

Suzhou Classical Gardens

The content, value and protection process of Suzhou Classical Gardens

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Introduction

Suzhou Classical Gardens is the general name for the Chinese classical gardens located in Suzhou City, Jiangsu Province, East China. The term "classical" defines the ancient Chinese period before the Opium War in 1840. Suzhou is a famous historical and cultural city in China. It has always been famous for its beautiful mountains and rivers and elegant gardens. In fact, classical gardens are not unique to Suzhou. They are all over China and show different characteristics in different places. However, due to Suzhou's beautiful natural environment, developed social economy, and thriving culture and art, Suzhou gardens have the reputation of “the gardens in the area south of the Yangtze River are the best in China, but those in Suzhou beat all the others (Congzhou C., 1956, p.5).” [1]

The classical gardens of Suzhou date back to the 6th century BCE when the city was founded as the capital of the Wu Kingdom. Inspired by these royal hunting gardens built by the King of the State of Wu, private gardens began emerging around the 4th century and finally reached the climax in the 18th century. Today, more than 50 of these gardens are still in existence, nine of which, namely the Humble Administrator’s Garden, Lingering Garden, Net Master’s Garden, the Mountain Villa with Embracing Beauty, the Canglang Pavilion, the Lion Grove Garden, the Garden of Cultivation, the Couple’s Garden Retreat, and the Retreat & Reflection Garden, are regarded as the finest embodiments of Chinese “Mountain and Water” gardens. (UNESCO, 1997)

Since these nine gardens were listed as world heritages in 1997 and 2000, Suzhou Classical Gardens have become a boom in China. There are many researches on these gardens, and they can be roughly divided into three categories. One is focusing on history, that is, “what was there”. The second is to focus on theory, that is, “why” and “how”. The third is to focus on protection and development. These three types of research are important for understanding Suzhou Classical Gardens, but they are usually independent, and there are few articles that can integrate them. Therefore, the purpose of this history thesis is to find a clue that implies historical timeline in these three types of research, and to provide readers with an opportunity to have a more comprehensive understanding of the gardens. And this clue is based on three different groups of people as the starting point, each of which elaborates their relationship with the gardens in different chapters.

Cheng Ji’s “The Craft of Gardens”, Dunzhen Liu’s “Classical Gardens of Suzhou”, and Tong Jun’s “Record of Jiangnan Gardens” are the most classic historical and theoretical monographs. Architects such as I.M. Pei, Shu Wang, Xinggong Li, Ming Ge produced representative design theories through architectural schemes. This article is completed by studying the resources related to Suzhou Classical Gardens, including books, articles, conservation regulations, and movies. The structure of this thesis consists of three chapters. In the first one, the creators of history showed us the appearance and thoughts of the gardens in the landscape paintings. The second chapter is that modern interpreters have annotated the gardens in their works and architectural works. In the third chapter, modern protectors have left the gardens to us and future generations through various measures.

[1]江南园林甲天下，苏州园林甲江南

Chapter 1: Gardens in landscape paintings

1.1 Introduction

Landscape painting is a type of Chinese painting. It is a painting form in which the author integrates the natural beauty into his own feelings and expresses them through artistic means. These authors are called literati, and they can both paint and write poems. Suzhou Classical Gardens and landscape paintings can be said to be in a complementary relationship. The aesthetic philosophy of landscape painting constitutes the connotation of the artistic conception of the garden, and the growing garden provides good creative materials for landscape painting. In terms of the identity of the creator, the owner of the garden may be both a calligrapher, a painter and a gardener; in terms of the creative concept, they both pursue the artistic conception of tranquility, quietness, elegance and ease, which is related to the creator's desire to create a state of mind of seclusion in the noisy urban gardens; in terms of creative techniques, gardening is like painting, and painting is like gardening. The basic composition of the picture is the spatial layout of the garden: the foreground is mostly flowers, trees and water, the middle scene is buildings, figures and important scenery, and the background is mostly distant mountains.

In this chapter, three landscape paintings depicting the Lion Grove Garden, the Humble Administrator's Garden and the Canglang Pavilion will illustrate the material content and spiritual ideas of Suzhou Classical Gardens. Although each garden has different characteristics due to the political and economic status of the owner and the location of the site, there are many similarities in garden layout, landscaping techniques and gardening concepts. Therefore, the purpose of this chapter is to lead readers to understand several representative Suzhou Classical Gardens, so as to get a general impression of them.

1.2 The Lion Grove Garden and the “Lion Grove Painting”

The Lion Grove Garden was built in 1342. Most of the existing landscapes were added or rebuilt by different owners after the 18th century. Only the mountains in the central rockery are the remains of the original construction. Because there are many stone pinnacles in the park, resembling lions, it is named “Lion Grove”. In 1373, the calligrapher and painter Ni Zan was invited by the owner to create the “Lion Grove Painting”. After entering from the door on the right in the picture, you will first pass the pine trees on both sides of the road, and then you can see two towering cypress trees. The house behind the cypress is called “Zhibaixuan”^[2]. There is a plum tree at the bottom of the screen, and the house behind it is “Wenmei Pavilion”^[3]. On the left side of the picture, it can be seen that the basic form and layout of the core of the garden- rockery is a huge rock group like a mountain. Among them is a temple building, which is a place for worshiping Buddha statues and placing seats (originally the garden was used as a temple). These rockeries are stacked with stones from Taihu Lake. These stones have the characteristics of “wrinkle, leakage, thin and transparent”, and have high ornamental value.



Figure 1, The Lion Grove Painting

Today, there are nine rockery paths, 21 cave entrances, and countless strange stones that look like lions in different shapes. When people stand outside the mountain and see the whole picture, they can't perceive the spatial appearance in it (Figure 2). Once they stepped into the mountain, it was like entering a maze, going around not knowing where to go. Only by climbing the stone ladder to the highest place can you know where you are (Figure 3). This kind of feeling is like climbing a mountain. There are different scenery experiences at different heights. Only when you climb to the top of the mountain can you see the vast scenery. Therefore, this kind of gardening technique embodies the idea of “recreating natural landscapes in miniature”^[4] of Suzhou Classical Gardens.



Figure 2, Rockery group



Figure 3, Inside the rockery

[2] 指柏轩

[3] 问梅阁

[4] 咫尺之内再造乾坤

1.3 The Humble Administrator's Garden and the "Thirty-one Sceneries of the Humble Administrator's Garden"

The Humble Administrator's Garden was built in the early 16th century, but most of the existing ones were formed at the end of the 19th century. In 1533, Zhengming Wen made 31 landscape paintings according to the scenery in the garden, each with a poem, that is, "Thirty-one Sceneries of the Humble Administrator's Garden", and he wrote the article "Wang's Humble Administrator's Garden". These two vividly show the spatial structure and gardening thoughts of the Humble Administrator's Garden, and they are precious historical materials for studying it.

In the Humble Administrator's Garden, Wen embodies the gardening concept of adapting measures to local conditions, taking water as its specialty, and humanizing natural landscapes. He took advantage of the natural environment of the garden with plenty of water, opened a pond to divert water, and created a water-based landscape garden. In the "Thirty-one Scenery of the Humble Administrator's Garden", two thirds are taken from plant themes, such as "Lotus Water" [5], "Bamboo Stream" [6], "Locust Tree" [7] and "Roses Path" [8], etc., showing the prosperous appearance of plants in the garden. "Happy and contented, enjoying the pleasure of living in a leisurely life (Zhengming W., 1533)" [9] shows the spiritual pleasure of the people in the garden and the attitude of life beyond the secular and material.

Now when we walk into the garden, we will be attracted by such a classic scenery: the wide pool is full of lotus, the surrounding buildings are hidden under the lush flowers and trees, and the distant tower outside the garden skillfully enters the painting (Figure 4). The lotus in the water is the "Lotus Water (Figure 5)" [6] in "Thirty-one Sceneries". This is still the garden at that time, which was dominated by water, flowers and trees, and was full of natural interest. Going to the other side of the water, you will see an exquisite covered bridge called "Little Flying Rainbow". It is a passage connecting the water surface and the land, forming a unique landscape centered on the bridge (Figure 6). Little Flying Rainbow is also one of the "Thirty-one Sceneries". Comparing the current photos with the painting (Figure 7), the shape of the bridge and the surrounding environment have been preserved. If you read the poem [10] written by Zhengming Wen, you will understand the deeper meaning of this bridge: the owner of the garden compared himself to a dragon like bridge. Because he was frustrated in officialdom, he could only lurk in the water (reflection) and could not show his talent.



Figure 4, Waterscape



Figure 5, "Lotus Water"



Figure 6, Today's Little Flying Rainbow



Figure 7, Old painting of Little Flying Rainbow

[5] 芙蓉隈

[6] 竹涧

[7] 槐幄

[8] 蔷薇径

[9] 逍遥自得，享闲居之乐

[10] 雌蜺连蜺饮洪河，落日倒影翻晴波。江山沉沉时未零，何事青龙忽腾翥。知君小试济川才，横绝寒流引飞渡。（未完）

1.4 The Canglang Pavilion and the “Canglang Pavilion Painting”

The Canglang Pavilion was built at the beginning of the 11th century, and most of the existing ones were formed at the end of the 19th century. Since its establishment, the garden has been abandoned, destroyed and renovated repeatedly, and it was opened to the public in 1954. Wang Hui’s “Canglang Pavilion Painting” reflects the appearance of the reconstruction in 1700, and also laid the foundation for the subsequent layout of the garden. There is not only one pavilion in the garden of Canglang Pavilion, but it is named because the pavilion is one of the most important scenery. (Because the official name does not include the word “garden”, it is easy to misunderstand)

It can be seen from the painting (Figure 8): The pavilion is built on the top of the mountain, and people can reach the water side by climbing the stairs. Along the road to the right (east) is a house on the creek called “Zishengxuan”^[11]; to the left (west) is a house called “Guanyuchu”^[12]. Both of these names were taken from the poem of the garden’s first owner. The two waterfront buildings and the pavilion are the three most important scenic spots in the garden. On the west side of Guanyuchu is the garden gate, in front of which is a folding bridge connecting the two banks. The lower left corner of the painting shows the wide surface of the water with lotus leaves and flat boats floating on it. The layout of the garden is clearly identifiable, which conveys the beautiful scenery of The Canglang Pavilion to future generations of viewers and researchers.



Figure 8, The Canglang Pavilion Painting

Now when you enter the garden, you will find on the hills: the mountain is covered with bamboos and ancient trees, and on the top is the Canglang Pavilion. There is a water pool under the mountain, and the mountain and the pool are connected by the winding corridor. There are flower windows on the wall of the corridor, and you can see the distant landscape through them (Figure 9).



Figure 9, Today's Canglang Pavilion and cooridor

[11] 自胜轩

[12] 观鱼处

Conclusion

UNESCO provided an explanation for the relationship between landscape paintings and Suzhou Classical Gardens: “Conceived and built under the influence of the unconstrained poetic freehand style originally seen in traditional Chinese landscape paintings, they are noted for their profound merging of exquisite craftsmanship, artistic elegance and rich cultural implications. These gardens lend insight into how ancient Chinese intellectuals harmonized conceptions of aestheticism in a culture of reclusion within an urban living environment (UNESCO, 1997).” Although the buildings and landscapes in the garden cannot be preserved through thousands of years (the ancient Chinese buildings are wooden structures, and their lifespan is not as long as the masonry structure), those profound ideas have been passed down and have a long-term impact on future generations.

Chapter 2: Interpretation of gardens

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, it was mentioned that ancient literati recorded gardens through landscape paintings, but they rarely commented on garden creation. This chapter hopes to illustrate how Suzhou Classical Gardens have been commented and reinterpreted in modern China through two modern books on gardens and a modern architectural case.

2.2 “Record of Jiangnan Gardens” by Tong Jun in 1937

“Record of Jiangnan Gardens” is a special work on classical gardens in the south of the Yangtze River in China. It was written in 1937 by Chinese architect Tong Jun. This book is the earliest garden monograph in China that adopted modern methods for surveying, mapping and photography. The author defines the three elements of the study of gardens: “One is flowers, trees and water, the other is houses, and the third is rockery. Flowers, trees and water are natural ones. Houses are man-made ones. (...) The one that is adjusted between the two is rockery. The stone is fixed and has a natural shape. Although it is natural, it depends on the skills of piling and chiseling. It is semi natural and semi artificial (Jun T., 1937, p.14).”^[13]

In the book, the author also pioneered the three realms^[14] of appraising gardens: “appropriate density”, “comprehensive twists and turns” and “scenery in front of you”. He used the Humble Administrator's Garden as an example to explain these three realms: “around the garden and at the entrance, the corridors and curved bridges are tight but not crowded (Figure 10). In the north of Yuanxiang hall, the mountain and pool are bright, showing the posture of high and low, and the potential of barrier. Sparseness and density, looseness and tightness are well controlled, which is the first realm (Figure 11). The arrangement should also avoid pairing, and it's better to be flexible. This circuitousness is essential. (...) The mountain loops around, and the bamboo path leads to the quiet. I was overwhelmed with the scene in front of me, but I stepped into the third realm without realizing it (Jun T., 1937, p.13).”^[15] These three realms and elements have become an important basis for later generations to study Suzhou Classical Gardens.



Figure 10, The corridor



Figure 11, Yuanxiang hall

2.3 “Classical Gardens of Suzhou” by Liu Dunzhen in 1979

“Classical Gardens of Suzhou” is a classic work completed in 1979 by Chinese architectural historian Liu Dunzhen. “The systematic academic research on Suzhou classical gardens began with the Chinese Architecture Research Office and the Architectural History Teaching and Research Group led by Professor Liu Dunzhen of our academy after the liberation (Tingbao Y., Jun T., 1978).” He began to conduct a general survey of Suzhou classical gardens in the 1950s, and left a large number of surveying drawings and photos in the book. These data with authenticity and integrity are of great value. At that time, when the development of modern Chinese history and culture was at a low tide, he was one of the few people who studied gardens, so this book was even more precious.

The theoretical part of this book focuses on the layout of the garden from the following five aspects: “scenic area and space, viewing point and viewing route, contrast and foil, scenery and borrowing scenery, depth and level.”^[16] These theories help later generations to study, understand and judge gardens more systematically and methodologically, and even influence the reinterpretation of gardens (ancient Chinese Architecture). Professor Chen Wei of Southeast University: “Mr. Liu’s understanding of the relationship between time and three-dimensional space (the scenery moves when the pace moves) and the relationship between space (level) is particularly incisive, which has opened and continued the theory of modernism in traditional Chinese architecture (Wei C., 2007).”

[13] 一为花木池鱼，二为屋宇，三为迭石。花木池鱼，自然者也。屋宇，人为者也…调剂于二者之间，则为迭石。石虽固定而具自然之形，虽天生而赖堆凿之巧，盖半天然、半人工之物也。

[14] 疏密得宜、曲折尽致、眼前有景

[15] 园周及入门处，回廊曲桥，紧而不挤。远香堂北，山池开朗，展高下之姿，兼屏障之势。疏中有密，密中有疏，张弛启阖，两得其宜，即第一境界也。然布置疏密，忌排偶而贵活变，此迂回曲折之必不可少也…。侧看成峰，横看成岭，山回路转，竹径通幽，眼前对景，应接不暇，乃不觉而步入第三境界矣。

[16] 景区和空间、观赏点和观赏路线、对比和衬托、对景与借景、深度和层次

2.4 UNESCO World Heritage List in 1997 and 2000

A total of nine Suzhou Classical Gardens are included in the World Heritage List. Among them, the Humble Administrator’s Garden, Lingering Garden, Net Master’s Garden, the Mountain Villa with Embracing Beauty were listed in 1997, while the Canglang Pavilion, the Lion Grove Garden, the Garden of Cultivation, the Couple’s Garden Retreat, and the Retreat & Reflection Garden were listed in 2000. Although the gardens mentioned in the first chapter were all rebuilt after the 19th century, UNESCO explained the integrity and authenticity of them. For the integrity: “The settings and features of the heritage property cover all essential elements and key values of the classic gardens of Suzhou (UNESCO, 1997).” From the rivers, streets, alleys, vernacular residences within the buffer zone to the architectural structure, layout and forms such as rock and plant configurations, plaques, couplets, and furniture are fully reflected in and around the current gardens. For the authenticity: “Information about

the gardens in each historical period is found in the ancient trees, plaques, couplets, brick and stone carvings, inscriptions and other precious immovable cultural relics in these areas (UNESCO, 1997).” Garden masters of each dynasty would use consistent materials and techniques to repair and maintain these gardens based on the reminiscent verses, poems, paintings and maps handed down from various historical periods.

When we visited the garden today, we would be surprised to find that a place with a small area can actually take an hour or two to visit. This is the embodiment of “create miniature worlds in limited spaces (UNESCO, 1997)”. When we climbed into the rockery group of the Lion Grove Garden, we found many different routes and entrances, and even got lost in it. This is the embodiment of “simulate nature with meticulous details (UNESCO, 1997)”. When we see the words on the plaque in the hall of the building and the couplet on the wall, we will find that the thoughts of all ancient literati have been conveyed to us through them (Figure 12). Although the wooden buildings in the gardens cannot be preserved in their original state due to material properties, natural disasters or man-made disasters. The intangible heritage of the most important values, design concepts and gardening techniques have been passed down to this day.



Figure 12, The plaque and the couplet in the Humble Administrator's Garden

2.5 Suzhou Museum by I.M. Pei in 2006

Suzhou Museum was designed by I.M. Pei and is located close to the World Cultural Heritage Humble Administrator's Garden. The Pei family bought the Lion Grove Garden at the beginning of the 20th century. Pei spent a period of childhood there, so the understanding of Suzhou classical gardens was implanted in his heart at that time. “It’s very difficult to design a museum here. There must be both traditional things and innovation. The traditional thing is to use traditional elements to make people feel very harmonious and comfortable; the innovative thing is to use new ideas and methods to make people feel good-looking and attractive, because the times are developing (Ieoh Ming P., 2004).” In the end, the new museum can be described as an extension of the architectural style of the Humble Administrator’s Garden to the north and a modern interpretation.

In terms of architecture, Pei retained a large area of white walls in the classical gardens to blend the new architecture with the traditional urban texture of Suzhou (Figure 13). The small gray tile roofs and window frames in the classical gardens are replaced with gray granite to pursue a unified color and texture. The roof of the museum reinterprets the traditional sloped landscape of Suzhou with a new geometric effect. In terms of layout, it continues the tradition, arranging the building around the courtyard and the water, so that visitors can get the experience of “the scenery in front of them”. Regarding rockery, Pei did not use the traditional Taihu stone in Suzhou Classical Gardens. “You can never build a garden with Taihu stones better than the Lion Grove Garden (Jeoh Ming P., 2004).” Based on a landscape painting by Mi Fu, he processed the huge stones and displayed the hazy mood of misty rain in the landscape painting by arranging them in different depths and positions (Figure 14).



Figure 13, Suzhou Museum



Figure 14, The stones

2.6 Conclusion

These scholars’ interpretations of Suzhou Classical Gardens have given these historical products the thoughts and viewpoints of this era. Liu Dunzhen taught us to evaluate Suzhou Classical Gardens. “The best ones are good at adapting measures to local conditions, learning from nature, and absorbing the advantages of traditional paintings and gardening techniques. They come out of their own way and create a variety of new artistic concepts, so that the visitors (...) are fascinated by them. The awkward ones deliberately twist and turn, and this artificial beauty damages its natural taste. The most inferior ones compete with gorgeous piles... (Dunzhen L., 1962)”^[17] And Pei I.M. brings us a kind of thinking of comparing East and West: “In China, architecture and the garden are one. A Western building is a building, and a garden is a garden. They’re related in spirit. But they are one in China (Jeoh Ming P., 2006).” This concept of integration provides a good model for the renovation or new construction of buildings in the ancient city of Suzhou.

[17] 其佳者善于因地制宜，师法自然，并吸取传统绘画与园林手法之优点，自出机杼，创造各种心意境，使游者…为之悠然神往。而拙劣者故为盘曲迂回，或力求入画，人为之美，反损其自然之趣。其尤劣者以华丽堆砌相竞尚…

Chapter 3: Protection of gardens

3.1 Introduction

These heritage values that we consider to be meaningful in this era require protection and management measures to survive and sustainably develop. This chapter introduces the protection and management process led by the government and related activities spontaneously initiated by the private sector. Finally, according to the Historic Urban Landscape approach proposed by UNESCO in 2011, personal suggestions are made on current protection issues.

3.2 The protection and management of Suzhou Classical Gardens

After the founding of the People's Republic of China in 1949, the protection and management of Suzhou classical gardens began. In 1952, the Suzhou Municipal Government established the Garden Management Office to be responsible for research and restoration work. It was upgraded to the Garden Management Bureau in 1981, increasing the intensity of garden protection and management. Then in 2001, it was renamed as the Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau, which clearly defined its main responsibilities, internal institutions, staffing and leadership positions. In 2002, the Suzhou World Heritage Protection Leading Group was established with an office and full-time staff to perform the city's world cultural heritage protection functions on behalf of the city government. In 2005, the Suzhou World Heritage Classical Gardens Protection and Supervision Center was established to carry out the protection and monitoring of nine gardens included in the World Heritage List. In 2006, the World Heritage Garden Management Office was established to be responsible for the daily protection of classical gardens. So far, a protection management framework has been formed for the leaders of the Suzhou Municipal Government, the director of the Suzhou Municipal Garden and Landscape Administration Bureau, the supervision of the Suzhou Relics Bureau, and the specific responsibility of the site management offices.

Since 1997, nine gardens in Suzhou have been included in the World Heritage List by UNESCO. In the same year, the Regulations on the Protection and Management of Gardens in Suzhou was formally implemented. This is China's first local regulation on garden protection and management, which clearly stipulates the responsibilities, scope and content of garden protection. Then, in the Management and Protection Regulations of Suzhou Garden and the Conservation Plan for the World Heritage Classical Gardens of Suzhou (2006-2020), in the protection part, many gardens were restored, partially renovated and the surrounding environment is renovated. In the management part, efforts are made to break down departmental barriers and strengthen unified government management.

3.3 The Garden Museum

Suzhou classical gardens have been opened to the public as museums after the 1950s. Because of the restrictions of the Regulations on the Protection and Management of Gardens in Suzhou, most gardens are well protected. And some measures are constantly updated according to the actual situation. For example: In order to control the number of people and improve the viewing effect, a time-sharing appointment method was adopted. The administration also carried out garden opening activities at night and various educational and social activities. In this way, the people's concept of heritage protection is increased, and at the same time, the heritage is closer to their lives. Touring in the garden, those bookish poetic inscriptions and the buildings, mountains and rivers, flowers and trees in the garden are naturally and harmoniously blended together. So that every part of the garden can produce a profound artistic conception. Wandering among them, you can get the spiritual cultivation and the enjoyment of beauty.

3.4 The HUL approach

For a long time, the Suzhou Municipal Government has invested a lot of manpower, material resources, financial resources and technical support in the protection of Suzhou Classical Gardens, and has achieved many results and useful experience. However, with the development of Suzhou's urbanization and the increasing requirements for the protection of world heritage, protection still faces many problems, which affect and restrict the sustainable development of the gardens. For example, most of the funding sources for protection come from government budgets and ticket revenue, while private foundations and social donations are minimal. Coupled with the impact of the time-sharing reservation system, ticket revenue can only be the same as in previous years. However, with the promotion of protection work, more funds are needed to improve the digital protection and monitoring and early warning system, and the existing funding sources are difficult to meet the needs of sustainable development. In addition, because of the low salary and long training period, the repair technicians have age gaps and lack of understanding of the traditional culture carried by traditional technologies. Moreover, the mechanism of public participation is not perfect. The lack of public governance attitude of the government, the untimely update of public information, and the weak power of the administrative departments connecting with the public all affect the public's right to know and decision-making, and undoubtedly lose a large part of the protection capability.

The HUL approach is a heritage protection method proposed by UNESCO in 2011. It first provides a new understanding of the historic environment: "the historic urban landscape is the urban area understood as the result of a historic layering of cultural and natural values and attributes, extending beyond the notion of 'historic centre' or 'ensemble' to include the broader urban context and its geographical setting. (...) It also includes social and cultural practices and values, economic processes and the intangible dimensions of heritage as related to diversity and identity (UNESCO, 2011)." Suzhou Classical Gardens are historic urban landscape, so the HUL approach may provide solutions to the above-mentioned problems. "Community engagement tools should empower a diverse cross-

section of stakeholders to identify key values in their urban areas, develop visions, set goals, and agree on actions to safeguard their heritage and promote sustainable development (The HUL Guidebook, 2016).” The Management Bureau can organize consultation meetings with government departments, surrounding residents and businesses. If the visions of these stakeholders are aligned, the scenery around the gardens can be better protected. “Financial tools should be deployed to promote private investment at the local level. Micro-credit and other flexible financing mechanisms to support local enterprise, as well as a variety of models of public-private partnerships (The HUL Guidebook, 2016).” For example: the government provides garden brand licensing and product research support, and local companies can develop more high-end tourism experience services. After the company makes a profit, it also needs to invest money in the protection of the gardens.

3.5 Conclusion

The protection and management of Suzhou's classical gardens has been continuously adjusted and updated since 1949, forming the current structure of cooperation between multiple government departments. After being listed as World Heritage in 1997, huge attention and resource investment have made the protection more comprehensive and in-depth. However, with the development of technology, more funds are needed for monitoring tools and personnel training. The development of the city also destroys the historical environment around the gardens. Unilateral reliance on governments or international institutions is not a sustainable solution. Perhaps we can refer to the HUL approach to promote dialogue and cooperation between the government and surrounding residents and enterprises. Only when the interests of all parties are maximized can it contribute to the sustainable development of garden heritage.

Conclusion

This thesis traces back to the earliest existing garden in the 11th century: The Canglang Pavilion, the Lion Grove Garden in the 14th century and the Humble Administrator's Garden in the 16th century. Starting from a painting depicting it, it describes the content, value, protection and development of the garden. Looking at those landscape paintings alone, one cannot know what it means to the contemporary era. Reading the interpretation of gardens and modern photos alone can't understand the reasons for its formation. Knowing how to protect it can make culture and heritage a resource that distinguishes a region from other regions.

The special feature of Suzhou Classical Gardens is that it is a process of many historical superimposition. "Many of the landscapes in the gardens we see today are not absolute pictures, but contain a lot of history, so they will touch you. If you regard a garden as a natural landscape or a botanical garden, you will lose its most precious and essential part. Simply speaking from the name of the garden architecture, such as the 'Rice Fragrance Pavilion', 'Pavilion in the Lotus Breezes', 'Drifting Fragrance Hall' in the Humble Administrator's Garden, it is more related to people's experience and mental state. They have a perfect echo with the surrounding scenery, and in a deeper level, it also involves the echo with poetries and landscape paintings (Ming T., 2018)."

The two theoretical works mentioned in the second chapter were completed in 1937 and 1979 respectively. After 2000, a group of architects and theorists headed by I.M. Pei began a new round of interpretation, with the intention of exploring the language system of Chinese native architectural design from classical gardens. Finally, it explains the history of garden protection and management, raises existing problems, and puts forward suggestions for its sustainable development.

Through the historical development of Suzhou Classical Gardens, the creators, interpreters and protectors related to them have had and will continue to have a profound influence on them. The accumulation of history has created rich gardens full of content, ideas and values. As visitors, we can also find a place that resonates with ourselves in a certain part of them. And this is the charm of Suzhou Classical Gardens.

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