Narrative Landscape Design and Construction of Regional Culture in City Garden

Xingyun Wei, Yaming Fan
College of Tourism and Landscape Architecture, Guilin University of Technology, Guilin 541006, Guangxi, China

Abstract: As a kind of thematic landscape, city garden reflects distinct narrative characteristics in the process of publicizing and displaying regional culture. After clarifying the advantages of regional cultural landscape narrative in city garden, this paper proposes how to gradually create narrative theme from the extraction, transformation and reconstruction of regional cultural elements. The expression methods of narrative landscape design are summarized from three aspects of time combination, space combination and cultural perception, and Hezhou garden in the 5th Guangxi Garden Expo is explored to probe into the specific paths of cultural translation, media expression and multi-directional identification in landscape design of city garden. This paper attempts to analyze how the city garden landscape fully reflects the regional culture through the narrative construction and design expression, and creates the perception experience of the integration of narrative and era.

Keywords: City garden; Regional culture; Narrative; Landscape

1 Introduction

China's vast land has created colorful regional culture. Cities located in different regions have their own characteristics due to regional cultural differences. Landscape architecture, including topography, architecture, water and plants, can always reflect the regional culture of a region. Since the first World Horticultural Exposition was held in Kunming in 1999, major cities across the country vied to hold garden expositions at all levels. With the prosperity and development of garden and horticulture, the citys’ images have been improved. As an important part of the garden exposition, city garden mainly displays the local natural features, folk customs and history and culture, reflects the city characteristics and transmits regional information in a limited space. Landscape carries human culture, knowledge and art. With the continuous progress of society, the narrative of landscape is gradually strengthened and valued. Narrative landscape design in city garden has good effect on promoting regional culture.

2 City Garden and Regional Cultural Landscape Narrative

City garden refers to the outdoor garden space with display function in exposition garden which
created by using landscape elements, garden techniques and horticultural techniques in a fixed site with a specific city as the theme. It is generally undertaken and built by the governments of participating cities (Ru, 2019). This kind of garden space with the city as the exhibition content plays an important role in the outdoor exhibition area of the World Expo Park. It aims to show the garden and horticultural characteristics of different regions and styles in a centralized way, and provide people with the perception environment of the most intuitive impression for each city. It is very usual to see basic model display in the early stage of city garden landscape design. As people pay more attention to the spiritual needs, city garden is no longer limited to let the audience observe the simple urban landmarks, but to pursue making cities reach a deeper level which contains regional culture.

Regional culture is formed by the combination of natural geographical environment factors and human social factors in a long historical period. From the perspective of landscape, there are many differences in topography, climate conditions and cultural characteristics in different regions, which constitute the unique regional characteristics of each region, and are also the significant characteristics of a region that is truly different from other regions (Alexander, 1989). The city garden integrated with local culture is the spiritual home for people's local feelings, and also an excellent window for displaying regional customs. Similar to literary works, the landscape usually uses a narrative expression. Modern landscape design uses a variety of media to mobilize the audience's senses and tell the local story of the city, then a cultural, melodramatic and experiential landscape space can be created.

Narrative technique was first used in the field of literature, film and education research. It mainly studies the internal structure of the text and the relationship between various elements. In recent years, narrative has developed rapidly in climate and environmental change, rural development, landscape change, urban social and cultural space reorganization and some other aspects, because it is particularly suitable for analyzing the common laws and local differences of the evolution of research objects. Landscape narrative, in short, is to tell stories, that is, to organize the relevant events into a coherent and meaningful event series for the audience according to a certain order (Fang & Liu, 2012). While in the city garden, storytelling is regarded as a kind of landscape arrangement and construction with the function of stimulating tourists' imagination and creating audience's emotional experience during the tour (Chang et al., 2008). Compared with the general landscape design, the regional cultural landscape narrative changes from "landscape-oriented" to "people-oriented", and constructs a rich and diverse landscape space with the priority of audience's choice, interaction and fun, which arouses the audience's sense of identity and participation desire.

3 Creation of Narrative Theme of Regional Cultural Landscape

3.1 Extraction of Regional Cultural Elements

Regional culture includes natural landscape, material products, spatial pattern, architectural form and other material culture and concept belief, festival celebration, customs and habits, humanities and art and other non-material culture. When carrying out specific landscape design, regional culture is usually presented in the form of elements. There are many regional cultural elements that can be
extracted from the material and non-material culture of a city, and extracting representative elements has the effect of seeing the big from the small. The investigation and carding of regional culture is the premise and key to extract the elements of regional culture. The method of investigation can be literature review or field investigation. Also, it is needed to sort out the survey results to ensure the accuracy and authenticity. In the complex and diverse survey results, we should extract the most important, most attractive and highly recognized cultural elements of the city according to the regional culture that the city needs to express (Hao & Zhang, 2017). Summarize the extracted regional cultural elements, and pave the way for its transformation in landscape presentation.

3.2 Transformation of Regional Cultural Elements

Transformation is to transform cultural elements into concrete images, that is, to landscape cultural elements (Malcolm, 2001). The regional culture harvested in the early stage is usually descriptive text information, and the text material is difficult for landscape design. If we want to present the regional culture landscape, we must analyze the text material and transform it into the image symbol which is easy to design and express. The specific way of transformation is to extract representative features from cultural elements, such as image, color, shape, material and so on to form the landscape carrier of culture. Some image symbols can be directly transformed and used, designed into sculptures, landscape walls and other landscapes, or directly adjusted to reproduce a scene.

3.3 Reconstruction of Regional Cultural Elements

If some image symbols are directly transformed into landscape, which is out of date or lack of artistic beauty, it needs to be reconstructed. According to the needs of the development of the times, through the scene simulation of culture or concise innovation of cultural elements, the image symbols are indirectly transformed into excellent narrative landscape (Erbaş et al., 2018); after being disassembled, abstracted and reorganized, the image symbols are more suitable for the contemporary values and aesthetic values, so that the traditional regional culture can be reborn in the city garden (Roger, 1986).

3.4 The Construction of Regional Culture Theme

Regional culture is the basis of narrative landscape theme of city garden, and the premise of landscape design expression, which lays the keynote for the presentation of landscape carrier of city garden. Combing the regional culture of the city can provide the scope for the formation of the narrative theme of the exhibition garden landscape. The extraction, transformation and reconstruction of the regional cultural elements gradually promote the creation of the narrative theme, on the contrary, it also plays a leading role in the narrative landscape of the exhibition garden.
4 Expression and Practice of Narrative Landscape Design in City Garden

4.1 Project Overview

Since 2011, 14 cities in Guangxi have held garden and horticultural expositions in turn, which actively promotes the improvement of urban quality and the improvement of urban ecology and living environment. The 5th Guangxi Garden Expo was held in Baise City, with the theme of "Beautiful Baise, natural customs". The goal of the 5th Guangxi Garden Expo is to "strengthen the exchange of garden and horticulture, develop and promote the garden cause, create a garden and horticulture display platform, protect the natural ecological environment, and display the first-class garden and horticulture level". Among them, the city garden undertakes the main task of displaying local features and urban culture. Hezhou garden project base is located in plot 2 of the city garden of the 5th Guangxi Garden Expo, covering an area of about 4700 square meters (Figure 1). The city garden has a main entrance and a secondary entrance. The main landscape nodes include long drum array entrance square, folk culture landscape wall, orange memory landscape, ancient building cultural memory wall and Xiushui stage landscape (Figure 2). The design of Hezhou garden fully excavates the most essential local culture. Starting from the construction of characteristic landscape, it selects cultural elements such as long drum, navel orange, Xiushui champion village (ancient stage, ancient wall) and other cultural elements. On the basis of full respect for the site conditions, it highlights the protection and promotion of traditional excellent cultural heritage, and integrates modern elements with new materials and new crafts, so as to achieve inheritance and innovation enhancement the identity and resonance of tourists, and annotate the theme of "flowing scenery, nostalgic memory".

Figure 1  General Layout of Hezhou Garden
4.2 Narrative Landscape Design Expression Method

4.2.1 Time combination narrative

Landscape is the place where time occurs, and it is also the narrative of rich and changing all the time (Potteiger, 1998). Narrative landscape and time come down in one continuous line. The landscape space integrated with time, history, culture and other factors is constantly enriched and sublimated with the promotion of tourism. Time combination narrative is a process of narrating a story with the time development of events as a clue, and is a way to create a dynamic landscape. According to the combination of time, landscape space narrative can be divided into three types: static narrative, sequential narrative and continuous narrative. For example, in the node design of folk culture landscape wall in Hezhou garden, according to the time sequence of folk festivals, the temporal narrative method is used to express the cultural landscape display design (Figure 3-2). The picture frames on the wall show the local traditional festivals and corresponding cultural activities in sequence according to the date sequence. The audience moves along with the walking tour position, as if crossing the time limit, experiencing various celebration atmosphere and experiencing the dynamic folk culture narration.
4.2.2 Spatial Composition Narrative

There is not only a temporal dimension but also a spatial dimension in narratology research (Ruyi, 2017). Narrative landscape design space also has its space combination mode, which interprets the type of space, as well as the relationship between space and external space and environmental elements. The space of narrative landscape design is arranged according to certain orientation and route, which can guide the tourists' tour rhythm and visual psychological feeling. The narrative content of each landscape node space in Hezhou garden has its own emphasis, which brings different perception effect to people. In the scheme, the spatial arrangement and combination are dense, and the connecting roads and plant configuration between each node effectively create the artistic conception transformation from the winding path leading to secluded to the suddenly bright, so as to achieve rich and hierarchical tourism experience.

4.2.3 Cultural Perception Narrative

(1) Symbol and Metaphor

Metaphor is the psychological behavior, language behavior and cultural behavior of perceiving, experiencing, imagining, understanding and talking about such things under the hint of that kind of things. Symbolism is based on the relationship between things, with the help of a specific image of someone or something (symbol), to express some abstract concept, thought and emotion. It can make the idea of the article high and profound. In the landscape narrative techniques, the difference between the two lies in that the symbol is more direct than metaphor, through a more direct external image (Ding & Xie, 2019). The main function of the landscape in the city garden is to show the city characteristics, so symbol and metaphor are also applicable. In the entrance square of Hezhou garden, the warm welcome scene of the long drum performance is expected to be displayed, but it is impossible to perform the real performance all the time. Therefore, the image of the long drum is designed into a tall landscape column to welcome guests and dance with songs and dances when visitors enter the exhibition garden. People will feel the regional culture of the city when they see these landscapes (Figure 3-1).

(2) Combination of Virtual and Real

The combination of virtual and real in literary narration refers to the combination of concrete description and abstract imagination. The multi sensory immersive experience brought by narrative landscape can stimulate the imagination of visitors and bring them into the long history and the illusion of ancient culture. In Hezhou garden, the narrative method of combining virtual and real is more common. The landscape nodes of the ancient building cultural memory wall extract the typical parts of the traditional architectural pattern to reflect the profound historical and cultural heritage. The wall made of green bricks and tile eaves creates the tangible traditional architectural texture. Besides, the wall surface shows the past life scene of the ancient building group in the form of picture frame, which gives the audience the virtual imaginary foundation of walking across them (Figure 3-4). In the orange memory landscape node, the facade design of the corridor has a screen to show Hezhou's development achievements and ecological civilization. Visitors can enjoy Hezhou's past described in
the film by sitting on the bench in the corridor, and enjoy the current landscape through the hollowed-out corridor. It is also easy to build an imaginary bridge to look forward to the future of Hezhou. Combination of virtual and real makes people not move, but scenery in the flow (Figure 3-5).

4.3 Expression Path of Regional Cultural Narrative Landscape Design

4.3.1 Cultural Translation

(1) Thematic Sublimation

The construction of narrative landscape is mostly based on thematic landscape. As a typical representative of thematic landscape, city garden needs to carry rich regional culture and efficient logical expression in limited space. The sublimation of the theme will effectively expand the narrative meaning and theme capacity of the design works, and make the intention of the exhibition garden more open and higher. "Nostalgia memory", the theme of Hezhou garden, will sublimate the regional culture to the height of "nostalgia". Nostalgia China and new urbanization construction forum proposed that "nostalgia" in the new era refers to a kind of dilemma experience formed by the integration of the attachment to the traditional life mode and the weightlessness of the current urban life of the villagers who are pouring into the city. In fact, "nostalgia" is a kind of cultural deficiency, which is the spiritual appeal for the culture with the most local characteristics in hometown. The landscape of city garden condenses deep regional culture and becomes a place to carry nostalgia and narrate local stories.

(2) Immersive Experience

The overall, direct and immediate experience environment provided by the city garden makes visitors immersed in the narrative space-time situation, which is a kind of experiential narrative with full participation. This kind of experiential display promotes the image described to stand vividly revealed on the paper and strengthens the visual feeling of the viewer. The node of Xiushui stage in Hezhou garden revives the ancient stage in the Xiushui champion village. The drama performance here allows tourists to go back to the historical entertainment scene, linger on and enjoy it carefully. The sound exhibition attracts the audience to think about the regional culture more sensually. The audience's inner understanding is connected with the objective performance and the cultural creation ferments in the soul of the individual, which makes the audience's perception of the landscape narrative unforgettable (Figure 3-3).

(3) Narrative Arrangement

Narrative text arrangement is the digestion of traditional culture, an important strategy to construct narrative space, and an important factor influencing the narrative structure of landscape space. In the spatial narrative, there are three different ways of text arrangement, including ellipsis, repetition and suspense (Yang & Li, 2012). For example, Hezhou garden uses the ancient building culture memory wall to show the architectural pattern of Xiushui champion village, omitting a large number of details of the building, and only retaining the most representative building wall, can still make people feel the atmosphere of the ancient building group (Figure 3-4). The long drum sculpture at the main entrance
of the exhibition garden has two rows and six repeated settings, which increases the expressive force of narrative discourse and strengthens the space experience (Figure 3-1).

4.3.2 Media Expression

(1) Material Selection

In the selection of hard materials and plant configuration of city garden, attention should be paid to the use of regional materials, because their texture, color and even flavor are inseparable from the life of local people, bearing the local memory of the city, and playing a key role in the expression of urban regional cultural narrative landscape (Patrick, 1989). In the scheme of Hezhou garden, the designer skillfully uses media to create landscape narrative, so that some familiar materials can tell the context of the site. The ancient and simple hard regional materials such as green bricks and tiles, combined with many Hezhou native tree species in the garden, comprehensively create an exhibition garden full of regional culture and arouse the resonance of tourists. Sometimes, the use of new materials to replace the original materials can bring people more thinking, such as the use of stones, sand, weeds, etc. with regional characteristics to imitate the shape of water body to create waterscape, which gives people a new experience.

(2) Technological Innovation

One of the key ways to realize the expression of contemporary narrative landscape is to use scientific and innovative means to interpret the art of the times, mainly through the use of new technology to highlight the regional cultural characteristics, reflect the spirit of the place, and create unlimited reverie in the limited space. The design of Hezhou garden breaks through the popular narrative technique. In the cultural scene constructed by landscape, the narrative carriers such as sculpture, landscape wall and stage are embedded with multi-media facilities, and various technologies complement each other to attract tourists' attention. The audience is encouraged to understand the regional culture in a participatory way and pay attention to the key aspects of landscape display by mobilizing the senses of the experiencer. The integration of sound, light and electricity in the landscape constitutes a highly modern aesthetic art. Its wonderful narrative not only makes the heavy history and serious urban construction easy to understand, but also makes the display environment like a film lead the audience to linger in the corresponding story space-time, interact with regional culture, and awaken emotion and memory.

4.3.3 Multidirectional Identity

The contemporary landscape narrative is open and diverse. The design expression of narrative landscape is a process of audience's active "reading" and active participation. People will have different interpretations of landscape according to their own life experience. In the narrative space of the city garden, the local tourists of the city realize the strong nostalgia and associate themselves with the city; the foreign tourists appreciate the different characteristics of the city, and the feedback of each individual is not the same. Due to the diversity of narrative landscape, the differences of perspective and aesthetics endow the landscape with multi-directional identity. The narrative expression of
landscape also relies on the exploration experience of the public. The multi-directional reading feedback conforming to or different from the original intention of the design gives the possibility of landscape narrative's re-creation. This is an "unfinished" and infinite process, which shifts people's attention to landscape works from scene presentation to site construction with more humanistic value (Thwaites & Simkins, 2007). Therefore, in the early stage of landscape design, reference to the public experience is also a bottom-up human-oriented regional culture narrative path. Narrative stimulates the experiencer's memory and respect for the site, making the space still fresh after long. The narrative landscape just caters to the differentiated aesthetic demands in the context of the changing times, and constantly causes people's emotional attachment to the city and rational thinking on the environment.

5 Conclusion

Since Kunming held the World Horticultural Exposition in 1999, the Garden Expo has played an important role in promoting the development of urban construction and improving the ecological environment, especially the city garden, which can express the unique regional culture of the city to the audience with landscape design language on the square inch land. However, in the past, there was a lack of scientific landscape design methods due to the simply imitating of typical landmarks or disorderly stacking of landscape elements. Narrative landscape construction mostly takes the theme landscape as the carrier, which can carry rich regional culture and efficient logical expression. In this paper, the narrative landscape design of Hezhou garden effectively organizes and connects the exhibition space, and each landscape node narrates Hezhou’s material and non-material culture respectively. The narrative technique is ingenious and the narrative content is deeply rooted in the hearts of the people, so as to provides new idea for the future city garden to better reflect regional culture.

References


