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# Masonry Memory: Ancient Gardens vs. Modern Gardens

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**Abstract:** The Cangwang Pavilion in the Suzhou Classical Garden is a treasure of Chinese classical gardens, with many delicate landscaping art techniques in the details of its landscaping elements that are worthy of appreciation. The Red Brick Art Pavilion in Beijing is a very prominent representative of modern gardens. The architects took inspiration from ancient writings and combined them with modern design and gardening concepts to make the Red Brick Art Pavilion unique and distinctive today. By comparing these two gardens, we will discover the same concepts and techniques and be inspired to think more deeply about them.

**Keywords:** Garden Design; Beijing Red Brick Art Museum; Cangnan Pavilion.

## 1. Introduction

Using the garden designs of the famous Song Dynasty gardens, Cangwang Pavilion and Beijing Red Brick Art Museum as samples, this paper will compare the similarities and differences between ancient and modern gardens in terms of layout, node creation, etc., taking the landscaping philosophy and method as the entry point, and discuss the inheritance and development of modern garden design in classical gardens.

## 2. Background

### 2.1. Historical Background

The Song dynasty was the first stage in the maturation of classical Chinese gardens.

In terms of politics and economy, the Sui and Tang dynasties introduced a system of land equality and limited the personal dependence of peasants. In the economic structure, the domination of the manor-lord economy was eliminated and the small farmer economy was gradually restored, laying the foundation for the long development since the Song dynasty and contributing to the country's progress and development. In the Song dynasty, the imperial court abolished the annexation of land and made private smallholders the sole legal form of ownership, thus solidifying the small-farm economy of the landowners, while at the same time separating towns and cities and allowing urban commerce and handicrafts to flourish like never before.

Apart from that, the literary and artistic aspects of the period showed a situation in which a brilliant group of stars triumphed for some time. Poetry and painting appeared in the Tang Dynasty and began to consciously pursue mutual penetration. Poets and painters became directly involved in horticultural activities, and garden art began to consciously blend poetry, painting, and is more evident in folk gardens. During the Northern Song dynasty, Confucianism changed to rationalism, and Taoism separated from folk Taoism into Lao Zhuang, Buddhism, and Zen, approaching academic Taoism. In terms of culture and art, there was a shift from outward expansion to inward excavation, showing very subtle expressions of emotion. The content and form of gardens tended to become more fixed, and the art and art of horticulture reached its peak.

### 2.2. About Cangrandei

During the Qingli period of the Northern Song dynasty, Su Sun-sin was framed by his father-in-law, Minister Du Yan Chengjo, for supporting Fan Zhongyan's reforms, and was removed from his official position and settled in Suzhou. On his travels, he found a place full of bamboo and water, and built a pavilion by the water, which he named Cangnu. He was inspired by the words of "Chuxing's Rhetoric - Fisherman": "The waters of Cangnu are clear enough to wash my tassel, and the waters of Cangnu are muddy enough to wash my feet. The expression of the atmosphere is very much in keeping with the characteristics of Northern Song dynasty gardens: simplicity, distant view, sparseness, elegance, and nature.

### 2.3. Modern Garden Design

As industrialization accelerates development, urban expansion is seriously damaging the natural environment, and the contradiction between people and land is becoming more and more pronounced. Modern gardens pay more attention to urban planning and public leisure and recreation, and advocate democracy for the people. The "garden" has gradually transformed into a "park," serving the people and exhibiting characteristics of humanization, sustainable development, and adaptation to local conditions.

In the development of culture and art, influenced by modernism and postmodernism, the gardening process became more attentive to concise design language and more focused on practical function and humanity.

### 2.4. About the Akarenga Museum

Located in Cuijiazhuang Township, Chaoyang District, Beijing, the Red Brick Art Museum is a garden-style contemporary art museum. The architectural design of the museum was undertaken by Dong Yuyan, a renowned architect and professor at Peking University's Center for Architecture Research, who used red bricks as the basic elements and green bricks for some parts of the building to create a garden-style museum that integrates with the surrounding land, grows within its original environment, and has a courtyard with a modern landscape. The museum will cover approximately 22 acres and 9,720 square meters of building area, including nine exhibition spaces, two public leisure spaces, and one art-derived space. The building and

gardens use red brick as the basic architectural element, and the museum is used for international cultural and artistic exchange and dissemination.

# 3. Landscape Gardening

## 3.1. Overall Layout

What differentiates Cangnanting from other gardens is that the overall layout is arranged in a sandwich style, showing a "water outside the garden, mountain inside the garden" layout format, breaking away from the traditional pool-centered architectural scheme, following the original form of the site, and adapting to the local conditions. The circular, river-like surface of the water makes the view more open, and at the same time, the fluidity of the water itself adds visual guidance, preserving the natural interest of the site itself while enriching the visual experience. In terms of architectural placement, the building combines an inward and outward facing arrangement. The building faces outward with its back to the courtyard, emphasizing centripetal and inward convergence. At the same time, the main scenic area radiates around the park with the mountain at its center, and the buildings are arranged in a circular pattern around the perimeter.

The use of the compound corridor greatly enhances the boundary space of the garden, with water breaking through the walls into the garden, the shimmering light on the water surface seems to seep into the garden as a whole through the funnel windows of the compound corridor, and the mountain landscape also enters the water through the corridor and extends to the river berm, the interaction of the mountains and water The interaction between the mountains and the water forms a sense of unity between the inside and the outside. The core of the garden is dominated by the mountain, while the outside is the water area, forming a structure that is solid on the inside and weak on the outside. The courtyard on the north side is surrounded by a corridor, forming a combination of inner emptiness and outer reality. The corridor surrounds the space between them, forming a relationship between reality and fiction, see Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Floor plan of the Red Brick Art Museum

The layout of the Red Brick Museum still follows the traditional pond-centered architectural scheme, with the building facing outward into the courtyard and adopting an inward layout format. Around the water area, following the horticultural law of "plow the high foothills and dig up the low sides," a difference is made between the intention of the height of the mountains and the low sides of the water, and the effect of the landscape is achieved by managing the relationship between the buildings and the trees, the landscape effect is achieved by the relationship between the buildings and the trees.

In the process of creating the garden for the Red Brick Museum, the soil from the pond to the south was dug out and the mountains to the north were tilled, forming a borrowed relationship between the wetlands to the north and the hazy northern mountains further to the north. The "Sophora Valley Courtyard" was placed in the center of the garden, taking over the rolling hills to the north and paving the way for the introduction of water to the south. The whole is square, twisted 45 degrees and embedded in the middle of the courtyard, with the northwest side connected to the rift path of the Acacia Valley. It is wide at the top and narrow at the bottom, allowing people to stay, climb, and play for short periods of time, adding to the interest of the space and creating a prelude to the maze-like entrance.

## 3.2. Node Design

### 3.2.1. Demolition of the Pavilion

The "Garden Metallurgy" includes "Pavilions, another stop. A place where people stop and gather." The Cangnan Pavilion is built on top of the mountain and overlooks the panorama, becoming the focal point of the landscape perspective and dominating the panorama. At the same time, it can also look up at the foot of the mountain, and the graceful eaves are also a beautiful landscape, which can form a counterpoint to the view by looking at and traveling through them.

In the garden of the Red Brick Museum is the Blind Pavilion, a work by Danish artist Elle Eliasson. In my opinion, this blind pavilion does not have the style of a traditional garden "pavilion," but it does have the characteristics of a traditional garden "pavilion. From a distance, the black mirror surface reflects luster and continually draws people's attention. Within it, the surfaces of the black and transparent mirrors reflect each other, and the different angles of the mirror surfaces continually refract the reflections of the surrounding natural scenery, reflecting different angles of the landscape. At the same time, some black mirrors would prevent the realization of a kind of "authority lost." It is a kind of "authority lost" scenario. Externally, the blind pavilion is a node of the garden, a decorative object. The exchange of materials for the structure of traditional semantics completes the modern "pavilion."

### 3.2.2. Arch and Spatial Sequence

In traditional gardens, the use of arches is to frame the scene, "the desired scene while the scene in the space is not fully observable or bland." In contemporary gardens, designers use repetition of design techniques, continuing multiple arches in the space to emphasize the depth of the scene and achieve a kind of "deep courtyard" effect, reflecting the classical beauty of the garden and at the same time having a strong contemporary art atmosphere.

### 3.2.3. Fiction and Reality

At Cangnang Pavilion, the art of the leaky window is also a very distinctive part of the garden. The windows at Cangnang Pavilion are made up of various window panes, bricks and tiles with different patterns, and the view outside the window is dimly visible but not very clear, giving it a kind of fuzzy beauty, like "seemingly real but fake, seemingly fake but real," and at the same time, the leaking windows at the same time, the leaking window itself has a certain appreciation and aesthetic value. In traditional Chinese gardens, windows are a major element of the frame, of which

there are two types: brocade windows and flower-leak windows. There are two types of windows: brocade windows and leaky-leaf windows. As the name suggests, leaky-leaf windows differ in the shape and frame of the window itself, and are mainly used for ornamental purposes as well as for borrowing scenery. Leaky flower windows are mainly used to communicate between interior and exterior spaces, delicate, small, and very decorative shapes in themselves can usually be borrowed when used when there is no landscape; the two types of windows are usually carved wood or brick stone; the two types of windows are usually made of wood or brick, and the two types of windows are usually made of wood, brick, or stone. In the garden, from the style of leaky windows can also be seen in the pursuits and ambitions of the garden owner. For example, lotus flower, plum flower pattern, three friends and ice crack pattern, all objects have meaning and reflect the garden owner in the pursuit of noble character, see Figure 2.



**Figure 2.** A leaky window in the Canglang Pavilion

The design of the facade of the Red Brick Museum of Art is also quite ingenious. Most of the windows on the facade are vertical strip windows. On the practical side, the 24-cm slit windows create a width between the window frames on either side that makes it difficult for glass to be pushed in if broken. On the other hand, the slit windows are twisted 45 degrees to avoid the view looking directly at the traffic on the adjacent road and to direct the view at an angle to the natural landscape in the front yard, see Figure 3.

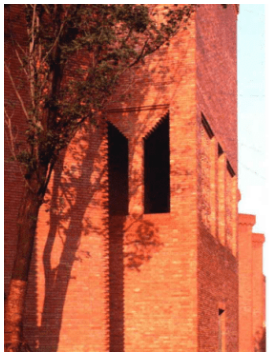


**Figure 3.** Window design for art galleries

### 3.2.4. Material Exchange

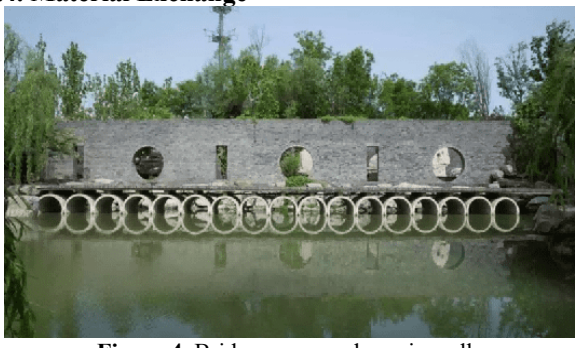


**Figure 4.** Bridge caves and scenic walls

The creation of ready-made objects and the replacement of materials are two creative techniques often used in contemporary public art, and these two creative techniques are also used at the Red Brick Art Museum. The bridge in the center of the site, above the water and under the wooden plank bridge, is made of large concrete pipes. Combined with a landscape wall with the Akarenga Museum logo, the project combines the subtle and distant intentions of a classical garden with the contemporary language of materials to complete the translation of a cultural symbol from the classical to the contemporary, see Figure 4.

## 4. Conclusion

The construction concepts of ancient and modern gardens have differed as a result of the constant development of productive forces, which have drastically changed social structures and economic models. The classical garden is a place for the scholarly class to comfort themselves and a tool for the royalty to show their power, while the modern garden is a public green space in the city, a piece of green space where people can rest amidst the concrete and steel of busy urban life, seeking the beauty of nature. At the same time, the development of science and technology has further promoted the updating of gardening techniques, and the application of technology is no longer limited to "making the garden look good" but pays more attention to environmental protection, sponge cities, rain gardens, etc., so that cities can achieve sustainable development.

Although the development of productivity has led to differences in the concept of gardening, the desire for beautiful nature is a tireless pursuit of mankind. In terms of design methods, modern gardening methods with Western design concepts pay more attention to the natural environment through a more condensed design language and through the deconstruction and restructuring of elements to express the landscape image. Or, through the deconstruction of traditional semantics, the use of new materials and technologies in place of ready-made art and utilities, making gardens more integrated into contemporary life so that the public can live more interesting and vibrant lives! It is a new and eternal process.

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