On the Application of Art Design in Tourist Attractions—A Case Study of Suzhou Museum

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Abstract. Taking Suzhou Museum as example, this paper explores the application of art design techniques, such as the methods of linking the traditional with the modern, using light and shadow, compromising form beauty and function beauty and view borrowing in tourist attractions, and analyzes architecture form and style, the application of decorative elements and humanistic concern in the new Suzhou Museum. On this basis, the paper studies how art design can help tourist attractions pay attention to tourists’ mental traits, meet their emotional needs and create a pleasing environment.

Introduction

Located at Northeast Street, Suzhou City, with Lion Grove Garden to the south, the Humble Administrator's Garden to the south and Prince Zhong Mansion on the east, Suzhou Museum is a regional historic and artistic museum in China. Building a museum in such a geographical location is undoubtedly a great challenge in that it should be of both historic significance and modern features.

The main body of the Museum consists of dark gray stones matching white walls, which embodies the regional hue—the blue and white of Suzhou, a waterside city in the south of the lower reaches of the Yangtze River, and its simple but elegant outdoor design and color combine the traditional Chinese architectural elements with humanistic thought.

Suzhou Museum integrates the beauty of landscape, nature, artificiality, humanity and artistic conception into one, impressing the tourists by its spatial formation, color, fitment, landscaping and layout, and every detail of the design expresses concern for the tourists.

The Application of Art Design Methods

Linking the Traditional with the Modern

How to inherit and carry forward the tradition while linking the traditional culture with the era is a design challenge to contemporary designers. Linking the traditional with the modern is attempted throughout the whole process of planning, designing and construction of the new Suzhou Museum, whose design fits into the existing Humble Administrator's Garden so well while keeping the traditional style. They stand harmoniously together with each other and borrow views from each other but are independent from one another.

There are a main courtyard and several small inside courtyards in the Museum, which are exquisitely laid out. Among them, the most special one is north courtyard on the central axis, and through its lobby glasses tourists can enjoy the typical waterscape in the area. The courtyard and the Humble Administrator's Garden are separated only by the north wall and they blend well together, conveying traditional cultural charm in a most direct way. It is a modern creative water-hill garden that is carefully built on the basis of classical garden elements, consisting of the cobbled pool, flagstone rockeries, straight and curved bridges, octagonal pavilions and bamboo grove, etc. With unique modern characteristics, it differs from traditional Suzhou garden without breaking away...
from traditional Chinese humanistic thought and charm. Under the north wall of the Museum lies original flagstone rockeries by the designer. Different from traditional rockery style, flagstone rockery draws on Taihu Lake stones which are cut into slices to form irregular hill contour. Then press and overlap them to the wall and use welding gun to burn it into special texture, presenting a picturesque landscape with wall as paper and stones as paintings. When night falls, light from behind the stone wall accentuates the effect of landscape painting featuring layer upon layer of peaks and knolls (Figure 1).

![Figure 1. Flagstone Rockeries.](image)

Wu-style roof of Yangtze River Delta, which is covered with traditional gray tiles, is not suited for a large open public space like the Museum, especially regarding lighting function for it would expose the limitation of traditional roof to a larger extent. With reference to and by improving dormer in traditional Chinese architecture, the Museum has its windows on the roof center, forming an angle with roof slope so that light can refract into exhibition hall. The problem is thus solved and a good effect is achieved by making use of new material and new process to lead natural light into the interior space while maintain traditional architecture style.

Although the roof looks simple on the whole, its structure is extremely complex. Through a series of structural design, the designer used metal plates, boards, insulation boards, steel structures, panels and suspended ceiling to effectively bring natural light in. More specially, roof drainage of the new Museum no longer depends utterly on the corrugated as it used to be, but deals with ponding, which penetrates through the roof to metal plates, with the help of drainage system of metal plates. The design effectively keeps its wholeness, using new materials and new process for restructuring and inherits traditional roof style at the same time, making the building integrate with the surroundings and re-enacting geometric effects by science and technology. Natural light can come into exhibition hall through glass roof and the complexity of light renders the visitors tour in picture (Figure 2).

![Figure 2. Ingenious Roof Design.](image)
Using Light and Shadow

Light has always been a leading role in Leoh Ming Pei’s architectural design, of which leading a large amount of natural light into interior space plays a core role. He attaches great importance to abundant changes of light and shadow formed by their move in space, which makes his work full of unique charm. His well-known saying goes: let light design. The master’s handling of light can be seen everywhere in Suzhou Museum.

The inner hall and corridor of the building uses a good number of glass-structured ceilings, hollowed-out windows, coupled with tinted shade, generating light leak and sparse shadow. Natural light changes and the space becomes vivid. In central hall and many other exhibition hall, roofs are made up of square and triangle frames of different size, inside the frame white ceiling and glasses interlace, resulting in a mottled effect of light and shadow. Calligraphy and Panting Hall skillfully uses hollow nine patch convenient for setting light. All of these enrich traditional Chinese architecture pattern and largely solve the problem of lighting in traditional Chinese architecture.

In order to protect cultural relics, Leoh Ming Pei learned from dormer in traditional Chinese architecture and made improvement to set windows on the roof center, forming an angle with roof slope so that light can refract into exhibition hall. Being filtered, the light becomes soft and layering, and more suitable for displaying exhibits. Meanwhile, glasses are widely applied on the top and gable wall, increasing permeability as well as realizing view borrowing. A double advantage is got!

Light is used in the building’s interior space to create atmosphere. As time passes by, light makes the space flow. Through thin grilles light gets inside the space orderly, and light and shadow wander on the wall, floor, furniture and stairs over time, simultaneously highlighting the shape, texture, color of the space and the contour of display environment. It requires move of light and people to achieve flexible use of space. People wander in mottled space as if they were walking at winding corridor. Sunlight streams through the ceiling and reached the floor, forming light spots, which bring the space to life.

Compromising Form Beauty and Function Beauty

What we have seen from this design work of the new Suzhou Museum is deep integration of form beauty and function beauty. The designer tried to follow and make use the function and structure of the building itself, only giving aesthetic treatment in form, thinking highly of structural beauty of its own and avoiding unnecessary adornment. Cantilevered steel stairs in the west area stretch from one end of floor, forming a zigzag structure with strong visual effect. Whether load-carrying members like floor steel beam or decorative part like steps or handrails are simplified, free of any complicated carved adornment. The whole design not only follows its own structural function but also fits into the surroundings, conveying a strong sense of form beauty. Twenty-thousand-square-meter floor pavings are all carefully selected Imperial Black coming from Shanxi Province, which is the best and densest black stone in our country. Paved on such a large area, the joints are still smooth and controlled within six millimeter. The fine brown stone pavings and straight lines become an irresistible symbolic sign, providing fertile ground of form beauty for various fantasy and imagination.

View Borrowingis

Leoh Ming Pei said that in the West window is exactly what lets sunlight and fresh air in as designed to be; but for Chinese people, it is a picture frame, out which there is always a garden. Consequently we can see moon gates and leaking window anywhere in Suzhou Museum, where nature and architecture are integrated. The clear contour and outline under light and shade send forth the strong scent of traditional Chinese garden style.
In the Museum many places apply the method of view borrowing. First, integrate the transparent glasses on the roof with sky, the large floor glasses with outdoor scenery into one (Figure 3); second, naturally product a landscape picture by moon gate and fanlight (Figure 4); third, directly bring the natural into interior space.

Courtyard-style architectural concept runs through Leoh Ming Pei’s design and gradually evolves to one of his architectural features. Courtyard is the core of public space which offers relaxation area for tourists. In the new Suzhou Museum, the combination of display area and natural landscape is everywhere, mainly by the means of: placing large potted plant, aquatic plants and indoor pool in interior space, such as the lotus pool in its west side (Figure 5); building courtyard on the ground, equipped with large area of steel structure ceiling to support the lighting of plants in the courtyard, such as the Wistaria Garden (Figure 6).

Humanistic Concern in Tourist Attractions

We should not narrow humanistic concern down to only paying attention to human body size and disadvantaged groups, we should also see its deep meaning that is to respect human essence, meet human needs and promote human vitality and creativity. Only on the basis of humanistic concern and humanistic spirit can we create better environment or better art environment. This is humanistic concern and humanistic spirit in environmental art design.

Environmental art design is to use technologies and aesthetic principles, in accordance with the nature of architecture, the environment and corresponding standards, to create an interior space that is function-reasonable, comfortable and beautiful and physically and spiritually satisfies the demand of human being. By “environmental” it means on one hand the artificial subjective environment, that is interior space environment, visual environment, physical environment and mental environment and so on, and on the other hand the organic integration of natural objective environment and architecture outdoor environment. Suzhou Museum is excellent in this respect,
perfectly fusing the interior display environment into natural environment. The application of art design in exhibition hall meets the aesthetic needs of tourists. In architectural feature, it is a modern space with classical taste; in exhibits, it displays a large number of ancient and modern artworks. Viewers’ feeling is also considered. Quite a number of exhibition halls and natural places provide relaxation areas, so visitors can still enjoy the beautiful scenery while take a rest. Owing to the application of art design, tourists run into surprises when they are visiting and their satisfaction is greatly improved.

Human beings are the core of design, determining that it should be people-oriented whether physically or mentally. Humanistic concern in environmental art design mainly focuses on human beings, taking people as main part and core, caring for people’s living condition, satisfying people’s living demand and promoting their vitality and creativity. This requires creative inspiration of Suzhou Museum art design to not only focus on visual effect and emotional expression of designer but more importantly to see to tourists’ feeling to build a beautiful environment.

Conclusion

With simple and natural methods and rich art language, Suzhou Museum reaches extremely high artistic level and possess great research value. To do research does not mean simply copying the tradition, on the contrary it is to treat the tradition with progressive and developing point of view and to make i.t be absorbed and used by modern architecture. The design of Suzhou Museum adds the understanding of local culture and traditional culture to modern design, uses rich art language to give the architecture characteristics of the time and holds to ethnic and cultural identity at the same time. It is worth thinking about. Perhaps the design full of ethnic and cultural value is most likely be acknowledged and may be what designers seek for.

Tourists are principle object and reference in tourist attraction art design. The aim and crux of artistic creation is to build a pleasing and beautiful place for visitors, and more importantly, to take their mental traits into full consideration and to meet their emotional needs. A people-oriented design is what well reflects humanistic spirit and humanistic concern.

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