

# *The Analysis of the Humanistic of Windows in Suzhou Gardens*

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**Abstract.** This paper analyzes the representation humanistic thoughts through the windows of pavilions in Suzhou gardens. The papers looks at the history of garden design from Tang dynasty and relationship to literati thoughts in landscape paintings. In these spaces, window are seen as second pair of eyes that allows one to see the sound of nature. The paper examines the different element of that nature that are framed through these windows. In addition to the beauty of its own shape, the garden window also has its internal beauty. We can understand more deeply the cultural thoughts in the garden window from the meaning of patterns and historical background, and also find the resonance between garden design and humanistic thoughts from landscape paintings. From the landscape painting thought contained in the garden, we can feel the ancient literati's love for natural landscape and the unique aesthetic pursuit of landscape design at that time.

**Keywords:** windows, nature, humanistic, painting, garden

## **1. Introduction**

When you pass a window in a Suzhou classical garden, do you notice this common architectural part? Will you stop for it? If not, stop and give it a moment's attention, or you'll miss the ancient design behind this window.

Nowadays, many people pay more attention to the study of the exquisite design of gardens, pay attention to the gardens themselves, and think about the design of gardens in a very macro way. But I think to study from the subtle point of view, leaving the design itself, to pay attention to the people and things behind the design, to pay attention to a part of the whole, such as the window. Such explorations can also lead to surprising results.

In daily life, people can always see the clear scenery through the square transparent windows. But when we go into the garden like the Humble Administrator's Garden, we see all kinds of beautifully shaped windows, through these windows which are different from the daily ones, we can see some unique scenes. When you see these different sights, do you wonder why people designed such windows for what purpose? What kind of designer would do something like that?

Suzhou gardens have a long history. After hundreds of years of development, many changes have taken place in the function and shape design of buildings. People in this era regard garden architecture as the embodiment of historical and cultural precipitation. In a garden, people can see the traces left by different times. people can feel from garden architecture that there may be

inextricable relationship between garden and humanistic thought, especially ancient secular culture. So can we think that garden art is constantly developing with the progress of humanistic thought? This confusion can be solved through the design ingenuity and development of garden window.

When it comes to windows in gardens, people always pay attention to their shape first. But in my opinion, the cultural ideas behind the window are more interesting than its shape. windows play the role of a second pair of eyes in the garden. Liu Xi of the Han Dynasty explained in his book "The Name of the Buddha" that "the window is wise, and the inside is wise." It can be seen that in addition to its function, "window" is a clever externalization of Chinese viewing methods and aesthetic tastes. Through the windows, we can view the garden from the same Angle as the designer. In this way, people can communicate with the ancients across time and space.

## 2. Appearance of windows in Suzhou gardens

From the development history of garden window, we can find the clues that garden and humanity are closely related. From historical data, we can know from the buildings in ancient paintings that the embryonic form of garden window began to appear in the Song Dynasty. Before the Song Dynasty, windows played a more functional role. From the Song Dynasty, people began to pay attention to their decoration and connotation when designing windows. We can think that the Song Dynasty is an important time node.

The view is put forward in Yuanye: there is a close relationship between garden and landscape painting.[1]

From the design of garden windows, people's attitude toward windows changes from focusing on function to focusing on its beauty and giving it meaning. This transformation trend can also be demonstrated from the development and change of landscape painting.

The painting techniques and consciousness of landscape painting have great influence on the design of garden. In the notes of "Yuan Ye", it is mentioned that the landscape presented by the garden, whether it is the scenic spots inside the garden or the effect achieved by borrowing the scenery, should have a painting, a small like the fine brush landscape of Xiao Li General, and the texture of the rockery should bring the accumulated brush meaning of Huang Gongwang's landscape painting.[1]

From the perspective of painting techniques, through the comparison of the landscape paintings of the Tang and Song dynasties, we can find that the composition and painting techniques of the paintings of the Song Dynasty have changed. In the Song Dynasty, the policy of emphasizing culture over martial arts provided a good environment for the development of humanity. Landscape painting entered the revolutionary period, and the development of gardens was also in its heyday at the same time. Therefore, it can be inferred that the formation and reform of garden window were influenced by a lot of landscape thought in the Song Dynasty. Through the landscape paintings of this period, such as the map of a thousand Li of rivers and mountains, the spring hill Ruisong map. We can see that the painting is no longer the perfect state of the landscape painting in the Tang Dynasty, and the painter added the subjective intention of the white space or the choice of elements, such as exaggerating the use of color, or showing the corner of the picture. In this period, we can feel more of the combination of the artist's personal thoughts and nature. Combined with the background of The Times, the Song Dynasty focused on cultural development and economic prosperity, which made people pay more attention to the quality of life and personal needs. There are more people in the upper class paid attention to personal experience and the beauty of things, which had a great impact on landscape painting and garden.

This idea is also reflected in the design of garden window.

The two windows are from the Suzhou Cang Lang pavilion, which was built in the Qing Li period of the Northern Song Dynasty (1041 ~ 1048 AD), and the Wangshi Yuan, which was built in the Southern Song Dynasty. These windows are both swastika windows.



Figure 1: Window from Cang Lang pavilion [2]



Figure 2: Window from Wangshi Yuan [3]

The swastika was originally an ancient charm, charm, or religious symbol, usually thought to be a symbol of the sun or fire.

"Swastika" in the Tang Dynasty AD 693, this auspicious symbol is read as "wan", which is endowed with auspicious meanings.

The two windows are characterized by a large gap in the middle, giving a sense of primary and secondary clarity. The first window looks like a picture frame in shape. Combined with real pictures, I think this type of window can guide people's vision and guide our viewing experience. When people stand in front of a window, they can't help but look at the objects in the center of the window, such as flowers. This is very consistent with the composition of Chinese painting aesthetic, full of literati painting ideas. The window in the second image is more complex and expresses more emotion than the first one. Through this picture, from the outside to the inside, we can feel the transition from blur to clarity. The ancients advocated reserved and restrained emotional expression, which was well reflected in the folding window. The hazy viewing experience is also poetic. Designers not only need to consider the beauty of the design, but also pay more attention to whether the design product is infused with cultural connotation, which is the unique ingenuity of garden design.

From the point of view of the changes in painting techniques, landscape painting from the end of the Song Dynasty began to appear a new painting technique, "Cun", and continue to develop. This painting concept is also reflected in the design concept of the windows. From the perspective of visual psychology, this painting method is mainly a creative optical illusion formed by observing when people face nature. This kind of ink effectively answers how the Chinese express the sense of three degrees in a plane of two degrees. It is a complex system structure, it is not a synonym of the European classical optical illusion center, it is a unique spatial optical illusion of the Chinese. The application of this concept to the garden is mainly reflected in the window, the design of the window requires people to see different landscapes from different angles, which is also a concept of pursuing three-dimensional space in the two-dimensional plane.

"Cun" describes the spatial sense of landscape on the flat paintings through the thick and thin of ink. Through the garden Windows, we see different pictures from different angles. The same idea applies between the two.

Ji Cheng proposed in "Yuanye" that the construction of windows should meet the needs of "everywhere nearby empty, side view". In my opinion, the understanding of this sentence is that every adjacent place has a relationship, and every direction is an exquisite one. The idea of landscape painting in this period coincides with the idea of garden construction.

Through this architectural element of window, garden architecture makes the scenery give a sense of looming, and the adjacent space achieves the effect of continuous separation. This design concept reflects the unique charm of traditional Chinese garden architecture art, through the window and other decorative Windows, so that the wall produces a virtual and real change, creating a far-reaching artistic conception and beauty.

### 3. The development and change of windows in Suzhou gardens

So how do garden windows change with the development of culture of The Times? This point can be started from landscape painting. Zhu Liangzhi mentioned in the "Fifteen Lectures on Chinese Aesthetics" : "Chinese gardens are natural pictures, garden designers are mostly painters, and they must also reflect the painting meaning as the fundamental... People design gardens to reflect the pictures of nature as the highest principle." [4]



The mainstream ideas of the Times conveyed by the ancient literati can be seen from the landscape paintings. Since the Wei and Jin Dynasties, realistic painting tended to be freehand, and painters gradually turned their attention from depicting people and objects to the beauty of natural landscapes, which gradually became popular. Zen and Taoism run through the whole development process of Chinese landscape painting, which is also the highest realm of Chinese landscape painting. Painting creation is the disclosure of the artist's temperament, and the artist's personality psychology can be seen through the works. The infiltration of the painter's mood, so that the painter's brush, a painting, a mountain and a river are the artist's self-expression.[5] Both the aesthetic concept of "Spirit is free" which means an aesthetic state of freedom and ease achieved when spirit and nature are united, and the theory of landscape painting gradually reflect on the inner heart and feel the relationship between the object and the self, which has an impact on the aesthetic characteristics of classical garden construction focusing on artistic conception.

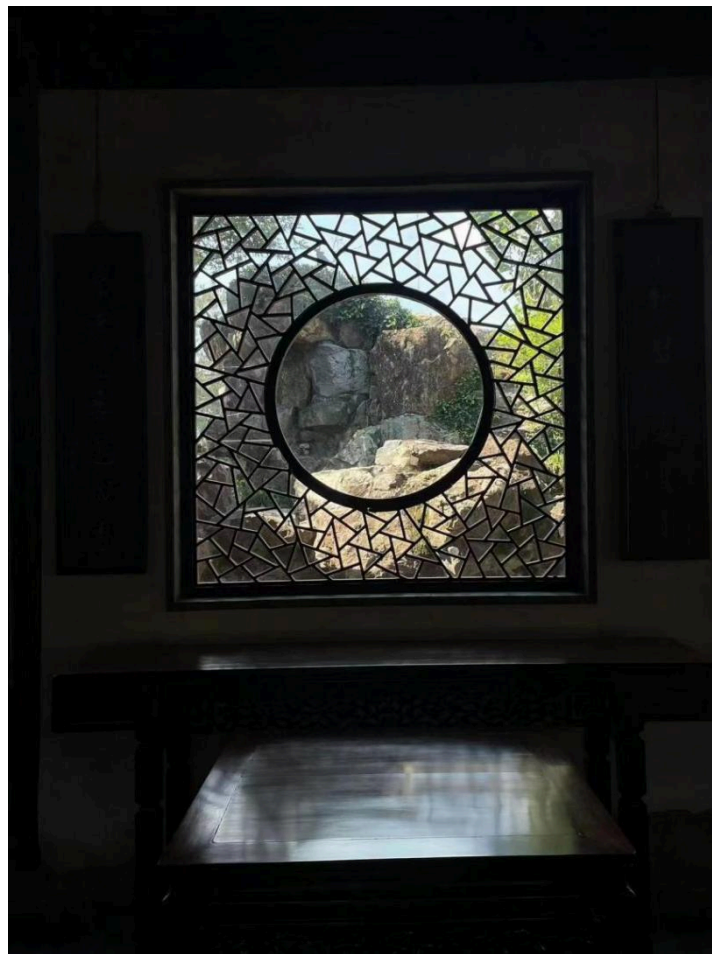


Figure 3: Window from Wangshi Yuan [3]

This is an ice crack pattern window. This window is located in the Wang Shi Yuan of Suzhou, which was built during the Song Dynasty. Ice cracked windows are common and representative in major gardens. Ice cracks window pattern mimics the ice cracks in nature, mostly straight lines into triangles, and regularly extended, simple, rough, natural lines. Ice is a symbol of scholar-officials and literati pursuing personality perfection. People often say "holding Yu with ice " to symbolize the purity of personality.

In addition to the unique meaning of the window itself, I think it is more important to have a unique visual experience through such windows. Looking at the landscape through the patterns on the windows is a way to appreciate nature from another perspective. Through the patterned Windows, what we see is not a concrete picture. When we look at the scene through the gap in the middle, you can clearly see the landscape outside, so the view is more direct and concrete.

But when people look outside through the pattern of ice cracks around the window, what we see through the pattern is that the scene is actually abstract. Through the pattern of the window, the blurred scene would be first seen. It's mostly blurred blocks of color, but our brains subjectively piece them together and combine them into a new scene. I think this is the subjective transformation of the landscape by designers, unlike the direct transformation of vegetation forms in Western gardens, what we change is the medium of observing things. This well reflects that ancient Chinese people, especially from the Warring States period, Zhuangzi put forward the idea of "heaven and man are compatible and corresponding", maintained a delicate balance between man and nature, that is, the consciousness of integrating man and nature. This reflects the unique aesthetics of people at that time, and the unique pursuit of maintaining a balance between man and nature. People emphasize on landscape design, keep the natural landscape agility, intended to imitate the charm of nature.

Through the design of garden window, we can find that the overall aesthetic process of the garden also has the same dynamic aesthetic balance through the way of from the small place to see the large place. The idea of "seeing the big with the small" originated from the Analects of Confucius and his disciples in the Spring and Autumn Period. At first his meaning is a kind of life wisdom, small things to see the big truth. Later, it gradually developed into an aesthetic observation method of ancient Chinese aesthetics, which is associated with large scenes from partial scenes.

People in the narrow space are oppressed and want to rush out, while the garden landscape creates a rich aesthetic image, which makes people stop and stare. The rich landscape changes create a variety of aesthetic images, viewers from the different aesthetic images of the garden to feel the surprise and surprise, which is also the interest of the garden.

#### 4. Influence of literati on garden window

Landscape painting and garden are artistic creations that draw a distance from real life, and with their gradual maturity, they have evolved into spiritual sustenance for literati to avoid the troubles of the secular world and envy the pastoral life

As for the development of private gardens in Tang and Song dynasties, they tend to mature. In the travelogues, the landscape of the garden is idealized and depicted like a picture. It can be seen that the attractive beauty is produced outside the reality.

window continued to develop after the Song Dynasty, Yuan and Ming dynasties, private gardens reached their peak, garden owners limited to their own talents, invited famous garden, painting garden, writing travel notes became the fashion of literati class.

The book "Gusu garden solidified poetry" points out: "We can see the aesthetic artistic mentality of Wuzhong literati from the patterns, patterns, meanings and scenes of the cave door and window." "Pottery melts nature, enchanted by the wind and moon, which is another taste of Wuzhong literati's life that we see from the window." [7]

The pattern and shape of garden window appeared many symbols of literati elegance, especially fan. Literati are very fond of folding fans, and people always bind folding fans with the literati's images. The use of fan-shaped windows makes the garden full of literati morale and book flavor.

In addition, there are book stripes in the Song Dynasty, literati and officials to read for pleasure, so imitate the Song Dynasty book page stripe design.

During the Ming Dynasty, the construction technology was more developed, so there were more elaborate Windows. For example, "four arts" pattern window, four arts refers to the literati's favorite piano, chess, books, painting four elegant objects. The owners of the garden are mostly literati, and the piano, chess, calligraphy and painting are also the main content of their elegant life.[8]

## 5. The world view expressed by the windows of Suzhou gardens

Understanding the cultural connotation of the garden reflected by the window can not only appreciate a garden in multiple dimensions, but also a kind of cultural inheritance. The unique design of garden window reflects the unique world view of ancient China, from the idea of the TianDao in the pre-Qin period.

As for the design of garden scenery, Ji Cheng put forward the principle of "Though it is made by man, it is not made by nature". Suzhou garden is one of the representatives of Chinese traditional garden, which embodies many essences and aesthetic concept of Chinese traditional culture. The first is to transplant the natural landscape into the garden through clever ideas, so that the garden presents a wonderful scene. This concept reflects ancient Chinese people's respect for nature and a deep understanding of the interaction between humans and the natural world. The second is to emphasize creating a harmonious environment in the garden, so that people can get spiritual relaxation and satisfaction. This concept also reflects the philosophical thoughts of "the way of Zhongyong" and "quiet nothingness" in traditional Chinese culture. The core of "the way of Zhongyong" mean is to maintain the right and peaceful, avoid excessive or insufficient, in order to achieve harmony and balance. The meaning of "quiet nothingness" is to follow the laws of nature, reduce human intervention in nature, and achieve a harmonious coexistence with nature

The unique design of the garden window also reflects the design concept of the garden, which reflects the unique world view of ancient Chinese. Zong Baihua put forward in "Aesthetic Walk" : "Chinese poets love to take steps from the window, especially from the curtain, screen, bar, mirror to breathe the world scenery." This reflects the cosmological view of "sky and earth are Lu". [9]Lao Zi said, "If you don't go out, you know the world. If you don't look through window, you can see TianDao."The understanding of this sentence is that without going out of the door, one can infer the reason of the world; Without looking out of the window, one can understand the natural laws of the movement of the sun, moon and stars. As the sentence Lao Zi said, the thoughts of these ancient Chinese philosophers reflect Mr. Zong Baihua's view that the window is the representative of "China's spatial consciousness of moving far away and knowing far away has become the characteristic of our cosmological view".

## 6. Conclusion

Suzhou gardens have a long history, and their architecture and landscape layout represent the aesthetic and cultural characteristics of different periods, reflecting the evolution process of Chinese history and culture. Understanding the humanistic concept contained in the garden, visiting the garden will produce a unique experience. While enjoying the beautiful scenery, a special cultural journey can also be harvested.

## References

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