



## 東西方景觀再現之跨文化論述

### --- 中國景觀繪畫、庭園設計、場所精神 ---

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#### 摘要

這篇論文探討比較性的景觀理論，有關景觀形態轉型的方向和定位。發現介於東西方之隨時間演化的多重性景觀設計概念，將衍生出對空間相關議題的嶄新啟發和討論。隨著詮釋學和跨文化觀察的研究過程，這篇文章將搜集那些對東西方景觀設計文化的形成有關鍵性影響的明確概念和認知。由於強烈的詩意論述，東方的景觀概念，特別是那些源自於中國文人傳統的，傾向於強調整合空間、時間和地方的宇宙結構。時間元素壓縮於空間性的庭園或畫軸並非不尋常的，而且從這個時間性的觀點，這篇論文將追溯介於東西方有關景觀設計概念之歷史與文化的異同。再者，這篇論文將用西方之場所精神的概念為背景，並將景觀文化有關之東方詮釋置於其上，以便擷取景觀再現之文化本質和詮釋的可能性。這個研究的結論或可提供重新定義景觀理論與其文化概念之形成的有趣論點。

**關鍵字：**景觀設計、庭園設計、中國景觀繪畫、場所精神

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# **The Cross-Cultural Narrative of Eastern and Western Landscape Representations --- Chinese Landscape Painting, Garden Design and Genius Loci ---**

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## **Abstract**

The study deals with comparative landscape theories in the orientation and identification of landscape morphology. Finding multiple landscape design concepts evolving with times between Eastern and Western cultures will engenders new discussions and inspirations for spatial-related issues. Following stimulating process of hermeneutic study and cross-cultural surveys, the study will gather concise ideas and perceptions which might have crucial impact on forming both Eastern and Western landscape design cultures. Owing to the strong poetic narratives, oriental landscape conception, especially which derived from Chinese scholar tradition, tends to emphasize on a cosmetic structure which combines with space, time and place. It is not unusual the element of time is compressed into a space-restricted garden or a scroll of painting, and from this time-related viewpoint the study will trace historical and cultural differences between Eastern and Western ideas concerning landscape design. On the other hand, the study will use Western concept of genius loci as backdrop, and put Eastern cultural interpretation of landscape on it to extract the narrative possibility and cultural essence in landscape representation. The result might offer interesting points to redefine landscape theory and its cultural conception.

**Keywords: landscape design, garden design, Chinese landscape painting, genius loci**

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## 一、 Introduction

To interpret the significance of cross-cultural landscape design conceptions, it is not unusual that contemporary professionals have difficulties in catching their cultural and spatial insights. Landscape's spatial conception possesses a specific cultural and narrative possibility to be explored, but this adventure requires intellectual tools to mediate Western thinking and Eastern one. Because of similar connotation and extending application of oriental landscape conception, which is manifested on artistic representations such as garden design and landscape painting, and Western spatial concept of *genius loci*, the study will use them as backdrop to explore the narrative possibility and spatial conception of landscape design. The oriental landscape painting has gained its popularity and cultural concern in academic discusses and various spatial discourses. Owing to cultural barrier, the conceptions of Eastern landscape design and Western *genius loci* have not been appropriately translation and interpretation. This deficiency might lie on the misunderstanding of landscape design essence and the difficulty in appreciating profound cultural connotation. Therefore the study selects oriental landscape representations, mainly landscape painting and garden design, and occidental spatial concept of *genius loci* as mediating elements to bridge the gap between Eastern and Western interpretations of landscape design. The landscape painting could be employed as a starting point to help people understand the multiple applications and meanings of oriental landscape design, as well as a comparative element to look into Western spatial concept of *genius loci*, thus nourishing cross-cultural narrative possibilities for interpreting these space-bounded landscape design conceptions. In other words, this is an experimental study focusing on narrative and interpretative possibilities of landscape design conceptions in a cross-cultural context. The study is divided into two parts: first, registering oriental conception of landscape painting and elements of garden design; second, searching multiple connotations of *genius loci* and its implementation in landscape design. Between these two parts, there are various elaborations in comparing Eastern and Western landscape design conceptions to exploring the narrative possibilities and cultural implications.

### 1. The landscape painting

Traditional Chinese garden is a reflection of poetry and painting



created by the scholar<sup>22</sup>(Jellicoe,1995: 68-70). Most of the Chinese landscape paintings represent a harmonious relationship between man and his environment. Even the painting is devoid of people, the sheer “mountain and water” still possesses a mental landscape looming from the painter’s personal experience or cultural tradition. In a scroll of landscape painting, which might extends a few meters, the observers move along the landscape. The silent landscape thus leads the observers through a set of spiritual experiences which equal to uninterrupted theatrical stages, various scenarios of the travel itinerary, or continuous musical notes<sup>23</sup>(Swaffield, 2002:152-153). The notion of movement is an essential element in Chinese landscape painting. The sense of movement follows the observer’s gaze drifting through the surface of painting when the motions of eyes take mental notes for the observer; meanwhile this kind of painting imposes the element of time into an observer’s mental landscape. In some special cases, the painter might create a scroll of painting which contains a lifelong experience or a journey lasting for months and years. Although imitating the nature, the essence of Chinese landscape painting is not to depict the beauty of nature or represent the harmony of environment. On the contrary, its main intention is to reflect the painter’s mind, and often represents the painter’s perception of utopia. By purposefully hiding time into the landscape space, the Chinese landscape painting depicts the nature that is contemporary and eternal, earthy and heavenly.

### 1-1. The Poetry<sup>24</sup>

The adding of poetry in Chinese landscape painting is another noteworthy feature that defines its design concept (Keswick, 2003: 94-100). Those poems are written in calligraphy and they often add a tone of cultivated scholarship. Although the poetry only occupies small part of the painting, its theoretical importance can not be overemphasized: first, the poetry in calligraphy is itself a sign and system evolving from thousands of years of language formation; second, like freehand sketch, the poetry in calligraphy possesses a unique quality of spontaneity and simultaneity initiated by the artist and coexisting with landscape components; third, the poetry’s narrative and literary characters are self-evidently valuable.

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<sup>22</sup> Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe, *The landscape of Man*, pp.68-70

<sup>23</sup> Simon Swaffield, *Theory in Landscape Architecture*, pp.152-153.

<sup>24</sup> Maggie Keswick, *The Chinese garden*, pp.94-100.



The painting and poetry inspire and form early Chinese landscape design. Tang dynasty poet Zhang Ji (mid 700's) once wrote a poem called *Maple Bridge Night Mooring*:

*Moon looming, crow cawing, frost heavenly everywhere  
River maple, fishing light, encountering trouble sleeping  
Outside GuSu city, the Chill Mountain Temple  
Midnight bell echoing into mooring boat*

Undoubtedly, poem with such vivid image can easily transfer into a romantic landscape, but the romantic image is not the only message the poet tries to commute with the readers. The essential perception about this journey of life is what the poet really tries to present. No matter it is Zen, Taoism<sup>25</sup> (Ibid., 85-88), Buddhism or Confucius' idea, the poem represents an insightful perception of life, and the ubiquitous context, the nature, engulfing human's living. Nevertheless, there is a tone of understanding toward this existing world, the environment. The natural elements such as the moon, the crow, the frost, the river and the maple dissolve into the artificial factors such as the fishing light, the city, the temple, the bell and the boat, and there is the omnipresent subject, the trouble sleeping poet. All together they inspire a strong feeling of humanity, a self-consciousness of life existing also in Western world from Greek school toward modern "being"<sup>26</sup> (Leach, 1997: 98-119).

From the first glimpse, the observer may think the Chinese garden is mainly composed of plants, water, rocks and buildings. This observation is reasonable, but it lacks some kind of "spirit" or essence that provides endless energy required for evolving and renovating the conception of landscape design. Like Venice in tourist's eyes, the magnificent cityscape, luxury squares and mystical canals present an extraordinary scenario for hasty sightseeing, but it takes times to catch the real Venice's "spirit" and appreciate its *genius loci*, which could mean the inherited energy and cultural power that make Venetians proud. Similarly, the Westerners may try to catch the oriental garden's essence by principles such as unity, balance, proportion, repetition, rhythm, transition and focalization. This is a well-intentioned start point, but it needs an omnipresent "spirit" or *genius loci* mentioned in the poem of *Maple Bridge Night Mooring* to further approach the legend of oriental landscape design.

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<sup>25</sup> Ibid., p. 85-88

<sup>26</sup> Neil Leach, *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 98-119.



On the other hand, Norberg-Schulz once stated that: “whereas science departs from the “given”, poetry brings us back to the concrete thing, uncovering the meanings inherent in the life-world.” This could have the same connotation which gives reasons for putting poetry on landscape paintings (Norberg-Schulz, 1980: 10).

### 1-2. The Rock<sup>27</sup> and the Water

The rock in Chinese garden is like the mountain in scholar painting (Keswick, 2003: 168-178). According to some old garden guidebook, the rock should be crumpling, leaking, penetrating and skinny. In some ways, these requirements for the quality of the gardening rock are likened to various characters the scholar-painter possesses. They represent a life-long experience against all odds, oozing out sophisticated aura like seasoned veterans. On the other hand, the imperfect rock tells the story of nature’s filtering process, like the experienced scholar-painter encountering his various fatal challenges. The defying character of the scholar-painter thus is praised by most of the cultivated people. Moreover, by tracing the original idea of putting rocks or stones in the Chinese garden, we may find out that it comes from the admiring of mountain and appreciating of single rock, which gradually become an aesthetic activity. The rock could be grotesque, but it is considered as condensing the energy of wildness, thus possessing an original beauty of the nature. In garden design, this rock admiring situation contrasts with most Western traditions which seem to prefer greenery and other colorful scenes.

The erecting rocks in Chinese gardens are difficult to find comparative match in Western world, but the rocks erected by human beings called Menhirs might have parallel undertone. Menhirs began to be erected in Brittany around 5000 BC. These stones could be the first cultural enduring points in the landscape. (Tilly, 2004: 33-37) Menhirs have been suggested to be landmarks or boundary markers set up related with the gradual post-Mesolithic clearance of the land for farming. Two basic forms can be distinguished: those are static and those with curved outlines with the impression of dynamism and movement. Although their forms are simple, they can create various experiences when encountered. Complex experiences are generated through movement towards and around the stones. The stones are dynamic even when they are fixed. This

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<sup>27</sup> Maggie Keswick, *The Chinese garden*, pp.168-178.



dynamic sensation of stones could also be sensed in Chinese gardens while moving towards and around the rocks. The merit of this comparative study between Menhirs and garden rocks might lie on its connotation. It is about the distinction between nature and culture. The Chinese garden stones seem to try to integrate nature with culture in their using of natural rocks to symbolize cultural orders. The erecting of Menhirs is an action of cultural objects marking the natural landscape.

In some way, the water in Chinese garden is like the water in landscape painting. It may represent “yin” against the rock’s “yang.” (Keswick, 178-184). It suggests the feminine gentleness against the rock’s masculine strength. It is used to balance the rock or mountain. The water and the rock together represent the perfect order of the nature. The water creates congenial and refreshing atmosphere of the garden, and it suits the most important purposes of the garden: to comfort and sedate the troubled mind.

The poet Su Dongpo (1037–1101) once compared the West Lake with a lovely young lady, and he thought it was a perfect comparison no matter what kind of cosmetic the lady might wear. The water’s luminous surface could act as a mirror to reflect all natural or artistic objects. It doubles all objects and gives a symbolic aura of blessing which is showed on pairing objects. For the artistic considerations and for the perfect balance of “yin” and “yang,” the traditional garden manual *Yuan Ye* puts the best site for a garden on the edge of lake with a view of mountains.

Water in landscape conception is so important that American Writer Henry Thoreau once wrote:

*A field of water betrays the spirit that is in the air—It has new life and motion. It is intermediate between land and sky—On land only the grass and tree wave—but the water itself is rippled by the wind. I see the breeze dash across it in streaks and flakes. (Thoreau, 1850)*

This notion of water in Western literature is quite valuable owing to its phenomenological connotation, which is so familiar to the Eastern audience that the notion could be easily taken as a statement by Eastern writers. Thoreau’s notion attests that there is some common ground in the interpretation of water between Eastern and Western thinking. To state the importance of the water, Norberg-Schulz posited: “In the images of Paradise we encounter another basic element of ancient cosmogonies:



water. The very particular nature of water has always been recognized. In the *Genesis*, God separated the dry land from the water after the creation of heaven and earth.” (Norberg-Schulz, 1980:27) This statement shows that water is the primeval substance which brings out all forms. As in the Chinese landscape painting, the presence of water gives identity to the land, rock, and sky. It also gives a reflection possibility on the reality of our existences. On the other hand, water seems to have direct connection to writing and calligraphy, this connotation is demonstrated by Su Dongpo (1037– 1101):

*My writing is like the water of a deep, full spring. It does not choose plots of ground, but gushes out over everything...But I am not conscious of it. All I know is that it moves on when fit must, and stops when it has to stop.”( Maeda,1971:248)*

Here Su used water as a metaphor to trace the creativity in his writing. Therefore writing was associates with calligraphy and painting, and water thus implying interconnected connotations for the possibility of interpretation.

### 1-3. The Metaphor<sup>28</sup> and the Mini-Cosmos

The aesthetic quality is not the only concern for the Chinese garden design. There is always some kind of metaphysic meaning while forming the garden (Keswick, 184-187).The scholar could regain spiritual energy while relaxing in the garden or similar landscape setting surrounding by rocks, water, and plants. From Taoist’s viewpoint, especially noted in Dao De Jing, the water possesses a supreme spiritual quality that no other natural elements can match. Furthermore, there is a common Confucius’s teaching: the wise people enjoy the mountains; the kind people enjoy the water. From Tao and Confucius’s tradition, we can find endless praising words for mountain and water, but there is the literarily poetic tradition that provides significant impact. The poet Su Dongpo (1037– 1101) once wrote a poem called *Canto of Crimson Gorge*. In the beginning, he wrote:

*Grant river rushes easterly;the waves filter out all timeless romantic figures.*

This is the open scenario of genuine Chinese epic that could reach the

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<sup>28</sup> Ibid., pp184-187.





level of Homer, and it depicts a mythical passion on the water and mountain. When we read the poem between the lines, the river-water becomes eternal symbol that carries all these romantic figures with it. The poem actually tells a story of China's Three-Kingdom period (220–280), when the powerful Wei invaded temporarily united Su and Wu. It is a powerful poem depicting Wu's general ZhouYu (175-210) who defeated invading navy by fire. Owing to the poem's popularity, the heroic scenario has deeply implanted into people's minds, and the image of Crimson Gorge, as well as the Grand River as a metaphor of everlasting power, transforms "mountain and water" into a more deeper spiritual insight that stimulates people's aesthetic and metaphysic sensation. The poem provides a vivid example on how the people's perceptions of "mountain and water" are influenced by popular literature, and it is a convincing case which shows garden/landscape design's ideas and perceptions could be stimulated by other popular cultural forms.

In a poem named *Auguries of Innocence*, British Poet William Blake (1757– 1827) wrote:

*To see a world in a Grain of Sand  
And a Heaven in a Wild Flower  
Hold Infinity in the palm of your hand  
And eternity in an hour*<sup>29</sup> (Blake, 2004:15-18)

This poem has some interesting insight on oriental landscape design. The Chinese garden design somehow is a miniature of grand natural landscape. A group of rocks erected inside the garden could be a miniature of grand Yellow Mountain. When a scroll of painting named Yellow Mountain hangs on the white wall of a traditional living room, it could represent a person with majestic personality. The mountains in the painting, as well as the rocks in the garden, tell the same story of grand natural landscape, and represent grand spiritual mindset of the host. The miniature landscape and painting image take the symbolic roles of the reflected living being, and tell the living being's story of life. The person appreciating the miniature might take a philosophical standpoint as David Thoreau (1817–1862) did in his *Walden*<sup>30</sup> (Thoreau, 2004). When people retreat into gardens or gaze at landscape paintings, they might psychologically transfer into another time and space. The different time

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<sup>29</sup> [http://www.everypoet.com/archive/poetry/william\\_blake](http://www.everypoet.com/archive/poetry/william_blake)

<sup>30</sup> <http://publicliterature.org/books/walden/xaa.php>



and space could be echoed by Thoreau's words: "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears the beat of a different drummer." (Thoreau, 2004: 343) Perhaps, knowing there is another mental place to retreat helps people encounter their everyday routines. As far as we know, the oriental garden bonsai also possesses parallel miniature character. Bonsai is potted miniaturization of trees with aesthetic values. A specific bonsai style called "the growing in the rock" has analogous form as rocks in the garden or mountains in a landscape painting, except that this style emphasizes on the miniature trees which is the result of struggling on sterile rocky terrain. The scene of the unique trees, after struggling with sterile nutrition, accompanying with skinny rocks, could represent unyielding character that a traditional scholar or gentleman requires.

## 2. The Genius Loci

In this study, the "genius loci" is used to represent the general concept of Western landscape design idea. Its etymological meaning and its cultural insight may provide an intriguing beginning toward Western landscape design. "Genius Loci" was the protective spirit of a place in Roman time. Nowadays the term is used as the "spirit of a Place". The eighteenth century English poet Alexander Pope (1688 – 1744) made the genius loci an essential principal in garden and landscape design. It means that the landscape design should suit to the context in which they lie. In Chinese world, the "Spirit" of a place may be compared to the word "qi"<sup>31</sup> (Weller, 2006: 22-25), which is a kind of cosmic energy. It constantly changes its quality and appearance through "yin" and "yang." It passes through our bodies and possesses the capability to determine health and illness. It travels through mountains and water, and connects human to the natural environment. Probably, we might consider the "qi" a constant-moving dynamic form of the spirit of place, and it might provide a metaphysical start point concerning the analogous quality between Western "genius loci" and Eastern "qi". In Western world, "genius loci" is about dwelling, which implies the establishment of a meaningful relationship between man and a given environment. This relationship results in the sense of identification, which could mean belonging to certain place. (Norberg-Schulz, 1985) Owing to the advance of our technology, traditional definition of "genius loci" accompanied with place is under transformation. Nowadays, we tend to free ourselves from

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<sup>31</sup> Robert Weller, *Discovering Nature*, p.22-25.



specific places in order to live a more mobile life. The advanced communication system liberates us from direct physical contact with others. New construction projects seem to try to free themselves from specific locations, but Norberg-Schulz argued that these projects did not really manage to free themselves from the concept of place. One of the radical statements was showed in Constant Nieuwenhuis' New Babylon:

*In New Babylon everybody will never feel the need to return to the place of origin, because it will anyhow have undergone a transformation. As a consequence New Babylon does not possess a determined plan. Every element is on the contrary left in a state of indetermination, mobility and flexibility, (Nieuwenhuis, 1964)*

Norberg-Schulz argued that this changing and indeterminate project would eventually turn into a constant one, and the real purpose of this kind of projects was to obtain a deeper human contact and a richer interaction. (Norberg-Schulz, 1988: 27) This conflict between the changeable and the constant is aroused by contemporary landscape design practices such as Parc de la Villette. In the project, Tschumi uses point, line and surface as the elements of spatial formation, and events, movement and space as different ingredients to form a new landscape which disassociates with historical context. Moreover, he uses red metal follies as a system of coordination. His main purpose seems to anticipate the interactions between people and those elements, (Tschumi, 1987) thus crating the above-mentioned deeper human contact and richer interaction. However, any changing of the perception of the place will have direct influence on the conception of "genius loci". Additionally, the conception of "genius loci" in landscape might imply a production of a "design for life", which shows on that we walk "informally" and dress in a "sporty" way. Our language has to be popular and easily understand, and our entertainment should be absorbed without effort. ( Norberg-Schulz, 1981: 201-202) These critical statements Norberg-Schulz used to argue formless "freedom" nowadays becomes some experimental concepts for landscape design. In this way, the "genius loci" becomes the magnet to bring people together and the visual order may be employed to service this purpose. To further define the essence of "genius loci", the study would like to quote a phase by Norberg-Schulz again:

...which is constituted above all by the totality that unifies possibilities already existing in the place itself, which is to say in the landscape used by the work of man...The definition of "local image" therefore concerns the effective quality of the place and not only the



characteristics that are easily perceived by sight...every local image is presented with its particular imprint, which is its synthetic quality par excellence...A particular atmosphere is pointed out by the very nature of things and not by their expressive force...the imprint emerges everywhere and conditions the place, but it can be grasped only as *genius loci*...(Norberg-Schulz, 2000)

## 2-1. The Tradition of Genius Loci

In ancient Roman, the “Genius” was considered a spirit that protected people and place, and the “Genius” even injected energy into people and place. In other words, the consulting and conciliation with the “spirit” could be the most important thing in daily life. This idea of balancing with natural spirit is certainly popular for ancient civilizations. In Chinese tradition, the “qi” is analogous to omnipresent movement or the spirit.

Norberg-Schulz’s book *Genius Loci* defines and exploits some specific meanings of the term. Generally, it concerns about the specific character of a place, and the comprehensive atmosphere of a place. Reflecting to human being, the “spirit of a place” defines people’s orientations and identifications<sup>32</sup>. (Norberg-Schulz, 1980:5) Historically, the Western ideas of the spirit of place might retrace to the Egyptians’ envisioning the forces of nature as gods. Some of the best examples are that Amun-Re was the sun god and Nut the sky god. Buildings were designed with respect to the various characters of the gods; temples were arranged with specific axes concerning the directions of sun and river. Later the Greek gods took human forms but continued to symbolize specific natural powers. The best example is that Apollo represents medicine, music and the Delphi oracle. The idea is that, before the specific temple was built, the spirit of place, “Genius Loci” had been there associating with the place. The Romans adopted the Greek Pantheon and continued the pattern of connecting specific gods with particular temples and natural characters. The spirit (numen) inhabiting a place and the generative power (genius) sustaining a place were respected. A spirit associated with a place, such as a stream or a forest, was recognized as *genius loci*.

With the Christian monotheism, the old gods’ association with locations or a special spirit inhabiting in a place might be considered as inappropriate. However, the genius of the place took another tone

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<sup>32</sup> Norberg-Schulz, *Genius Loci*, chapter1 “place?”



associating with eighteenth century's concerns with nature, reason and classical civilization<sup>33</sup>. In order to further understand eighteenth century's idea on landscape design, one of Alexander Pope's (1688-1744) famous verses may provide useful clue:

*To build, to plant, whatever you intend,  
To rear the Column, or the Arch to bend,  
To swell the Terras, or to sink the Grot;  
In all, let Nature never be forgot.  
Consult the Genius of the Place in all  
That tells the waters or to rise, or fall  
Joins willing woods, and varies shades from shades  
Now Breaks, or now directs, th'intending Lines;  
Paints as you plant, and as you work, Designs<sup>34</sup>. (Tatter, 2010)*

Nowadays, it seems that most of the landscape designers not only have not forgotten the important of nature, but also employing nature with a more systematic approach which combines with the studies of history, geography, climate, biology, geology, and so forth. This kind of practices could easily refer to Ian McHarg, and it might have considerable similarity with oriental landscape design concept.

## 2-2. Ian McHarg and Design with Nature

There are many advanced landscape designers in Western world, but Ian McHarg could be one of the most influential contemporary designers. Ian McHarg (1920-2001) was a landscape architect and the founder of the Department of Landscape Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania. His 1969 book *Design with Nature* initiated the concept of ecological planning and it still is one of the most circulated books about landscape design. The book was a step-by-step guidebook on analyzing region's appropriate use. We will quote some of McHarg's most influential verses to look into its insight which might have looming oriental landscape design viewpoints<sup>35</sup>:

*This book is a personal testament to the power of sun, moon, and stars, the changing season, seedtime and harvest, clouds, rain and*

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<sup>33</sup> <http://www.gardenvisit.com/landscape/architecture/14.1-genius-loci.htm>

<sup>34</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_Pope](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Pope)

<sup>35</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian\\_McHarg](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ian_McHarg)



*rivers, the oceans and the forests, the creatures and the herbs. They are with us now, co-tenants of the phenomenal universe, participating in that timeless yearning that is evolution, vivid expressions of time past, essential partners in survival and with us now involved in the creation of the future.*

This summary shows some similar connotation with Eastern garden design, which the small self merges with the Universal Self, thus realizing eternal blessing. The Eastern concept is that a person functions best as an organic unit and he relates himself to his environment and to all forms of life which we may call nature. (Lancaster, 1966: 237) McHarg continues:

*Our eyes do not divide us from the world, but unite us with it. Let this be known to be true. Let us then abandon the simplicity of separation and give unity its due. Let us abandon the self mutilation which has been our way and give expression to the potential harmony of man-nature. The world is abundant; we require only a deference born of understanding to fulfill man's promise. Man is that uniquely conscious creature who can perceive and express. He must become the steward of the biosphere. To do this he must design with nature. (McHarg, 1969:5)*

In Ian McHarg's viewpoint, the French style of garden design is a conflict with nature, and the English style is the prototype for his design philosophy which aligns with nature. Throughout his life McHarg searched for a modern association between human and nature. His contribution might be summarized as the following

- a) all analysis is the first step that prepares a platform for creative design
- b) landscape is for the nature of land, and it should not be used as consumable commodity
- c) refusal to accept that landscape design should be subservient to other professions

In sort, Ian McHarg's theory is based on the concept that the core of landscape design is the nature, and the relationship between human and nature. The various technical methods can only be used as tools that help us approaching this goal. This approach is undoubtedly match with Chinese landscape design concept. It puts nature, such as mountains, water, rocks, and plants, as well as the relationship between human and nature, such as scholar's painting, as the main concerns.

Moreover, MacHarg extended it concern to ecosystem. He argued the



ecological crisis was caused by reckless laissez-faire development, Western capital greed and chaotic urbanism. He considered the holistic ecology of the “the Orient” was better in its non-anthropocentric and respect for the biotic community. He also stated a grand critic of Western anthropocentric industrialism versus an Eastern harmonious naturalism (Anker, 2005: 533).

### 2-3 The English School<sup>36</sup> and English Landscape Garden

This section will look into various ingredients of genius loci that form the landscape design practice called The English School (Jellicoe, 1995: 233-250). Two influential figures, William Temple (1628 – 1699) and Alexander Pope (1688 – 1744) had strong impact on the formation of it. In 1685, William Temple, a formal diplomat, wrote an essay *Upon the Gardens of Epicurus*, which praised the Chinese manner of garden design. Although Temple’s writing did not cause Europeans to adopt the imaged Chinese manner as mainstream landscape design concept, it did inject an alternative thinking toward European’s formal garden design style. In 1713, Alexander Pope, a noteworthy poet, wrote an essay on gardening in the *Guardian*, suggesting a return to simplicity of plain nature. In *Epistle to Burlington*, he stated what was to become the main principle for the English landscape design: “In all, let nature never be forgotten.....Consult the genius of the place.” At that time, although the English landscape design was inspired by blurred Chinese landscape design concepts (Jacques, 1990), the main pattern of these English gardens was formed by the images of European landscape paintings. Later there was a fashion of Chinese-inspired garden, that was popular during the last half of eighteenth century, and it spread almost all over Europe. One of the most interesting ingredients in Chinese-inspired garden is the erecting of follies. The follies include various exotic figures such as pagoda, Egyptian monument, Creek temple, Chinese pavilion, and minaret. Recently, the design of Parc de la Villette in Paris (Tschumi, 1987) also employed various follies for its composition, and the design smartly redefined the meaning of the folly, which elicited enthusiastic intellectual debates. Moreover, this imposing of historical ingredients into contemporary landscape designs and transforming their meanings might be considered as an intercontextualism practices. The backing concept that engenders Chinese-inspired garden<sup>37</sup> and the employment of follies as contemporary

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<sup>36</sup> Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe, *The landscape of Man*, pp.233-250.

<sup>37</sup> <http://cesarigd.club.fr/parcsafabriques/etr/dEtr2e.htm>



landscape design strategy are interesting variations between Eastern and Western interpretations of landscape design. When we compare occidental and oriental design concepts, these kinds of variations provide enchanting motive to elaborate further.

Furthermore, English landscape gardens, such as the one at Stowe, could be understood as a way of representing man's idealizing image of nature. The change of English garden design in eighteenth century corresponded with a change in ideal. It was a gradual loosening of the formal system and geometric idea, and a forming of the conception of natural's energetic role in organic metamorphosis toward garden design. Although the gradual change in design conception, there was a constant idea permeating eighteenth century English garden design: the idealizations of transcendental experience in nature which the romantic poets celebrated (Bassin, 1979:31). Besides, the landscape designs could be seen as part of the contemporary philosophical and literary debate about the relationship between art and nature. (Neumeyer, 1947) By the second half of the eighteenth century, the new understanding of nature was showed in the Gothic style in architecture and the Picturesque in landscape. Alexander Pope (1688-1744) and William Kent (1685-1748) own a historical position in this time period. Both of them undertook landscape design work. Pope built villa and garden at Twickenham; Kent built several county houses by architecture and landscape commissions. Pope was a poet, and Kent was architect/landscaper. Their differences of design styles brought into cultural debate about the relationship between art and nature. The intermediate structures developed by them became solid forms that disclosed a new relationship of society to nature. (Balmori, 1991: 39-40)

### 3. Conclusion

The Chinese landscape painting is literally called "mountain and water" painting. (Weller, 2006:22) People call it this name because the landscape painting is full of mountains and waters, but there is another possible reason that might catch the deeper meaning of the name. In history, the painter<sup>38</sup> was also a poet, a calligrapher, a scholar and an officer (Keswick, 2003: 102-127). The scholar became officer once he had past specific official exams. The scholar-painter-poet-officer might encounter some political turbulence and be exiled to provincial area.

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<sup>38</sup> Maggie Keswick, *The Chinese garden*, pp.102-127.





During the exiling, he might brush some extraordinary landscape paintings to express his will, melancholy or contentment. One way or another, the exiling scholar often showed his real character in the landscape painting. The genuine character he might hide inside the emperor's court, but not in the exiling provincial environment. Therefore the landscape painting is like the mirror or reflection of his essential self. The extraordinary of the landscape painting represents his distinguishing personality. The more supreme or unique the mountain is, the more purified or matchless his character is. The landscape painting, like the poetry, becomes the channel to express his emotion and passion, as well as to elicit his sub-consciousness. The landscape painting owns healing power and becomes the tool to cure mental dissatisfaction. It also evokes strong sympathy toward the painter, and admiring the "mountain and water" is equal to admiring the exquisite character of the painter. Meanwhile, since the landscape painting and poetry inspire Chinese landscape design and garden formation<sup>39</sup> (Jellicoe,1995: 70), the above-mentioned conditions, especially the scholar-painter's mindset, also have long-term influence on oriental landscape design.

An interesting idea about the Eastern landscape conception is the occurrence of the monumental and the miniature together. The topography of grand lands and mountains could be transformed into various rocks and terrain treatments in enclosed gardens. On the other hand, a life-long's experiences, with all the emotions and sensations, could be condensed into a scroll of landscape painting. With all the freedom, the landscape painting symbolized the interpretation of personality and place, which consists of our being in the world. This freedom also forms the sublime principle of Chinese landscape design. This landscape design conception aims at creating a form with the dual elements of space and time, as well as their relation to our bodies. Chinese landscape painting actually creates a mental place, with condensed space and time in a scroll, and most Chinese garden designs realize this mental place in a condensed style. According to Christopher Tilley:

*Places constitute bodies, and vice versa, and bodies and places constitute landscapes. Places gather together persons, memories, structures, histories, myths and symbols. Mental and material, symbolic and practical, wild and domestic, they constitute landscapes, collections of place-bound structures and meaning.*

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<sup>39</sup> Geoffrey and Susan Jellicoe, *The landscape of Man*, p.70.



(Tilley, 2004: 25)

The essence of the Chinese landscape design might lie on its blurring of the imagination and reality, mental and material, symbolic and practical, wild and domestic. The Taoism's elements of "yin" and "yang," void and solid all mix together to form a transcendental being.

To conclude, this brief study tries to pick up some interesting points that might help people realize the differences between Eastern and Western landscape design concepts. Chinese landscape tradition in scholar painting and gardening, the concept of "Genius Loci", and McHarg's modern landscape design concept all result in respecting nature and the relationship between human and nature. Perhaps, only through nature, we could "dwell poetically"<sup>40</sup>. (Heidegger in Leach, 1997: 98-119) On the other hand, this study mainly deals with positive and general characteristics of landscape design conception, with a supplementary hue of particularity and exemplarity. Like Walter Benjamin used *flaneur* as a trope to look into modernism, (Tester, 1994) the Chinese-inspired garden, or Anglo-Chinese garden, provides a valuable trope to investigate the difficulties and transformation in cross-cultural interpretation and narrative. (Fung, 1999: 219) Hopefully, this cross framework of discussion might help bridge the gap of our understanding regarding Eastern and Western landscape representations.

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<sup>40</sup> Neil Leach, *Rethinking Architecture*, pp. 98-119.



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