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MODERN “CHINESE-STYLE” ARBOURS: IMAGE AUTHENTICITY OR DISTORTION?

WSPÓŁCZESNE ALTANY „W CHIŃSKIM STYLU”: AUTENTYCZNOŚĆ CZY ZAFALSZOWANIE WZORU?

Abstract

One of fashionable threads in modern landscaping is the widespread use of modern arbours that are positioned as small “Chinese-style” forms. The investigation of traditional Chinese pavilions proves the superficial perception of Chinese traditions without the understanding of age-old foundation on which they were formed. Actually, modern “Chinese” arbours form the misperception both of the signs of the traditional Chinese garden architecture and the methods of integrating the small forms into the natural environment. Architecture in China has always been ancillary to the natural environment and climate, and was the expression of the social hierarchy of a person who owned the rich variety of materials and ornaments with the specific sacral significance.

Keywords: arbours, distortion of traditions, China

Streszczenie

Masowe zastosowanie nowoczesnych altan, które określane są jako małe formy architektoniczne w tzw. chińskim stylu, jest obecnie jednym z kierunków we współczesnym projektowaniu krajobrazowym. Stosowanie wzorców tradycyjnych chińskich pawilonów świadczy o powierzchownym postrzeganiu chińskiej tradycji bez zrozumienia podstaw jej formowania. W rzeczywistości współczesne „chińskie” altany przekazują zarówno nieprawdziwy obraz tradycyjnej chińskiej architektury ogrodowej, jak i metod włączania małych form do krajobrazu. Architektura w Chinach zawsze była podporządkowana krajobrazom oraz klimatowi. Wyrażała także przyjętą hierarchię władzy przez bogactwo materiałów i detalu, mając przy tym szczególne znaczenie sakralne.

Słowa kluczowe: altany, wypaczenie tradycji, Chiny

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, European landscaping has appealed to Chinese traditions. Today, many design bureaus and construction companies suggest developing an individual project of a Chinese gazebo or offer typical designs of gazebos in the Chinese style with the use of modern

materials; landscape design companies also propose making a site plan for a Chinese or Japanese garden. By the time of the pandemic, such a popularity of the Chinese theme in landscape design was due to the interest of all Chinese outside of China, the tourist impressions of those who had first-hand knowledge of the Chinese culture, as well as the search for innovative solutions to gardens and parks in Europe. It should, however, be noted, that the Chinese theme in the landscape design was most widely used in the household plots, since the Chinese garden could be developed both on a large area and on a small one, taking into account the fundamental postulates on which it was based for centuries. The coronavirus pandemic has completely changed the life of the whole world and made adjustments in many habits that would stay with us for a long time

If the saying “the world without boundaries” was true in the past, the world after the pandemic will become different, more closed; it will shift the focus from external tourism to domestic one and spending leisure time in your own country house with a household plot. For example, in Ukraine after the announcement of the quarantine, those who had country houses immediately left the city to live in the country.

According to statistics from Ukraine, gardening has become a massive hobby during the quarantine.

One can predict an increase in demand for the country houses with green spaces, gardens and orchards around them, and after the easing the quarantine restrictions and abolition of the quarantine. And as not many areas are spacious and each owner tries to landscape his plot, in many cases a Chinese-style garden can become currently important since it can be designed in a palatial residence and on a plot of 6 acres. Such a garden is original, unlike neighbouring green areas, however, the more you analyse the historical canons of the Chinese garden compared to modern gardens that position themselves as “Chinese,” the more you become convinced of their non-identity. In many cases, something presented to the customer as the “Chinese garden” is, in fact, a free interpretation of the real Chinese garden, creating a false impression of Chinese traditions in general.

That is why the authors tried to determine the essential peculiarities of a traditional Chinese garden and compare it with gardens that are positioned as “Chinese” to prove that designing a real garden in Chinese traditions (not a simplified decoration), is a very complicated thing.

It is not enough to look at photographs of Chinese gardens with pavilions or visit them during a tourist tour. It is necessary to work out a significant number of scientific sources, considering landscape design in the general context of the development of Chinese culture and art to understand the philosophical and religious foundations of Chinese landscape design. That is why the authors used a convincing source database to substantiate the findings, and publications from both Chinese and Ukrainian and Russian scientists were studied. As since ancient times Chinese architecture has been inextricably linked with poetry and painting, the relevant publications on the relationship of architecture and art, the concept of art, and the specifics of architectural design have become the sources of our study (A. Dmytrenko and T. Kuzmenko,¹ T. Kozłowski²).

¹ A. Dmytrenko, T. Kuzmenko, *Methods of architectural design*, Yuri Kondratyuk Poltava Polytechnic, Poltava 2019.

² T. Kozłowski, *Architektura a sztuka*, Wydawnictwo PK, Kraków 2018.

We studied the sources concerning the general issues of Chinese culture and architecture (N. Akhmetshin,³ Ye. Belova,⁴ China National Bureau of Cultural Heritage,⁵ D. Kogan,⁶ A. Kolpakova,⁷ Z. Wang⁸), as well as directly gardens and historical pavilions (Q. Li,⁹ R. Lu,¹⁰ Lou Chinsi,¹¹ H. Zhong,¹² W. Zhou¹³). Besides, we studied the scientific sources dealing with the structural system of Dougong (G. Zhang¹⁴) to understand the specific character of the morphology of shapes of pavilions. We additionally involved publications devoted to the design of modern parks and pavilions in the Chinese style (J. Lui¹⁵).

2. MAIN PART

2.1 IMITATION, SIMPLIFICATION, OR CREATIVE RETHINKING?

Over the past centuries, Europeans have never been able to achieve truthfulness in imitating Chinese traditions.

Most probably, it is almost impossible to obtain the same authenticity of the building in a foreign style as of that building in the homeland. Indeed, it is impossible to recreate a Chinese garden or pavilion, only knowing that the roofs are curved upwards, and the principal Chinese symbol is an image of a dragon. It is worth recollecting the situation with the emergence of the European version of the “Chinese” – the Chinoiserie style, where the artists and architects did not represent authentic China, but the European perception of China (Europeans who have never been to China and made up their minds about China in several engravings, Chinese porcelain vases and excerpts from stories). This led to the situation where the Europeans received the impression of China not from the primary sources or as a result of visiting the country, but from the representations of artists. In relation to this, a famous joke is recalled, when a person made the impression of the imperfection of the Beatles singing from a chant of a song from their repertoire by his friend, who could not sing.

³ N.Kh. Akhmetshin, *Puteshestviia po Kitaiu* [Travels in China], Ast: Vostok-Zapad, Moskva 2007.

⁴ Ye.Yu. Belova (ed.), *Mir kitaiskoi kul'tury: bibliograficheski ukazatel'* [The World of Chinese culture: bibliographical reference], PGPB im. A.M. Gor'kogo, Vladivostok 2007.

⁵ *Dictionary of Chinese Attractions* (third edition), National Bureau of Cultural Heritage, Shanghai Dictionary Publishing House, Shanghai 1998.

⁶ D. Kogan, *Ancient China* (encyclopaedia), transl. R. Kogan, Mir Knigi, Moscow 2007.

⁷ A. Kolpakova, *Ancient China*. Belyi Gorod, Moscow 2006.

⁸ Z. Wang, *Architectural Beauty in Ancient Chinese Culture*, Xuelin Press, China 1982.

⁹ *Chinese pavilions*, text and photos by Qin Li, China Architecture and Building Press, Beijing 2019.

¹⁰ R. Lu, *Garden Pavilion Analysis*, China Forestry Press, China 2004.

¹¹ Lou Chinsi, *10 etudes on Chinese architecture*, Publishing House of Construction Universities Association, Moscow 2009.

¹² H. Zhong, *Inheritance of the Pavilion: Collection of Architectural Culture*, Commercial Press, China 1989.

¹³ W. Zhou, *History of Chinese Classical Gardens*, Tsinghua University Press, China 1999.

¹⁴ G. Zhang, *Library of Dougong elements and information modelling of architectural monuments of ancient China*, AMIT, 2015, no. 2, pp. 1–13.

¹⁵ J. Lui, *Sculpture parks in modern China: problems of originality and perspectives of evolution*, Bulletin of St. Petersburg University, Art History Series, 2017, no. 7(3), pp. 360–372.

Here we proceed to a very obstinate intricacy: what precisely is behind our desire to create a Chinese-style garden on the household plot and what result we want to obtain.

There are three ways of imitating: the first is the literal repetition, taking into account all the peculiarities of creating the original work and achieving maximum similarity with the principal; the second is the simplified imitation of the principal with the embodiment of only some features; the third is the creative rethinking of the principal and creation of the innovatory work on its base, which simultaneously gives rise to analogies with the original work. From the aesthetic value of a work of architecture and art, the most original is the third option, when the author does not try to literally or simplistically reproduce what was once, but creates on its basis something of his own, belonging at the same time to the past and present. Examples of this include Piazza d'Italia by Charles Moore in New Orleans; Les Espaces d'Abraxas (a residential complex in Marne-la-Vallée) and Antigona (a neighbourhood of Montpellier) by Ricardo Bofill and his Taller de Arquitectura; Teatre D'Hades (a residential complex in Le Grand Hornu, Belgium) by Manuel Nunez Yanowsky. However, in the case of the imitation of Chinese gardens, there is no attempt to creatively rethink the old traditions according to the traditions of the present. Instead, the way of simplified imitation of the principal is used with the embodiment of only some features. As a result, the owner who receives a "Chinese garden", gets a distorted version of it, which is also true for small architectural forms – pavilions and decorative lamps and mass production fountains.

To experiment with traditional Chinese forms and at the same time not go down to trivial copying requires courage, creativity and skill, therefore, as positive examples, we called Charles Moore, Ricardo Bofill and his Taller de Arquitectura, and Manuel Nunez Yanowsky, who just managed to build the bridge between the past and the present. For example, the residential complex in Marne-la-Vallée (1979–1983) is an illustration of how a traditional object was transformed into a theatrical decoration with a free interpretation of the order, which takes on hypertrophied forms, a triumphal arch and an amphitheatre square that surrounds the triumphal arch in circles. There is a creative rethinking of classical or Baroque traditions. The architectural building intentionally turns into a theatrical decoration, losing the usual signs of a material structure, emphasized hypertrophied proportions of parts of facades, the dimensions of windows and doors, columns, portals, the outline of the Antigona residential complex generally resembles a quatre foiled Catholic church. Architects adhere to their principle: "The only open way is rethinking and detached using of classical forms and rituals in a new ritual context," which is generally characteristic of postmodern architecture. The traditional Chinese garden in the European interpretation is still waiting for its daredevil, who will decide on such a creative experiment "in the Chinese style." By this time, it is crucial at least not to repeat the mistakes of the Chinoise style and, accordingly, to follow the Chinese landscape traditions.

2.2 EIGHT POSTULATES OF CHINESE LANDSCAPE DESIGN

The first feature of Chinese landscape design is the subordination of the social hierarchy while preserving the basic canonical techniques. That is, both the private garden of the emperor Qin Shi Huangdi, and the private garden of the official (the garden was private and not public), created an ideal landscape behind high walls, providing the impression of "garden joy" by the expression of the Chinese "Book of Songs," and with this, the goal was embodied in the techniques of "one lake, three mountains," "garden in garden," "borrowing

the scenery,” however, they differed in their scale and luxury of ornamental decoration of the buildings in the garden. In the Chinese garden, there were always lakes, ponds, streams, hills, rock gardens, flower beds, and the beauty of artificially created natural pictures was highlighted by small architectural forms – pavilions. The layout of the garden, regardless of its size, provided for a constant change of pictures, where the central role was played by nature, which was delicately supplemented by architecture. So that the “Chinese garden” created in the 21st century does not become a distorted erroneous copy, you need to know the main traditions on which the Chinese landscape design is based. It is a mistake to consider that setting up one gazebo with a concave roof or a Chinese red lantern with a hieroglyph on a personal plot will create an “impression of China.” We highlighted the eight rules of canonical Chinese landscape design.

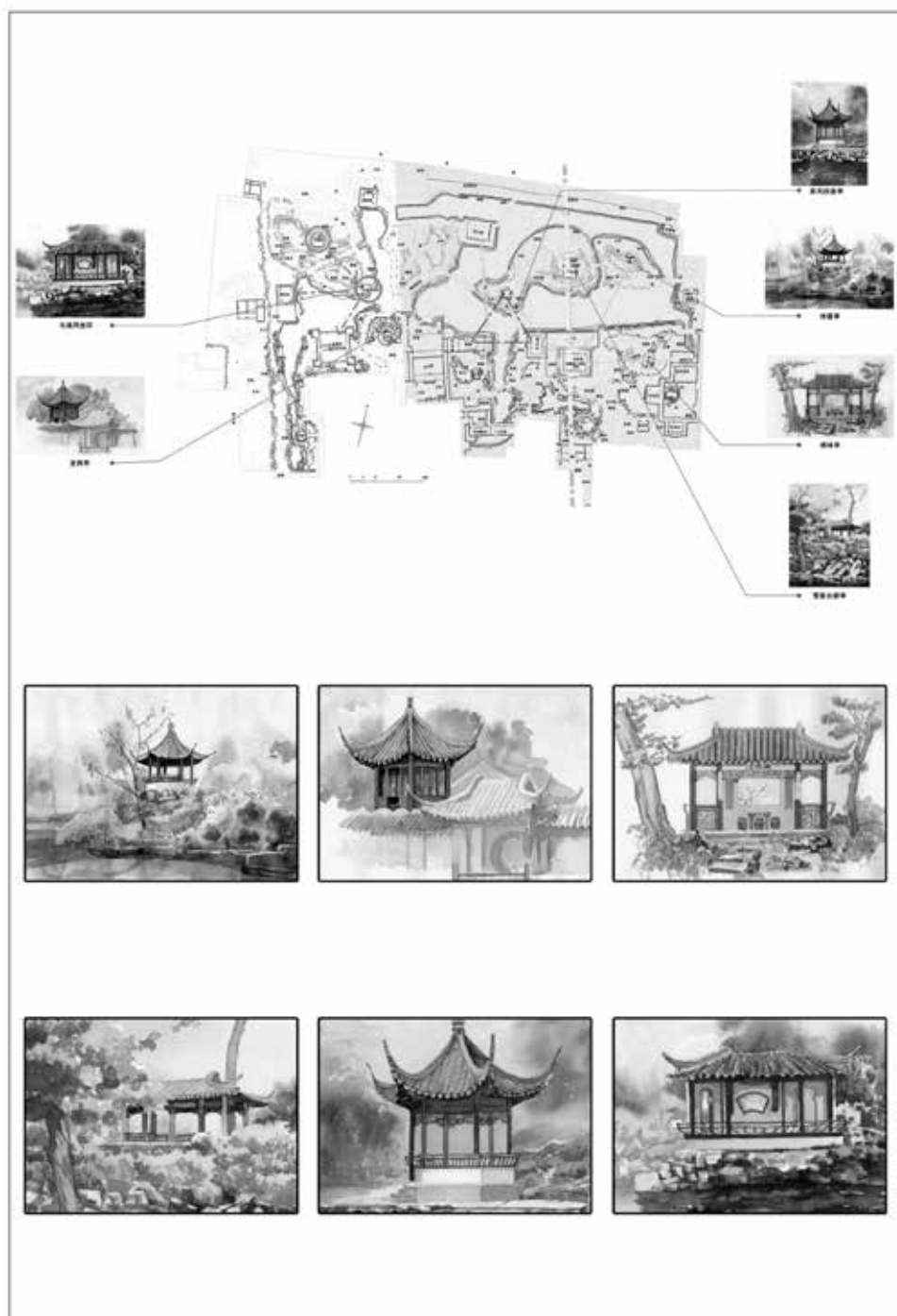
The first and principal rule of the Chinese garden is that garden is an embodiment of an ideal harmonious world, separated from the real world; it is the dominance of nature and emphasizing the secondariness of architecture in the natural environment (Ill. 1). Therefore, the scale of the pavilions and arbours never contradicted the natural environment, and the image of the garden had an inextricable connection with poetry. This comparison of architecture and poetry is not unjustified, as Leonardo da Vinci acted in a similar way, comparing poetry to paintings: “Painting is poetry that is seen and not heard, while poetry is painting that is heard and not seen.”¹⁶

The garden in China was considered in the context of the three main ontological components of the world: Heaven, Earth and Mankind. The principal elements of the garden were water bodies and artificial or natural hills, while the area of water files amounted to 3/5 of the entire garden. The elements created without human intervention were considered the most unexceptionable ones; such as natural stones, which inspired some associations; or rocks with their outlines, where natural forms and delicate human interference were combined. When the masons picked holes in the boulders and lowered them to the bottom of the lake, and after years, water destroyed traces of processing and provided holes with a natural character.

The second rule of the Chinese garden (and this is its difference from the European garden) is the lack of long-term prospects and the division of space into separate independent landscape pictures that change like glasses in a kaleidoscope. This impossibility of simultaneous viewing of the entire garden space was not an accidental caprice of the architect since the partitioning of the long-distance perspectives with trees, pavilions or rockeries blocked the path to evil spirits according to Feng Shui. In architecture, this role was performed by multivalved folding-screens and shelters.

The third rule was the unity of landscape painting and landscape design when they obeyed a joint thematic genre. For example, the landscape genre of “Shan Shui” (mountain – water) has spread both in painting and in the design of gardens, where it is considered one of the most ancient landscape techniques. The genre of Shan-Shui moved to landscape design from Buddhist ink wash painting. Using the example of the ancient Suzhou garden – the Canglang Pavilion (Surging Waves Pavilion, Cāng Làng Tíng), known from the middle of the 11th century, it is possible to illustrate how this plot is realized through the lace windows of the gallery. At daybreak and sunset, the fog transforms the view of the reservoirs outside the garden through the gallery windows into ink paintings in the genre of Shan Shui.

¹⁶ L. da Vinci, *Traktat o malarstwie*, Wrocław 1961, p. 13, after: T. Kozłowski, *op. cit.*, p. 177.



III. 1. The Zhuo Zheng Yuan (Zhuzheng Yuan) garden in Suzhou. Watercolours by Chang Peng, 2020

The fourth rule is to miniaturize the somewhere present real landscape with mountains, lakes and rivers. In a small area, observing the proportions of the elements, a reduced copy of the landscape is reproduced. It created the specific term “City Mountains and Groves.” The main objective was to produce on a reduced scale the impression of being in a real mountain environment. One of Suzhou’s private gardens, Shī Zǐ Lín Yuán (The Lion Grove Garden), was called the “Kingdom of Artificial Rockworks,” because it had a significant number of reliefs of various shapes.

The fifth rule refers to a specific list of the landscape design techniques: 1) Shan-Shui; 2) “one lake – three mountains” (the technique is associated with the cult of xian (legendary immortals of the Han dynasty); it was believed that immortals live on “the three divine mountains”, and at the foot of the mountains there is a sea of immortality, which together, even in a small copy of the plot, ensures immortality to the garden owner); 3) “borrowed scenery” – a different view was revealed behind each landscape picture, thus it’s as if integrating a foreground landscape with the distant view outside the garden; 4) “garden in garden” – there is a smaller garden inside of the larger one; 5) framing – a landscape like a picture in a frame; 6) partition of the scenery.

Often the landscape design technique gave the name to the pavilion in the garden. For example, the name of the pavilion where you can see the shadow of the tower in the Zhuōzhèng yuán Garden implicitly illustrates the method of “borrowed scenery.” Since the pavilion is located near the pond, it is reflected in the water like a pagoda, and is consonant with the distant view of the Northern Temple pagoda outside the garden, thus turning into the final concluding accent accord of the Zhuōzhèng yuán Garden. It testifies to the specific role that the Chinese gave to the “borrowed scenery” technique.

The transformation of the scenery into a charming picture in a frame can be illustrated by the example of the pavilion “The Tranquil Residence Among Phoenix Trees and Bamboos” (Wuzhu Youju ting) in the central part of the Zhuōzhèng yuán Garden, and the pavilion “With Whom Shall I sit” in the western section of the garden. In the pavilion “The Tranquil Residence Among Phoenix Trees and Bamboos”, you can see the sceneries as if decorated in round frames when they overlap each other. The pavilion “With Whom Shall I Sit” does not have a front wall, but it has two slots in the side walls opposite each other and a fan-shaped hole in the central wall makes it possible to see a full review of the front and fragmentary perception of scenery through the slots and opening in the wall.

A unique embodiment of three techniques at once – “borrowed scenery,” “garden in garden” and “scenery division” is a separate small orchard with medlar, surrounded by its walls, in the south-east of the central part of the Zhuōzhèng yuán Garden.

In this inner “garden in garden,” there are pavilions that additionally divide the space of a small garden into three small separate spaces with courtyards of different size. Although the Pavilion of Pleasant Fruits is located outside the fence from the south, it is informatively related to the territory of a small orchard, that is emphasized by its name.

The sixth rule concerns the poetization of small architectural forms – pavilions, which receive a form and scale that is consonant with the natural environment, and the name generated by either a view, or an event, or a poetic stanza. So, in the largest of Suzhou’s gardens, the Zhuōzhèng yuán Garden, the roof of the Bamboo Hat Pavilion resembles a wide-brimmed hat in the grass, and it is sometimes called the Pavilion of Waiting for Frost. The names of the pavilions could be associated with the changing seasons, for example, the names “The Scent of Snow” and “A Nice Cloud” come from the impressions of the

plum tree blossoming. In the name, moral principles could be poetized in an implicit form, as in the name of the pavilion of the Wind in the Pines, since in Chinese culture the pine tree is not afraid of the cold and is a symbol of nobility and morality, or by the name of “The Lotus Surrounded by the Wind on an Island in the Middle of a Lotus Pool” pavilion, wherein Buddhism, the lotus is a symbol of purity. The seventh rule of landscape design is associated with a specific orientation. In ancient Chinese architecture, the north-south axis was decisive, with the main premises oriented south. The layout of the garden could suit two main axes – north-south and west-east, highlighting them with a specific arrangement of pavilions, as is done in the Zhuōzhèng yuán garden (the Humble Administrator’s Garden).

The eighth rule concerns programming a particular mood from a specific landscape picture (sadness, poetry, joy, inspiration, uplift or peace) by selecting some components and placing pavilions that contribute to the maximum merger of a person in the pavilion with the surrounding scenery and therefore often do not have walls, and the fancy roof seems to “float” on graceful high supports.

2.3 MODERN CHINESE-STYLE GARDENS: THE IMAGE OF CHINA OR THE ARCHITECTURE OF DECEPTION?

The monograph of Tomasz Kozłowski *Architektura a sztuka* traces the fair idea that the concepts of “beauty” and “art” are not identical in the modern world.¹⁷ At the same time, a hallmark of the Chinese garden is the identity of these two concepts, since the Chinese garden was originally conceived as the embodiment of harmony and an ideal world. Modern landscape designers name the following basic properties of the Chinese garden: balance with the natural environment and minimalism, possibility of privacy, winding paths, maximum naturalness of landscape paintings; presence of small architectural forms is mandatory. It is proposed to put the main accents in the depths of the garden (it also applies to large sculptures), to arrange ritual animals in various sectors, to place bowls for washing hands in open areas, along roads and on the banks of water bodies. Stones perform a special role, especially the stones of an unusual shape or with holes or cavities. On one of the sites of the landscape designing firm, we found evidence that stones with voids show “caught” inner space, unusual forms of stones symbolize the vitality of space, and holes in the stone – the meeting of heaven with earth, and the correct location of the stones helps to include garden into the space circulation energy. What is primarily noticeable in the interpretation of the image of the Chinese garden on the websites of firms that provide such services? First of all, attention is not paid to the basic principles that were mentioned in the previous section, but some legends are given, characteristic sculptures and bas-reliefs are described, although they did not form the traditional image of the Chinese garden. Designers widely use picturesque terms, such as the “the moon window”, that is, the round window that allows you to perceive the landscape as in a frame. However, this technique is only one of the main ones highlighted in the previous section. The reception of lace windows through which the view opens, also known since ancient times – in the Cāng Làng Tíng Garden is also the same. When describing water bodies in modern Chinese-style gardens, designers often limit them to water lilies or lotuses.

¹⁷ T. Kozłowski, *op. cit.*

The judgment that the Chinese garden has a pronounced centre around which all sceneries are grouped is erroneous. Using the example of the Zhuōzhèng yuán Garden in Suzhou, it can be seen that the presence of the north-south and west-east axes, which are fixed by the pavilions, becomes important. Designers use unexpected terms to encourage customers – “garden that laughs”, “formidable garden”, “idyllic garden”, – providing some signs of each type – it is believed that the “garden that laughs” has a bright polychrome, the “formidable garden” expresses the indomitable strength of the elements in the form of waterfalls, overhanging rocks and menacingly twisted trees, the “idyllic garden” creates a sense of peace, calm and harmony through pastel colours. These descriptions do not correspond to the abovementioned philosophy of a private garden, which for centuries has been creating the impression of an ideal space for calm and harmony. It is unlikely that the owners of Suzhou’s private gardens would have thought of creating a “threatening garden” with blocks that were about to fall on their heads.

The statement of modern designers that the Chinese garden always requires large areas and a considerable amount of work, is also erroneous: on the contrary, the universality of the Chinese garden was precisely in the possibility of embodying the same canonical landscape plots despite the difference in scales. In small areas, the gardens became more chopped, and the focus was on detailing each landscape picture. It required not only the skill of the gardener but also an understanding of the philosophical foundations of each scenery. So, many owners now complain that they tried in vain to make a Chinese garden in the country but received only a miserable parody.

Describing traditional techniques, designers often use atypical terminology and, emphasizing the meaning of elements, such as water and stone, they do not reveal the philosophical and religious content of the “one lake, three mountains” technique. Designers generally do not mention this technique which is canonical in most historical Chinese gardens – both imperial and private, but they talk about the “balance between wood and stone” and the “perfect microcosm” of the garden. And this explanation does not allow the customer to understand why the decoration of his garden, made of stones of the predominantly original form and even with holes, would create an ideal world for him. Designers often call the principal element of the Chinese garden “the pagoda pavilion, which is reflected in the water mirror.” But the pavilion and the pagoda are two different types of Chinese buildings; the Chinese never considered the artificially created building to be the “main element” of the garden. Such an element was an artificial lake with mountains around, a symbol of “one lake and three mountains”, and the pavilions were considered a minor addition to the landscape; moreover, they did not necessarily stand by the water, they could crown a hill or stand in greenery. It is also erroneous to say that the pavilion often has round slits as it symbolizes the moon and the concepts of immortality. In the Zhuōzhèng yuán Garden, only one pavilion has round slots and, in general, most of the pavilions in the natural environment are open on pillars for maximum merging with the scenery.

Creating a modern version of the Chinese garden is a difficult task since the designer must either reproduce the main features of the traditional Chinese garden, eight of which were mentioned earlier, or follow the path of postmodernists and creatively rethink historical oriental traditions, purposely hypertrophying iconic forms. However, a more typical European option is still an attempt to reproduce Chinese traditions and make the modern garden close to the original.

It should be understood that the construction of a real Chinese garden requires not only an appropriate type of pavilion with roofs curved upwards and streamlets or lakes in front

of them. It is necessary to solve the intricacy of the background scenery, since “borrowing the landscape” arises here, and the background scenery cannot discord with the landscape of the foreground. In this case, it is strange to form an exotic look of the development. This thesis can be illustrated by the example of the Gorki-2 complex stylized to China, where the concept is innovative in itself, but everything is spoiled by the background with typical Russian pines and standard cottages with metal roofs behind the fence; in the foreground, there are wooden benches and barbecues, atypical for China. It just proves that it is impossible to attach a Chinese landscape picture to any environment, like a stamp on an envelope (Ill. 2).



Ill. 2. The exterior of the Gorki-2 complex (2006). Author: Landscape studio Ilya Latsis. Watercolour by Chang Peng. Source: <https://landshaftm.ru/landscape-design/dizajn-uchastka-6-sotok>

A separate issue involves the look of modern pavilions-arbours, which are positioned as pavilions in the Chinese style. The previous statement is also valid for them: it is necessary either accurately reproduce historical shapes, or create emphatically innovative, postmodernist with some quotes of Chinese architecture. Unfortunately, most of the standard arbours on offer are a simplified version of Chinese small architectural forms. One of the mistakes is the idea that the use of concave roofs and decor with hieroglyphs will already create a “Chinese” impression. The concave roof was not an unintended whim of an architect to create an original image; it was due to the specificity of the Dougong construction. The roofs were more concave up in the regions with a large amount of rainfall and had a special symbolic meaning in Feng Shui. In appearance, the pavilions in the gardens, except for the especially significant imperial gardens, were very simple in ornamental decoration. There are also

many questions about the advisability of decorating modern gardens in the “Chinese style” with a large number of sculptures, lamps and coloured bas-reliefs, as well as oversaturated polychrome (Ill. 3,4).



Ill. 3. The small modern Chinese-style gazebo. Watercolour by Chang Peng, 2020. Source: <https://mainavi.ru/dom/sad-i-ogorod/besedka-v-kitajskom-stile/>



Ill. 4. The modern version of the “Chinese” garden. Watercolour by Chang Peng. Source: <https://mainavi.ru/dom/sad-i-ogorod/besedka-v-kitajskom-stile/>

3. CONCLUSION

Understanding the basics of designing a traditional Chinese garden begins with the fact that a garden has become the embodiment of a synthesis of traditional arts – landscape design, architecture, painting, poetry, sculpture and philosophy. The principal difference between the Chinese garden and the European garden is the dominance of the natural surroundings over artificially created architecture, so small architectural forms are always secondary to the scenery and are designed not to express their beauty, but to express the beauty of the environment. The traditional Chinese landscape design was based on canonical principles that have not changed for centuries.

In contrast to the Western European landscape park, the Chinese garden played only a private role and had, first of all, thousand years of philosophical, religious, cultural and artistic experience, a synthesis of philosophy, beliefs (Taoism and Buddhism), architecture, landscape design, calligraphy, poetry, music, painting and sculpture.

The essential components of the Chinese garden were water ponds and artificial or natural hills, complemented by picturesque vegetation, flower beds and pavilions. The main task was to create the constancy of the variability of space, subject to the canons of Taoism and the canons of Buddhism. As a result, the garden turned into a combination of independent landscape pictures with alternating open spaces with mountains, lakes and streams, half-open spaces between mountains and water, closed spaces surrounded by greenery and pavilions. These spaces were both separate and interconnected, since they “flowed” into each other, creating a constant change of landscape pictures. The architecture has always been subordinated to the natural environment, and most of the buildings were close to the water.

The Chinese pavilions were built according to the established and unchanged canons over the centuries, under a strict social hierarchy and the principles of Feng Shui. Colours and elements were not only aesthetics but also carriers of certain symbolic content. The most peculiar characteristic of the Chinese pavilions were concave roofs, which created a dynamic silhouette, multi-tiered roofs and roofs with fine detail. The crucial role in shaping the image of the traditional Chinese pavilion was performed by the Dougong design scheme, known from the beginning of the 12th century and constantly improved over the centuries, and ancient treatises generalized the centuries-old experience in construction and provided modularity and typification of building elements and structures.

Modern designers and landscape architects while designing “Chinese-style” pavilions and “Chinese gardens” make the same mistakes, like their predecessors, chinoiserie-style artists, who also took the path of simplifying Chinese forms and moving Chinese architecture to the unusual environment without a fundamental transformation of the surroundings. In fact, the Chinese theme turns into an element of entertainment in this case. “This is a feature of art that is based on satisfying the need for play, which constitutes the main feature of mass culture. A category of fairy tale appears and its recipient *Homo ludens*, i.e. the ‘playing’ man.”¹⁸

A hallmark of Chinese architecture, in general, is that it cannot be precisely reproduced, without knowing the basics of design and not understanding what exactly each element

¹⁸ T. Kozłowski, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

embodies. It is incorrect to consider that only a round window provided the landscape framing; this effect could be produced by slots of various shapes, demonstrating the pavilions of the western part of the Zhuōzhèng yuán Garden.

It is impossible to understand the nature of the Chinese garden if only to use the terms “a garden for joy,” “a formidable garden,” “a moonlight window,” knowing that there should be a lot of stones and water, and all the pavilions should have a roof that is concave upwards. To create a convincing image of China in landscape architecture, you should not go from the mechanical list of the set of the principal constituent elements that mean something, but from the list of the techniques that are present in most gardens, since it was a particular technique that involved a combination of specific elements.

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