sense and beauty of space with Chinese national characteristics were showed, finally achieved the artistic effect of "Although person made, just as the nature manufactured." In the history of gardening, the basic garden aesthetic idea had fallen into a pattern, which was more unified with the poetry, painting and other art form, such as the landscape started from the realm of painting, rose to the realm of poetry, then raised to the higher level emotion, at last achieved the realm of integration of the people, the emotion and the landscape.

Freehand is the purpose of gardening of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou, the process is to forming the system of gardening through combined the tangible and intangible culture. This system establishes the historical status and the position of the arts of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou, so that it eventually becomes a model of Oriental gardens.

## **II The Classical Gardens of Suzhou are exquisite living space that represents harmony of nature and human.**

The Classical Gardens of Suzhou whose fundamental function is appendix of residence in Jiangnan (south of Yangtze River). In spirit, the gardens express the ancients' nice wish of getting well on with nature and pursuit on living quality. Conducted by the wish and pursuit, the gardens were gradually built beautifully and became exquisite living space that represents harmony of nature and mankind.

### **1\_The Classical Gardens of Suzhou are inspissions of Suzhou city feature**

Recorded in history, Suzhou city has existed for more than 2500 years. The real historical relic that reflects the ancient city feature is **Pingjiang Map** which was inscribed on stone in South\_Song Dynasty. Streets, rivers, buildings, warehouses, temples, can be seen on the map, furthermore, gardens and beauty spots are apparently marked their names and locations, such as South\_Garden\_Canglang Pavilion. The well\_known picture **Sheng Shi Zi Sheng Tu**, which is a picture of prosperous Suzhou city in Qing Dynasty, vividly and realistically describes sceneries of gardens and people's living situation in gardens.

Conforming to Situation of Sky and Earth, observing Soil and tasting Water is the guideline of building Suzhou city in natural circumstance at that time. It is also high-level refining of humanism in spirit that means respect and acclimation to nature.

All of those, not only lay physical foundation of elegant natural circumstance of Suzhou city, but also offer plentiful resource and vivid original fodder for setting up garden scenery. Gardens exist in Suzhou ancient city. In history, abundant natural sceneries were remained among the chessboard of streets and lanes, moreover there contained an automatic recurrent ecologic environment, for example, **Canglang Pavilion** (world heritage) remained the scenery that was flourishing grass and trees, broad surface and cascade hills when it was built in Song Dynasty. **East Villa** built in early Ming Dynasty, was a manor with garden. **The Humble Administrator's Garden** (world heritage) built in mid-late Ming Dynasty keeps the scenery that it is in the city as broad as in the countryside. The Mountain Villa With Embracing Beauty (world heritage) was built in Qing Dynasty, whose rockery was piled up imitating Yang Hill to the west of Suzhou city.

According to historical record\_ there were 270 gardens and courtyards belonging to private residence in Suzhou city in late Ming Dynasty. The ancient city of Suzhou covered 14.2 square kilometers and there was one garden or courtyard per 0.053 square kilometers average. Although the garden was privately owned, its function of virescence is beyond private benefit, and adjusts environment of the whole Suzhou city. So it benefits to the public. Therefore, Suzhou deserved the title of City of Gardens in history.

Density of the gardens in city unanimously reflects the characteristic of Suzhou city that is of gardens. The garden will be seen as soon as people enter the gate of house. Almost every house has garden or courtyard. It is said in ancient poetry that Suzhou is wonderful; half the city is covered by gardens.

## **2\_The Classical Gardens of Suzhou is a mirror of Suzhou folk-custom**

As gardens of residence that combine houses with gardens, The Classical Gardens of Suzhou have the function of living. They are architectural spaces accessory to residence. The noumenons of the gardens preserved to present prove related historical materials. In these Architectural spaces, local natural conditions and social custom, lifestyle and folk-custom, folk convenience and tradition of Suzhou are reflected vividly and clearly. In Chinese history, Suzhou people's high-level lifestyle had a wide and profound influence. The tangible architecture, furnishings, dishes of Suzhou style, and the intangible handcrafts, folk-custom of Suzhou were absorbed in gardens. Garden is a place for exhibiting folk-custom of Suzhou integrated as well as the lifestyle of Suzhou that was imitated by other areas and even influenced royal life.

### **First, architectural formation of The Classical Gardens of Suzhou reflects life concepts of traditional families.**

Suzhou traditional residence demanded legitimacy in architectural style, but the structure of garden is unequal. Axis runs through residence and rooms of all kinds of function are arranged alongside the axis from south to north. Location, acreage, sculpt, scale, fitment, etc. are different according to the owner and their function. On all accounts, all of these reflect the idea of patriarchal clan system, ethic and social ranking, which represent the characteristics of the age.

The hall of the residence in **the Master-of-Net Garden** is traditional mode of three grades. Inside the gate is sedan hall, behind the sedan hall is the main hall used for treating male guests. Behind the main hall is the female hall used as sitting room for female guests. The three halls are connected by an obvious axis. Plane figure and elevation figure display the main hall is highest, because male uses it. The female hall is lower and darker, in which hostess met female guests, which was somewhat private in feudal age. The gate-hall is used for servants wait for command, so it is quite simple. The series of building definitely express the ethic idea that male is more respected than female in feudal age and reveal the assignment of male and female.

Gardens as accessory architecture spaces are quite unbending spaces that imitate nature. They are also small spaces in which the owners and their friends forgather informally and study poetry. Constantly they are also places for the family's party, which is more concerned about entertainment and emotion-communication. The famous novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* which was written in Qing Dynasty clearly describes the scenes of treating guests.

### **Second, the Classical Gardens of Suzhou were the ideal places for scholar-bureaucrat's elegant lives.**

The Classical Gardens of Suzhou can serve for living, viewing, sightseeing. They can satisfy all kinds of routine requirement of lives. Furthermore they are graceful circumstance for appreciation. Ordinary routine lives become artistic and meaningful in these artistic spaces of poems and paintings. Scholar-bureaucrats lived on so plentiful materials that they need not pay attention to political affairs, but poetically inhabit the gardens designed by themselves and enjoyed the artistic lives. Gardens were the ideal place for scholar-bureaucrat's elegant lives, which made their desires of elegant lives becoming realities.

**Wen Zhengheng** is one of great grandsons of **Wen Zhengming**, who is one of the 4 most famous painters in Suzhou in Ming Dynasty. He was a typical bookman of Suzhou, born in well-educated and rich family. Main activities of all his life were reciting poetries, writing articles, painting, and building gardens. He just lived in gardens like poetry and painting and the gardens melted into his life. In his late years, he wrote a book titled **Zhang Wu Zhi** which introduces the tenet of designing gardens, rules of arranging furnishings and so on, and records essentials, course and various common senses of scholar-bureaucrats' elegant lives in gardens in Ming Dynasty. He never studied building gardens purposefully, but was always praised once he made performance that was based on his own attainment and accumulation. One of the two gardens designed by him was titled with *Showplace of Suzhou*, the other was titled with *People in the Picture*. **Wen Zhengheng** poetically lived in gardens designed and built by him, which represented his own taste. In his own gardens, he realized artistic life. As a type of scholar-bureaucrats in Ming Dynasty, his attainment, taste, talent and sentiment, selfhood surpassed ordinary persons. His understanding on gardens could be called *Temperament*

*of Gardens*. The masterpiece of art of gardens **Zhang Wu Zhi** that contained *Temperament of Gardens* was remained. Frondose artistic and exquisite lifestyle in gardens are mainly those activities such as playing musical instrument, playing chess, calligraphy, painting, tasting tea, and opera. Guqin, Chinese antique musical instrument, is a symbol of lofty morality in ancient time of China.

**The Guqin and its Music** was inscribed on the list of intangible world heritage in 2003. Before Ming Dynasty, Guqin was always ranked as head of elegant arts. Gardens as elegant living spaces usually have the buildings that are specially used to listen music of Guqin, For example, **Guqin Room in the Master of Net Garden**. In some gardens, famous Guqins were collected and stored for Guqin Club so as to continue the ancients.

Playing I-go is a primary entertainment in ancient time of China, which contains lofty brightness. There were many stories concerning mythological playing I-go. There are special places for playing I-go in the Classical Gardens of Suzhou, for example, *the Small Hill and Osmanthus Fragrant Pavilion* in the Master-of-Nets Garden.

Reading and composition, calligraphy are nuclear items in Chinese ancient culture. There are special places for both reading and calligraphy in gardens, for example, *the Return to Read Study* in the Lingering Garden, The Listening to the Sound of Rain Pavilion in the Humble Administrator's Garden, etc.

Because the classical gardens regard paintings as references and painting is main component of elegant lives in ancient time, painting Ateliers are set up in gardens in which elegant sentiment and aesthetic abilities can be cultivated in the excellent circumstance.

Drinking tea is quite a practical routine of life. During the evolving course of thousands of years, literators of different ages added individual factors into drinking tea so that a series of liquid of tea, water for infusing tea, tea set, tea tao, tea skill came to being.

Music of Suzhou is mainly instrumental music of bamboo-made instrument that is named *Jiangnan Sizhu*. Because the gardens were privately owned, professional bands were often employed for musical performance in small ceremonies.

In addition, drinking wine, tasting tea, enjoying the cool, appreciating the moon, watching the fishes, so much as feeding the pets of traditional cultural meanings which are crane, white deer, mandarin duck. It is said in today that all of those are slap-up entertainments. They are endowed cultural meanings in **the Classical Gardens of Suzhou**. These entertainments are connected to idiographic buildings. For example, *The Carrying Wine Hall in the Couple's Garden Retreat* has the subject concerning wine and express the mood of drinking with friends together.

There out, elegant lives in gardens are not only recreational but also immerge in cultural and artistic nutrient, which are ideal lives of elegance. Besides the solid economic foundation, the owner who enjoyed the lives must have courtlike sentiment, cultural attainment, and spiritual pursuit.

### **3.Gardens are the cultural memories on traditional craftworks.**

At the Golden Age of the Classical Gardens of Suzhou, economy and culture of Suzhou took the lead of the whole country. A great deal of top-ranking litterateurs, poets, painters, calligrapher, architects, craftsmen, musicians, playactors, and so on, came forth. Gardens were source of their creation and concourses for exhibiting their excellent works. These achievement of traditional craftworks are preserved in Suzhou gardens and become present cultural memories.

#### **First, the Classical Gardens of Suzhou is a habitat of diversified traditional craftworks.**

Since Tang Dynasty, Suzhou was always one of the most economy-developed cities in China. Therefore, at the age of craftwork, craftworks of Suzhou not only have plentiful categories, full-scale industries, but also have a high total level and took the lead of craft brothers in China. These craftworks were more exquisite after entering gardens and became obvious gentle and elegant according to the requirement of owners. Suzhou style came to being. In The Classical Gardens of Suzhou, works of handicraft can be seen everywhere. For example, Xiangshan Group was a group engaged in traditional architecture.

In the Classical Gardens of Suzhou, Xiangshan Group Architectures which have harmonious colors, compact structures, ingenious work, changeful forms can be seen everywhere. For example, structure of the hall is huge and ingenious (xxi), and the beam was shaped to round or quadrate. Furthermore propitious patterns are carved on the surface of the beam. Door can be classified into wall gate, general door, and window can be classified into long window, half window, knockdown window and window screen, etc. Accessory establishment made of wood, such as baluster, hitching ornamentation, decorative framework, are all of exquisite sculpt, delicate work and have the sense of innervations and inspiration.

The color is simple and elegant. The carving is exquisite. All of those are characteristics of Suzhou gardens.

There must be rockery in the Suzhou gardens. Piling up the detritus to rockery, is a kind of craft that combined technique and art together in high-level. There is no ready-made mode of rockery. It is necessary that the craftsmen have plentiful experiences and holistic understanding of the natural mountains. At this rate, craftsmen can pile up the detritus to artistic rockery. Moreover Piling the rockery needs to master the dynamics theories.

### **Second, the Classical Gardens of Suzhou are carrier and foundation of the cultural memories.**

It is no doubt that The Classical Gardens of Suzhou are carriers of cultural memories. Since the nations all over the world universally start to respect their own national cultures and histories, the relics are especially invaluable for the cultural marks that they carry. These relics are also foundations of recalling history and studying history. The 21<sup>st</sup> session of World Heritage Committee gave appraisal to The Classical Gardens of Suzhou that these gardens built in 11<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century, by the design with special care, reflect the abstruse artistic conception that is derived from nature but surpass nature in Chinese culture. As the carriers of cultural memories, The Classical Gardens of Suzhou served as the foundation for study.

*Yuan Ye* is a book concerning devising garden, whose author is Ji Cheng who was born in Wujiang County in Suzhou in Ming Dynasty. Ji Cheng summarized experiences of all his life on designing and building garden to compose a book titled *Yuan Ye* that mainly recounts the principles and techniques of designing and building gardens. It is in particular that the chart of piling rockery is called *the crystal of this book*. This book was almost lost during the long years and was not found until 1930s in Japan. After then, *Yuan Ye* was republished and handed down generation by generation.

*Zhang Wu Zhi* is another book concerning devising and enjoying gardens, whose author is Wen Zhenheng, who lived from 1585 to 1645, Suzhou locative. The content of the book can be classified into 12 chapters, which are house, vegetation, water and rockery, bird and fish, calligraphy and painting, furnishings, apparatus, dress, boat and vehicle, location, vegetable and fruit, tea. In the light of the classification, it can be revealed that the book not only recorded the principles of building garden in Ming Dynasty but also noted scholar-bureaucrats' understandings and appreciations on gardens as well as their exquisite lifestyle, which is more costful.

*Record of Jiangnan Gardens*, author of which is Tong Jun \_1900~1983\_, a famous Chinese architect. In the 1930s, he investigated the gardens of 14 cities in Jiangnan, which included Suzhou, Yangzhou, Nanjing, Hangzhou, etc. As a production, *Society for the Study of Chinese Architecture* published *Garden Zhi of Jiangnan* in 1937. In this book, the situation of the remainders of historical gardens all round Jiangnan was recorded. Furthermore, it uniquely dissertated building gardens, piling rockery, history of gardens, and historical materials of gardens.

*The Classical Gardens of Suzhou* is a book as reference of composing nominating document when the Classical Gardens of Suzhou was going to be nominated to the list of world heritage by UNESCO in 1997. The author of this book is **Liu Dunzheng** \_1897~1986\_ who is a famous architect, architecture historian, and academician of China Science Academy. In this book, the temporal situation of these gardens is recorded. Every garden was meteraged and their features of art were classified and evaluated.

Both the works generated in activities of ancient garden building and the monographs of investigation on gardens in last century, are truly cultural memories. They are foundation of inheriting the gardens as well as the contemporary monographs on gardens.

### **III Ecological environment and cultural values of Suzhou Classical Gardens**

Nowadays, there are many different words to inscribe urban construction: urban landscapes, garden city, ecological city, livable city, green city, etc. but the core idea is the same, that is the pursuit of harmonious relationship between natural environment and human in the greatest degree. People have become to advocate green city, green economy, green living, and green civilization. Urban landscape has become the main direction of urban construction and laid a solid foundation for urban sustainable development. Suzhou Classical Gardens, with high value of ecological environment and spirituality, reflected not only the survival of ancient Eastern wisdom and arts, but also the concept of contemporary urban development.

#### **1. Garden is hot pursuit of contemporary social and human spirituality**

Since UNESCO inscribed the Suzhou Classical Gardens on World Heritage List in 1997, people began to rethink over the Garden, which is a living environment.

In past, it was only regarded as the ancient residential areas, classified as sub-disciplines of architecture, valued as sightseeing place, but now, as a result of ancients' efforts in pursuit of an ideal living environment,

as a combining disciplines with art and culture, as a museum to display traditional culture.

In short, it has been a decade since Suzhou Classical Garden inscription on World Heritage List, and during these 10 years, managers' awareness were arisen, understandings were enhanced, and utilizations were more scientific. It is also a decade in pursuit of human spirituality.

**First, it means re-recognizing the value of ancient civilization that people pursue traditional culture**

Garden, whether large or small, has its particular elegant and generous style. Suzhou Classical Gardens, built by mankind, look so natural and full of meaning. It can be considered as a manifestation of intangible heritage. All kinds of buildings, from shape to color, have its own specific function and cultural meaning. It is a perfect union of tangible heritage and intangible heritage. In particular, some small-sized buildings located out-of-the-way, its structure is so simple, but the courtyard is so delicate. These gardens, which are so quiet and comfortable, are important elements of garden-style city. Now, people's interest was stimulated by the ancient city's common facilities and construction. People even to imitate it in modern city, which means that people pursue traditional culture, and re-recognize the value of ancient civilization.

**Second, Respecting the traditional culture is the performance of psychological maturity of modern people**

Suzhou experienced a kind of cultural development and reunification process. Most of man-made-tourist-spots, which were built in the late 20th century, were quickly shut down due to lacking of cultural meaning. People finally found the unique cultural heritage's eternal historical value, aesthetic value and scientific value. Suzhou Classical Gardens, with ancient town, ancient lane, ancient block, ancient rivers, ancient trees, are witnesses of Suzhou's history and customs, are precious relics of Suzhou traditional arts and culture.

Respect traditional culture and art or neglect? Is to protect or give up? This is a measure of a society and government's level of civilization, also a foundation for further development. In 1995, Suzhou Municipal Government initiated to declare the Suzhou Classical Gardens on World Heritage List, which means Suzhou Municipal Government has recognized the value of Gardens from worldwide point of view. In recent years, the ancient garden, historical city and town has become a hot topic, the tourism industry increase year by year, and the influence of the cultural heritage of Suzhou also gradually strengthened. Take 2007 as an example, there are 2,061,800 Chinese tourists and 47,923,900 foreign tourists, increasing 13.61% and 15.89% (compared with last year), and the total income is 638,090,000,000 RMB.

**Third, inheritance the traditional culture shows the long-lasting vitality of local and national culture**

Suzhou is an ancient city with 2500 years history, formatting mature customs and culture. From Classical Gardens of Suzhou to Suzhou ancient city, to traditional buildings of south Yangtze River Delta, a conclusion can be draw that they have similar characteristics in appearance, color, scale, function, etc. The reform and opening up policy provide Suzhou construction opportunities, and the complex of Garden, which was hidden in the blood of Suzhou was awakened. Gardens, with Qin, Weiqi, books, paintings, tea, Kunqu, and other cultural, joint with contemporary people's spiritual needs, and many new garden-style house was welcomed. In particular, Suzhou Classical Gardens was inscribed on World Heritage List, and UNESCO inscribed Kunqu on Oral and Intangible Cultural Heritage List, after that, there is a new research trend ---- return to traditional culture. This once again shows that the traditional cultural values and vitality, has proven its strategy of sustainable development in contemporary China irreplaceable importance.

**2. Garden is a sample of harmony between man and nature.**

Today, Harmony between man and nature is an important topic, this paper only deal with the people's living. 3,000 years ago, the ancient Chinese philosophical works Book of Changes, put forward point view of harmony between man and nature. In the development of contemporary global integration, there are more and more intense conflicts, such as people and nature, people and resources, people and the environment. From point view of people's basic living requirements, their home harmony with nature is the greatest desire, also is the highest level. Suzhou Classical Garden is harmonious, reflecting the ancient Chinese art concept and multiple values. It contains the traditional Chinese culture in ecological and aesthetic philosophy of life, also is the universal values of all mankind:

**First, looks natural: living environment and ecological awareness**

Most of people choose urban life, whether in ancient or modern, this is because the city has safer and more convenient living conditions, full of opportunities for themselves and their future generations. But there are also disadvantages of urban life, such as people unable to enjoying natural world that is full of vigor (including the right to enjoy the beautiful natural scenery); unable to meet the spirit of the aspirations of detached the outside world, unable to enjoy no ecological pollution of life (including fresh Oxygen, Clean drinking water, etc.).

Suzhou has good natural conditions, such as climate, geography. After having enough money and political status, the ancient literati is longing for enjoying nature in city. Wen Zhenghen's book, ZhangWuZhi referred the ideal home: the first class is living in landscape, the middle class is living in country, and the last class is living in suburb. "Looks like nature" means a pursuit of the natural ecological environment, which should be close to us. In their own house, the urban residents will be able to obtain the ecological space, so classical garden was always called "urban forests". Contemporary people are interested in "urban forests", it means that they affirm the favorable conditions of the urban life and abandon non-ideal, non-ecological environment of the city.

#### **Second, return to nature.**

Suzhou Classical Gardens also contains ecological aesthetic concepts, return to nature. Garden's design is ancient's re-creation. Whether utilizing existing conditions or digging pond, the purpose of building is to return to nature. They have a strong subjective consciousness while gardening, creating a poetic and ecological landscape. Therefore, the funs of garden are both from nature and art. This kind of landscape is after the nature, but higher than the natural ecological landscape, woven with ancient Chinese philosophy, literature, calligraphy, painting, music, opera, etc, especially with the traditional Chinese landscape poetry, landscape painting. The garden is known as the "silent poetry, Three-dimensional paintings." Take the name of some classical gardens of Suzhou as examples, the Humble Administrator's Garden, the retired National Ombudsman want to grow vegetables. The Couple's Garden Retreat, a pair is willing to cultivate a harmonious life. The Retreat and Reflection Garden, the owner thinks about his own past mistakes...

Garden return to nature, with various purposes: sequestered herself from the world, calmly live with lover, think about past mistakes after retired... The final purpose of gardening is living in an environment, with harmony between man and nature.

#### **Third, perceive the whole world from a miniature**

Suzhou Classical Gardens are private, so it is limited in area. In thousands of years of gardening history, gardeners have formed a complete method--- in a small space, using various means to create a garden, perceiving the whole world from a miniature. Private garden in a small space. The largest remaining Suzhou Classical Gardens is the Humble Administrator's Garden, covering 5.2 ha. Generally speaking, the classical gardens are about 1 ha. In order to create a small space with remarkable effect, designers use contrasting, background, increasing landscape level to deal with space, according to local conditions. Corridors, walls, bridges, houses are commonly used to create a rich landscape. Thus, people can perceive the whole world from a miniature. It is different from the geometric pattern of Western classical gardens, but also different from the royal gardens in northern China. Nowadays, its natural flexibility is more and more applied to contemporary buildings.

#### **Fourth, natural creatures have t meaning of for creating urban ecological environment.**

Vegetation, with mountains and water, is main parts of ecological environment. Vegetation's important position in gardens can be seen whether from the historical records or the existing examples. Suzhou Classical gardens, which as it as natural example, have much vegetation. For example, Pili, Luoshi and Sudaicao can be planted for covering road and wall. Prunus persica, plum tree, and malus halliana can be planted for seeing and enjoying. Maple tree, phoenix tree and ginkgo tree can be planted for sun shading. There are hundreds of vegetations in Gardens, and there are kinds of flowers and green trees all year round.

Lush vegetation in Garden, attracts all types of small insects, small reptiles, fish, shellfish, birds, tortoise, and the host tame some redeeming animals, such as Crane, Deer, etc. Intentional and unintentional, taming animals and wild animals, animals and plants, constitute a small eco-environment together. Given if there is a small garden in per 0.053 sq. A natural biological chain, regulating the microclimate of the city and maintaining the ecological harmony, is made up of hundreds of small ecological environment.

#### **3. Garden is the example of passing history memory and cultural.**

Creation of the Memory of the World programme to protect irreplaceable library treasures and archive collections. From then on, people all over the world extended this program to history memory, to protect cultures in each country. There is a value about the history memory, which is an example of cultural heritage's passing. In short, it is necessary to find something in human's history, particularly the cultural history, if you want to know the meaning and the future of mankind. The existing World Cultural Heritage --- -Suzhou Classical Gardens is an example, and garden design, building methods, content and the spirit value are the combination of tangible heritage and intangible heritage. From this point of view, it is an example of history memory and cultural heritage's passing.

Suzhou Classical Gardens, is the greatest characteristics of Suzhou ancient city, is the representative works

of Oriental Gardens, and is cultural symbol of a certain historical era. Its values as tangible and intangible cultural heritage are increasingly demonstrated. I believe that there will be more and more achievements with the development of in-depth study and research on Gardens.



(i)The Humble Administrator's Garden



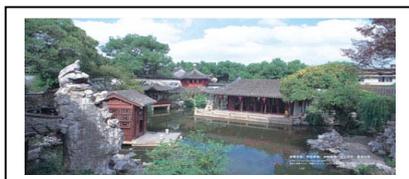
(ii)The Linggring Garden



(iii)The Mast-of-nets Garden



(iv)the Mountain Villa with Embracing Beauty



(ix)the Retreat and Reflection Garden



(v)the Canglang Pavilion



(vi)the Lion Forest Garden



(vii)the Garden of Cultivation



(viii)the Couple's Garden Retreat

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