A POETIC LIVING
– Chinese Private Garden, Literature and Landscape Painting

by
FENG WEI
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to explore the poetic aspects of Chinese private garden by means of examining and analyzing its relationship with literature, especially poem and traditional Chinese painting as well as technique has been used in the garden design.

Chinese private gardens, through a long process of poets, painters and men-of-letters’ creative innovation and exploration, have formed their own distinctive style - the unity of natural and man-made beauty. Chinese garden had been regarded as an idea environment for literati and the meaning of Chinese Garden represents the naturalistic philosophy of ancient China. In ancient China, there were no professional garden builders. Gardens usually were planned and designed by painters who were also literati. Therefore, Chinese private gardens are associated closely with literature and landscape painting. Chinese garden in certain ways is very similar to writing essays and composing poems and landscape painting. Chinese landscape art attempts to create an artistic imagery within a limited space. The Chinese garden may either be inspired by a landscape painting, or take its cue from pastoral or scenic poetry and prose, or even uses natural scenery as its blueprint. Be it a scene of serene forest or a scene of tranquil lake and mountain, or a scene of mountain village and winding path, or even a scene of a hall at the water edge with leaves of lotus swaying in the wind. One can thus conclude that the scenic imagery of a garden is subjectivised imagery. Chinese garden is characterized by its concentration, symbolism, idealized and is full of fascination. Containing a certain element of thought and feeling, which is what many commentators called the 'sentiment of poetry and painting'.

Today, we are facing very serious environmental problems. Human lives are simply treated as a kind of "thing" by compressing them within the compartment walls of mass produced modern "living machines". Now is the time to rediscover the naturalistic philosophy of ancient China. the meaning of Chinese Garden does not confine itself to the realm of the achievement of Chinese landscaping art. It, in fact, establishes itself as a valuable model of human endeavor in environmental design. By returning to the basic concerns which Chinese had showed in their garden design, we may find the spirit of the new architecture and the opportunity of new creations for the 21 century.

Dissertation Supervisor: Dr Li Shiqiao