# Cross-Cultural Currents in the Work of Yu-Cheng Chuang

An Examination of the Chinese Principle of *Jingjie*
and Western Idea of the *Picturesque* as Parallel Influences
on Site-Specificity in Land Art

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# Abstract

This combined studio practice/text thesis analyses links among the Chinese concept of *jingjie*, the archetypal patterns of sacred places, the *picturesque* movement in European aesthetics, and site-specificity in 1960s Land Art.

In addition to examining site-specificity and the theoretical aspects of my studio practice, I explore the relationship between my ethnicity and my work in the context of contemporary Chinese and Taiwanese art environments. Guided by the principle that "practice and theory inform each other," I restate the significance of *jingjie* in contemporary art, especially its connection with the physical and psychological patterns found in archetypal "sacred places." *Jingjie* was fundamental to the spatial fluidity found in Chinese landscape arts, especially garden design. After demonstrating how Chinese gardens influenced English landscape garden principles and the 18th-century European *picturesque* movement, I argue that similar East-West connections served as direct and indirect influences on the site-specific work of middle and late 20th-century Land Art artists. I then describe how *picturesque* depictions of the relationship between man and nature influenced 19th-century landscape architecture in North America and 20th-century Land Art throughout the West.

Finally, *jingjie* and Chinese gardens are used to explore archetypal sacred place patterns and their influences on the Western tradition of the *picturesque*. These parallel East-West connections served as the foundation for later interest in site-specificity, and were essential in establishing a historical context for understanding cross-cultural currents and their influences on Land Art artists. Using *jingjie* as my focus, I examine aspects of contemporary art that are not usually addressed by art critics, and reconsider the relevance of the Western *picturesque* tradition through a reciprocal model of cultural influences.

# Acknowledgements

This research actually began in 1998, when I completed my MFA degree at the Rochester Institute of Technology in New York State. The department of Visual Arts at Goldsmiths College generously offered me a position to continue my studio-based research. I have received tremendous assistance from the instructors and staff of the Visual Arts department, yet it is impossible to mention all of the people who helped me complete this project. Special thanks are offered to my supervisors, Professors Brian Falconbridge and Nick de Ville. Professor Falconbridge recognised the project's potential and the importance of conducting a cross-cultural investigation at this particular time. With a good understanding of Eastern philosophy, he encouraged me to explore my cultural roots and their relation to my studio practice. Professor de Ville's insightful critiques helped me to articulate the central focuses of my thesis and studio practice. I would also like to thank the English Language Unit at Goldsmiths College for helping me to develop academic writing skills.

There are many off-campus organizations and individuals who gave me support during my study period in London, especially those who sponsored my exhibitions. Special thanks go to the Cultural Division of the Taipei Representative Office in the UK and the ROC National Culture and Arts Foundation for sponsoring several of my London exhibitions. The Cultural Division office was especially helpful in allowing me to participate in cross-cultural events and exhibitions designed to introduce Chinese and Taiwanese culture to UK residents. Also, I offer thanks to Japanese curator Kiyoko Mitsuyama-Wdowiak for giving me the opportunity to organise my first solo exhibition at the Mafuji Gallery in London, and to participate as the only Taiwanese artist in the UK Japan 2001 Festival. Thanks also go to Katherine Wood, director of *firstsite*, Colchester, who exhibited my work and who gave me a

commission for a special project in the winter of 2001. I am grateful to the *Chinese Art Centre* in Manchester, which accepted my proposal for a contemporary work with Chinese aesthetic origins and exhibited the result during the summer of 2002. My appreciation also goes to the *afoundation* in Liverpool for accepting my proposal for a project to be shown at the 2002 Liverpool Biennale independent programme.

I would like to give my deepest thanks to my parents for their generous support during my many years of overseas study. Without their encouragement, I would not have had the opportunity to even imagine this project. Finally, I wish to acknowledge all of my friends and colleagues in Taiwan, the United States, and the United Kingdom who gave me the unlimited emotional support that was required to complete this study.

# *Part I*

## Text

# Contents

# List of Illustrations

# Chapter 1

## Introduction

### 1.1 Overview

We are just beginning to see the effects of globalisation and cross-cultural currents on contemporary art. More than ever before, people in the 21st century are very much aware of "others";[1] the consequences of such awareness are being observed and represented in contemporary art. However, cultural confrontations have inevitably raised some important issues about fundamental cultural differences. From my own observations, these confrontations present problems for emerging artists, especially those who view the world from a non-Western perspective.

In Taiwan, a post-colonial Chinese society, there is ongoing debate concerning "modernity versus tradition" and "East versus West" in visual art and literature.[2] This is a significant consequence of early 20th century political, economic, and cultural pressures exerted by a handful of powerful Western nations. From a practical viewpoint, however, complex socio-political factors tend to make such debates seem very distant from the realities of productive contemporary art communities. Frequently based on monolithic interpretations of the concept of "culture," these debates often quickly turn into challenges of contemporary viewpoints. To practising artists, these debates can seem like endless sources of questions that have few answers.

As a Chinese/Taiwanese practising artist, I have become increasingly aware of the fundamental philosophical differences and cross-cultural currents that mark

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[1] In this thesis, "others" indicates other groups of people that originated from different cultures.

[2] The modernity versus cultural identity debate has been going on in Chinese society for nearly a century. Art historians and critics have identified at least three periods of intense discussion over the "West vs. East" question in post-World War II Taiwanese art history. The latest one is said to have occurred between 1990 and 1994.

contemporary art scenes. I have also started to question their consequences, particularly in how they affect the work of contemporary Chinese artists.[3] In order to enhance the hybridity of contemporary Chinese art, my goal in this thesis is to establish a tenable position for Chinese artists that goes beyond monolithic "East-West" debates. Furthermore, in order to clarify the sources of my creative process, I will demonstrate a broader sense of historical connections to the central issue, so as to avoid a mere review of a well-researched topic in art history.

This thesis grew from a proposition that encouraged me to pay more attention to the cross-cultural influences of contemporary Chinese art. On the one hand, the Western concept of Modern Art has enriched the tradition of Chinese Art; on the other, cross-cultural currents have allowed the essence of Chinese Art to be presented in the Western world. The cross-cultural elements that support the Chinese essence have captured my attention. I began with a review of the problematic position of all Chinese/Taiwanese artists—that is, the need to reconsider the significance of traditional Chinese Art in order to relocate the current state of contemporary Chinese Art. In addition, the essence of traditional Chinese Art (for instance, its fluid spatiality) has been identified as an element of cross-cultural exchange. Following the interest developed through my art practice and my initial theoretical survey, the fluid spatiality and dynamic experience (both of which are core characteristics of my own work) became the focus of this project. Accordingly, this research looks at the complex relationships among theoretical aspects of my studio practice (i.e., *jingjie*, Chinese gardens, sacred places, the *picturesque*, and Land Art) and site-specificity.

Four central issues are raised in this thesis. First, the research demonstrates the inseparable relationship between art practice and theory by embodying the idea that "practice and theory inform each other." My studio practice provides both visual and physical elements for theoretical analysis—for example, the labyrinthine patterns and spatial illusions that together serve as the guiding focus of my work. In turn, my studio practice was enriched by a

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[3] In this research, "Chinese artists" will include artists from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Singapore, and other Chinese societies around the world. In other words, the term will represent artists from "cultural China."

theoretical analysis and literature review of previous research on the *jingjie* concept, Chinese gardening techniques, the archetypal patterns of sacred places, and the notion of site-specificity.

Second, the research spotlights the complex relationship among the Chinese concept of *jingjie*, the Western concept of the *picturesque*, sacred places, and contemporary site-specificity in Land Art. Among Chinese aesthetic terms, *jingjie* has been proposed as the most essential in terms of fluid spatial experiences and their multiple representations. In this thesis, I will describe the development of Chinese gardens and their illusory characteristics in relation to *jingjie*. I will analyse the principles used to create a sense of *jingjie* in Chinese gardens and their appropriation, reinterpretation, and transformation for use in contemporary Chinese art. I will also demonstrate the concept of sacred place in relation to Chinese garden design, with *jingjie* serving as one embodiment of the fluid spatiality found in the Chinese landscape arts—especially in the ways that Chinese gardens have long been organised. I will use *jingjie* and Chinese gardens as starting-off points for exploring archetypal sacred place patterns and their influences on the Western idea of the *picturesque*. Not only did these East-West connections serve as direct and indirect influences on contemporary interest in site-specificity, they were essential in establishing a broader historical understanding of cross-cultural currents and their influences on Land Art artists. Understanding the underlying structure of sacred places—including their physical (e.g., paths, thresholds, and enclosures) and psychological patterns (e.g., spiritual journeys)—makes it possible to describe an archetypal model that has been shared across many cultures for many centuries. I will suggest that these archetypal physical and psychological patterns served as links between *jingjie* and Land Art. I will also describe how, as part of a much earlier period of cross-cultural exchange, Chinese influences on English landscape garden traditions also exerted a significant influence on the Western concept of site-specificity.

Third, I will demonstrate how the *picturesque* depiction of the relationship between man and nature influenced 19th century landscape architecture in North America and 20th century Land Art throughout the West. The *picturesque* concept changed the aesthetic focus of many landscape artists from

two-dimensional visual images to three-dimensional bodily experiences. This transformation eventually helped to establish a new sense of site-specificity that evolved into an expression of a new relationship between man and nature during the last half of the 20th century. I will argue that the significance of the *picturesque* not only serves as a bridge between sacred places and Land Art, but also exists in parallel to the Chinese concept of *jingjie* in terms of attitudes toward nature. The new *picturesque* tradition that was established in North America in the 1800s had a direct influence on the Land Art of the 1960s and 1970s.

Fourth, I will describe the re-invention of Chinese traditions in contemporary art. The idea of "re-inventing tradition" plays an important role in this project, especially in my studio practice. "Tradition" here means Chinese *jingjie* and gardening, the Western *picturesque*, and the universal tradition of sacred places. One outcome of this research is that a re-invention of these traditions creates new potential for contemporary art that serves as an alternative to the monolithic East-West and modernity-tradition debates. As a Chinese/Taiwanese artist, it is essential for me to reconsider Chinese traditions and their embodiment in contemporary art forms.

## 1.2 Studio-based Research Methodology

Unlike conventional research in the visual arts or art history, this studio-based project uses a methodology that emphasises both personal experience and comparative analyses of previous artworks. From a practical point of view, quantitative and qualitative methods that have long been considered sufficient for art history research are inadequate for expressing personal experience when compared with practice-based research methods. Many natural and experiential phenomena—for instance, human relationships, motivations, interpretations, experiential reflections, and personal expressions—are simply unquantifiable, and cannot be captured using simple qualitative techniques.

Conventional methods are still marked by a division between practice and academic research. This separation is primarily attributed to an "objective" scientific tradition that assumes that a participant in a process cannot accurately interpret what is occurring within that process. Nevertheless, some commonalties can be found between studio-based research and scientific inquiry; for one thing, they share a commitment to innovation and creative imagination. However, unlike scientific investigation, which separates empirical and introspective approaches, studio-based research requires their parallel consideration.

A similar shift is taking place in social science research; William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson have noted that "the depths of 'human experiences' have become an inevitable quest for researchers."[4] Still, the search for new practice-based research methodologies to meet this shift in thinking is considered a challenge, especially in cultural studies and such practice-based research fields as visual arts, design, music, dance and drama. The effort to create new methods is fuelled by the desire of scholars and academic practitioners to find ways of presenting research findings that go beyond mere academic texts.

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[4] William Braud and Rosemarie Anderson, Transpersonal Research Methods for the Social Sciences: Honouring Human Experience (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998) xxvii.

Methods that are currently being experimented with in the social sciences include aspects of naturalism, ethnomethodology, and emotionalism. The first two have come under question for what some believe to be their superficiality, and so the challenge to establish a trustworthy method that is grounded in personal experience has yet to be resolved. A primary goal of the new methodology should be to go beyond rationalised analytic language in order to reach human feelings and experiences. In the present study, my goal is to consider both studio practice and personal insight to achieve a new perspective in artistic research.

For these reasons, I used a combination of new research methods, studio practice, and my own personal experiences to explore the relationship between the creative process and historical literature. My experience as a Chinese/Taiwanese artist has a direct bearing on how I view the research topic, therefore my studio practice and theoretical investigation were treated as parallel processes throughout this project. The new research methodology takes into account two core concepts: emotionalism and transpersonal inquiries.

## 1.2.1 Emotionalism

Emotionalist researchers are the major subjects of their own studies; all research assumptions and consequences are rooted in the artist's experience. According to Gubrium and Holstein, the researcher should not only examine the thoughts of others, but also examine his/her own experience of the real world.[5] The approach gets its name from the emphasis that is placed on emotional experience.

Led by Jack Douglas, the emotionality movement began in the early 1970s under the label "existential sociology"; individuals in a later group led by Carolyn

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[5] Jaber F. Gubrium and James A. Holstein, The New Language of Qualitative Method (New York: Oxford University Press, 1997) 57.

Ellis and Michael Flaherty were called "students of emotionality."[6] Both groups shared a concern for the passions associated with inner experiences. In practical research terms, emotionalism allowed for the expression of very personal passions felt toward lived experiences in the final presentations given by the researcher. Bochner and Ellis state that the aim of emotionalist practitioners is to help their readers feel and experience, "to become more fully immersed—morally, aesthetically, emotionally, and intellectually."[7]

For the present study I adopted a method that emotionalists call "re-enacting emotionality." They believe that, as qualitative researchers, it is necessary to engage in representational practices to the full range of lived experiences—that is, to integrate cognitive, emotional, and somatic dimensions. The controlling idea is that the reconstruction of representational practices that embody research is identical to the creation of artworks from an artist's experiences and relevant sources. The result is an interaction with references that provide a route map for readers and viewers to experience research in ways that go beyond mere text or linguistic meaning.

In order to study my experiences with the creative process, I documented all activities associated with the research—for instance, my personal work processes, seminars, tutorials, interviews, presentations, and exhibitions. These images and texts (that is, the "retainable documentation of studio practice") are presented in the second part of this thesis. Throughout, the guiding goal will be to make my own experience as a researcher and my original work as a practising artist available to readers and viewers in a complete visual presentation.

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[6] Gubrium and Holstein, 58.

[7] Arthur P. Bochner and Carolyn Ellis, "Taking Ethnography into the Twenty-First Century," Journal of Contemporary Ethnography, 1996, 25:4.

## 1.2.2 Transpersonal Inquiries

Aspects of new research methods are also coming from what is referred to as "transpersonal psychology." Like emotionalism, this methodology incorporates self-awareness and personal transformative experiences into academic research. Unlike other formal psychological methods that focus on clinical matters, the transpersonal approach focuses on personal transformations that occur during and because of the research. In other words, the consequences of transpersonal inquiry are expected to influence not only the readers, but also the researchers themselves.

As Braud and Anderson point out, "The methods used in the transpersonal approach ask researchers to use their intuition and apply the alternative state of consciousness such as direct experience, imagery work and even meditation to the research process."[8] In other words, methods associated with transpersonal psychology are viewed as part of a process of self-realisation. This process not only informs researchers about their topics, but also helps them learn about themselves, occasionally through the engagement of a spiritual quest. This approach is very new, and the details of transpersonal artistic research are still evolving.

Based on the Eastern influences that were acknowledged during the 1960s, this methodology includes aspects of spiritual practices with a transpersonal orientation—practices that shape our understanding of human experience. Some researchers are now using the latest developments in transpersonal psychology to establish methods that incorporate spirituality with academic rigour, leading to an understanding of human experience partially built on ancient wisdom. Thus, the boundaries between spirituality and psychology are being expanded to include shared affinities between "the transpersonal" and such subjects as anthropology, sociology, philosophy, religion, and the creative arts.

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[8] Braud and Anderson, x.

In one sense, transpersonal psychology combines ancient wisdom with Western rationalism and logic—making it a potential bridge between East and West, and between rational analysis and inner experience. The word "transpersonal" combines the Latin words *trans*, meaning beyond or above, and *persona*, meaning an actor's mask or assumed character. The word thus represents something that is beyond, or that occurs through, personally identified aspects of self. Transpersonal psychology seeks to look at the most profound aspects of humans—for instance, mystical and native experiences, personal transformation, meditative awareness, and expansive states of consciousness.

## 1.3 Research Framework

This thesis is presented in two parts—the academic text as Part I and visual documentation as Part II—for reasons of logical integrity. Part I begins with a general overview of the project, including a description of the studio-based methodology that is an essential part of this research. After describing the Chinese concept of space that exerted such a dramatic influence on Western Art following World War II, I will situate the cross-cultural phenomena that embody spatial representations of landscape art forms in a historical context. I will use historical references to illuminate the philosophical and visual parallels between *jingjie* (a Chinese aesthetic category indicating the integration of the subjective and objective) and the Western idea of the *picturesque*, then present an alternative interpretation of both concepts as influences on the site-specificity of Land Art and my own studio work.

The specific outline for the rest of Part 1 of this thesis is as follows: Chapter 2 discusses how the emergence of contemporary Chinese art during the past few decades has spotlighted the dilemma of how to simultaneously recognise the influences of both contemporary Western art and traditional Chinese art. I will describe how my position as a Taiwanese artist with Western training places me in the middle of this dilemma, and the efforts I am making to bridge the two aesthetics.

In Chapters 3 and 4, I will give a detailed account of the *jingjie* concept, which has deep roots in Chinese poetry, painting, garden design, and landscape. Of these art forms, the importance of Chinese garden design has been largely overlooked, even though garden designers achieved equally high levels of sophistication and success in terms of three-dimensional representations. I will also demonstrate how the *jingjie* concept entails complex ideas found in Chinese poetry and landscape painting that have largely been set aside in contemporary Chinese art; the one notable exception is Japanese Zen gardens, which served as a reference for Western Land Art artists in the 1960s and 1970s.

In Chapter 5, I will give an overview of how anthropologists and mythologists have interpreted the experience of certain geographical spaces as "sacred." I will discuss how sacred places can be described not only in terms of their psychological effects, but also in terms of physical setting, since many are considered architectonic sites. This chapter will also include a discussion of four crucial elements of a sacred place (enclosure, threshold, path, and final destination), as well as a discussion of specific examples of sacred places from a *jingjie* perspective. These archetypal elements, which also appear in different configurations in gardens and contemporary site-specific structures, have become focal points in my studio practice and installations.

In Chapter 6, I will show how place and land considerations influenced Western landscape art forms as well as sacred built environments. After establishing how non-traditional methods of organising space that were developed during the 18th-century *picturesque* age in England made a significant contribution to contemporary three-dimensional visual art practices, I will propose that the significance of the *picturesque* lies in great part to its similarities with *jingjie* regarding attitudes toward nature.

In Chapter 7, I will explore connections between the *picturesque* traditions and concepts that were central to the Land Art movement of the late 1960s. I will also describe similar approaches taken by critics (e.g., Lucy Lippard and Maureen Korp) and artists (e.g., Robert Smithson) who argued that the development of 18th-century English *picturesque* gardens served as a reference point for the development of Land Art in the 1960s and 1970s—now considered a milestone in Western landscape art. A comparison of 18th-century *picturesque* landscape gardens and Land Art reveals many links between the two.

In the final chapter, I will further analyse the connection between the *picturesque* and *jingjie* on one side and the site-specificity of Land Art on the other. In this manner I will demonstrate how today's cross-cultural currents require us to pay particular attention to the cultural context of contemporary artworks in addition to their formal appearances. In order to propose a contemporary approach to art that engages cross-cultural currents at a deeper level,

I will make an attempt to re-invent the Chinese concept of *jingjie* prior to reconsidering the Western tradition of the *picturesque.*

# Chapter 2

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## The Dilemma of Contemporary Chinese Art

### 2.1 The Emergence of Contemporary Chinese Art in the 1990s

For the first time in its 98-year history, the 1993 Venice Biennale included a "China room," considered significance in that it was one of the very first occasions at which late 20th-century Chinese art was presented at a prestigious international show. However, despite the "modern" label, the selected works were quite traditional in terms of media, especially when compared with the pieces chosen to represent other genres. Most of the Chinese selections were figurative and realistic paintings representing the *Political Pop* and *Cynical Realist* movements that developed following the June 4 incident at Tiananmen Square in Beijing; for the most part, the pieces were produced within the constraints of Chinese socio-political pressures.

Some of these pieces and their creators have gained a degree of notoriety in the international art scene, with some works appearing in international art markets. However, the artists remain at a disadvantage in that the majority of Westerners interested in Chinese art are still paying much more attention to its traditional forms—for example, landscape paintings and calligraphy. It is these traditions that contemporary artists in China have confronted since the mid-1980s; similar clashes between modernity and tradition are also taking place in other Chinese societies, including Taiwan and Hong Kong.

The 1993 Venice Biennale focused on contemporary art being produced in Mainland China (known officially as the People's Republic of China, or PRC); artists from Taiwan (known officially as the Republic of China, or ROC) were presented for the first time at the 46th Biennale in 1995. Visitors to the 2001 Biennale were also able to view works produced by artists from Hong Kong. The inclusion of contemporary Chinese artists from outside the PRC was a sign

not only of an artistic cultural identity being presented at the international level, but also a recognition of the diversity of identities found within and among Chinese societies. In the face of the complicated socio-political connections that exist among these societies, the recognition constituted considerable encouragement for emerging Chinese artists.

The Venice Biennales also highlighted the diversity of contemporary Chinese art in terms of media and concepts, with important developments being noted even within the brief span of the past ten years. Chinese artists are now using installations and multimedia to express their ideas, in the same manner as artists from other parts of the world. These developments were recognised at the 48th Venice Biennale (1999), when New York-based Chinese artist Cai Guoqiang (蔡國強) won one of the three International Awards presented that year; furthermore, Paris-based Huang Yongping (黃永砅) was chosen as a representative artist in the French pavilion. In all, 20% of the participating artists in the main exhibition were Chinese.

Still, it is important to remember that this kind of intensive exposure depends on the personal taste and ideology of the curators. In many cases, Western recognition of contemporary Chinese art is a reflection of purposeful efforts to promote multiculturalism. The question therefore remains as to whether the "contemporary Chinese art" that is presented today is an authentic representation of the genre. As sociologist Claire Huot points out, avant-garde art coming out of China "has to be discussed in terms of visibility/accessibility. Oil paintings are seen and "possessed" largely by non-Mainlanders. Installations and happenings are seen by the art crowd in China, which is made up of artists, foreigners, and accidental onlookers."[1]

Others have noted the lack of supportive social and artistic foundations for contemporary art in China. Ellen Johnston Laing in particular has discussed the lack of criticism in Chinese art:

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[1] Claire Huot, China's New Cultural Scene: A Handbook of Changes (London: Duke University Press, 2000) 149.

> Chinese artists are still in the throes of trying to win artistic freedom for themselves. Their art cannot engage in the exposé and criticism we in the West have come to expect of post-modern art; nor does art in China really address, or comment on in any incisive or penetrating way, the contemporary human condition or experience from social, racial, ethnic, gender, sexual, political, environmental, urban or rural stances.[2]

Her comments may not be a fair reflection of all contemporary Chinese art, but they do shed light on the conflict between Western tendencies and the social realities encountered by many Chinese artists. In Mainland China, art education of any type is limited, but it is especially limited regarding Western art; the country's art market is just beginning to emerge. For many, the dramatic transformation from traditional to modern to contemporary art during the 1980s and 1990s was jarring, with much of what was taking place being focused on commercial transactions. As art critic Gao Minglu (高明潞) pointed out about Chinese contemporary art in the 1990s, "No artist has been able to escape from the commercial waves of the transnational economy. The art world is now dominated by a concern for commercial success to the extent that most other critical criteria have been discarded."[3]

Furthermore, there is still vigorous debate concerning the notion of "avant-garde" art and whether such a thing exists in China. Claire Huot argues that "China has had no previous avant-garde movements, it has no institutionalized alternative art structures, and the art is intricately mixed with the new emerging consumerist mentality, which makes art-works fashion statements."[4] Therefore, while contemporary Chinese art may be gaining international approval and a certain degree of commercial success, many issues under the surface remain unresolved.

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[2] Ellen Johnston Laing, "Is There Post-Modern Art in the People's Republic of China?" Modernity in Asian Art (University of Sydney East Asian Studies, No 7), ed. John Clark (Sydney: Wild Peony, 1993) 220.

[3] Gao Minglu, Inside Out: New Chinese Art (London: University of California Press, 1998) 21.

[4] Huot, 127.

## 2.1.1 Identity Issues

The international touring exhibition *Inside Out: New Chinese Art*, organised by Asian Society Galleries in New York and the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art, is considered a milestone for contemporary Chinese art in the late 1990s.[5] Curator Gao Minglu believes that the survey of contemporary art from Mainland China, Taiwan, Hong Kong, and overseas Chinese artist communities was "constructed around the central issues of modernity and identity . . . transitional modernity and transitional identities have produced the dynamic visuality that this exhibition presents."[6] By focusing on artworks produced between 1986 and 1998, Gao helped to spotlight the dilemmas most commonly encountered by Chinese contemporary artists.

In the exhibition's companion text, entitled Toward a Transnational Modernity, the curator argued that the search for identities among different Chinese societies seemed to point to "an internal dialogue answering only to its own social and cultural demands."[7] To Gao, Chinese artists appeared to be paying more attention to internal socio-political conditions—for instance, nationalism in Mainland China, nativism in Taiwan, or regionalism in Hong Kong—than to contemporary international issues in the visual arts. He further commented that:

> It has only been since the basis of society has been altered by the emerging transnational economic system that any real interplay or clash of the East (or China) and the West has become possible. The Chinese consciousness of modernity has only recently begun to be transformed from a self-focused to an interactive one.[8]

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[5] This exhibition opened in September, 1998 at the Asia Society Galleries, New York, and the P.S. 1 Contemporary Art Centre, Long Island City, New York. It travelled to San Francisco, Mexico, and Seattle in 1999. The exhibition has since been presented in several museums in major Asian cities.

[6] Gao, 15.

[7] Gao, 17.

[8] Gao, 17.

Gao believes that overseas Chinese artists may be able to go beyond the dilemmas resulting from the rapid modernisation taking place in Chinese societies. Since their initial presence at the Venice Biennale and other international shows, overseas Chinese artists have played increasingly important roles in communicating with international mainstream art and artists. Claire Huot made a similar observation in her paper, China's Avant-Garde Art, claiming that "the better works are participating in the global trend toward a de-anthropomorphized vision of art and, because they come from China, in a general trend toward a de-sinicised view of Chinese art."[9] Gao adds,

> These artists have adopted a strategy of neither emphasising nationalistic cultural characteristics to play the role of a minority or exotic nor overtly de-emphasising their Chinese identity and becoming international artists....They have presented Chinese traditional materials not as the touchstone of a monolithic entity but as dimensions of a material language, and as bridges over which different interpretations can cross.[10]

On the other hand, it is important to remember that overseas Chinese artists' identities are generally more in flux than their compatriots, and therefore in constant negotiation. Consequently, these artists have had to rethink their origins and the function of their cultural roots in relation to mainstream contemporary art. They also "bring their critical observation of Asian urban life to the internationalization of Asian culture, their distant angle of witness maling their work particularly pungent."[11] Artists such as Cai Guoqiang and Huang Yongping, whose works are characterised by trans-cultural materials and ideas, serve as two examples. Both have experimented with combining symbolic Chinese stories and metaphors with contemporary visual techniques. Cai's

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[9] Huot, 131.

[10] Gao, 3.

[11] Hou, Hanru, and Hans-Ulrich Obrist, "Cities on the Move." Cities on the Move. Ed, Susan Ferleger. (London: Hayward Gallery, 1999) 14.

*Borrowing your Enemy's Arrow* (草船借箭, 1998) (Fig. 2-1) is based on a famous story from Sanguo period (三國時代, 220-265), and Huang's *Yiren Jiushou* (一人九獸, 2001) (Fig. 2-2) contains mystical animals taken from an ancient Chinese book of mythology. The use of similar symbols is also found in the works of Chen Zhen (陳箴) in Paris, Wu Shanzhuan (吳山專) in Hamburg, and Xu Bing (徐冰), Zhang Jianjun (張建軍) and Gu Wenda (谷文達) in New York. Wu, Xu, and Gu frequently use Chinese text in their works to comment on past and present Chinese culture, perhaps an attempt to initiate dialogue between the two (Fig. 2-3).

Because these artists all face challenges at the international level, many have felt compelled to adopt some type of mainstream contemporary art in order to interact with other cultures. While agreeing with the necessity of adopting such a language, Gao Minglu also suggests that the strategy includes "appropriation, allegory, masquerade, and cynicism; it differs from their original "grand" language in China, where they were obsessed with seeking truth."[12] Traditionally, Chinese art has been considered a tool for expressing the moral values of intellectuals—for instance, truth, virtue, and aesthetics. The new generation of Chinese artists, who are not limited to these values.

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[12] Gao, 35.

**Figure 2-1**, Cai Guoqiang, *Borrowing Your Enemy's Arrow*, 1998
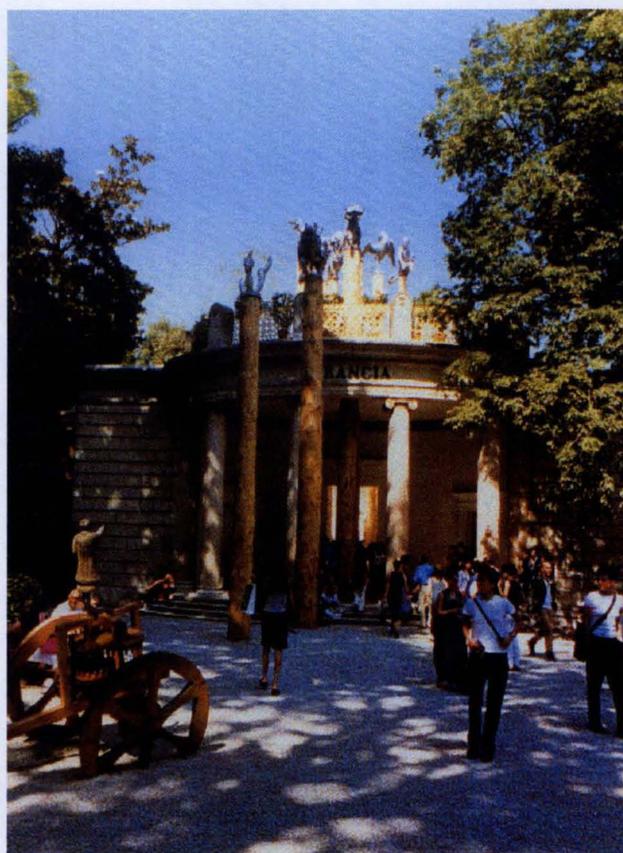


**Figure 2-2**, Huang Yongping, *Yiren Jiushou*, 2001
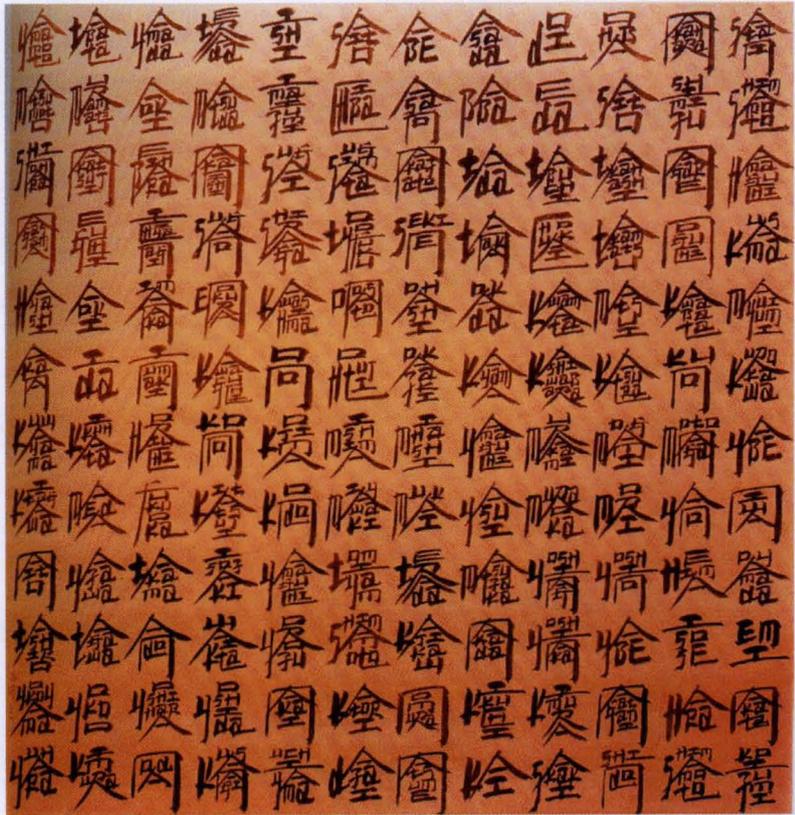
**Figure 2-3**, Xu Bing, *Your Surname, Please?*, 1998

Another international touring exhibition (entitled *Cities on the Move: Urban Chaos and Global Change—East Asian Art, Architecture and Film Now*[13])—presented a contrastive vision of late 20th-century Asian art, one that focused on the dynamic, creative, and mostly urban environment of contemporary East Asian visual culture. In their description of the exhibition, the curators stated that "art, architecture and urbanism are explored as manifestations of the process of modernization in the region—a modernization which is not only regionally important but also globally significant."[14] But as the travelling collection showed, the visual culture that contemporary Asian artists are inheriting is a hybrid that contains many contradictory elements—a reflection, perhaps, of what the curators believe is

> an inevitable tension [that] exists between the desire for a capitalist economy and the traditions of Asian culture . . . Currently, East Asia exists in a state of permanent and frenzied transformation, with almost unbearable urban density, uncontrollably rapid economic expansion, profligate exploitation of natural and human resources, and the loss of social, cultural and political stability.[15]

It is my argument that these current conditions not only serve as sources of creative ideas for artists, they also serve as a natural extension of the ongoing debate between modernity and tradition that Asian artists continue to address.

## 2.1. 2 The Dilemma

My observations of contemporary Chinese art have led me to acknowledge that most of the strategies used by mainstream contemporary Chinese artists, overseas as well as in Chinese societies, deal with Chinese essence on a superficial level. That is, they show a preference for Chinese symbols and

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[13] This exhibition opened in November, 1997 at the Secession Vienna. It travelled to New York, Demark, London and Helsinki in 1998 and 1999.

[14] Hou and Obrist, 10.

[15] Hou and Obrist, 11.

materials instead of making the effort to express the depth of profound Chinese beliefs. My impression is that many of these artists go against tradition in their attempts to gain freedom of expression, but hold on to Chinese tradition as part of their identity in order to gain international recognition. This paradox is made more complex by the debate over how cultural symbols should be used—for example, artist Wu Shanzhuan's comment that "Culture is a kind of symbol; writing uses symbols which express symbols . . . They are the last stronghold of [Chinese] culture."[16]

My concern over the use of Chinese cultural identity as a strategy to gain status in the contemporary international art scene without understanding the true essence of Chinese culture is shared by Wu, who describes true Chinese artists as pandas—exotic creatures on the brink of extinction. Apparently, part of his meaning is that while Chinese artists rightfully see the advantages of celebrating multiculturalism, doing so may later result in what artist Robert Smithson called "cultural confinement"—that is, a situation where strategic concerns take precedence over creativity:

> Cultural confinement takes place when a curator imposes his own limits on an art exhibition, rather than asking an artist to set his limits. Artists are expected to fit into fraudulent categories. Some artists imagine they've got a hold on this apparatus, which in fact has got a hold of them. As a result, they end up supporting a cultural prison that is out of their control. The artists themselves are not confined, but their output is.[17]

As part of an international trend, multiculturalism has become a mainstream element in contemporary art. Chinese artists have certainly been carried along by this cross-cultural current, which may explain their recent gains in the contemporary international art scene. However, as Hal Foster reminds us, "whether 'post-modernism' signals a new recognition of cultural difference or is

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[16] Huot, 145.

[17] Jack Flam, ed. Robert Smithson: The Collected Writing (London, University of California Press, 1996) 154-156. This statement was published originally in the Documenta 5 catalogue as Smithson's contribution to the exhibition, and later published in the October, 1972 Artforum.

simply 'the last proper name of the west' . . . remains to be debated."[18]   Artist Xu Xiaoyu expressed a similar concern when he said, "China's contemporary art is precisely in a kind of colonial condition; it relies closely on the West."[19]

Contemporary Chinese artists are currently confronting three issues: a) whether or not the appropriation of Western mainstream art styles is the best approach for representing Chinese culture and current Chinese circumstances; b) the concern that if they fail to reconsider Chinese tradition, they may end up creating illusory representations under the gaze of Westerners; and c) whether or not the Western market orientation will lead to the over-commercialisation of Chinese art.

Hou Hanru and Hans-Ulrich Obrist also noting that "the globalization of the Asian economy and culture makes Asia increasingly open to the West, and to new forms of cultural hybridity and negotiation."[20] The reason why the East-West and tradition-modernity debates still exist is that no one has yet established an acceptable alternative in the form of a hybrid culture. Homi K. Bhabha has labelled this potential hybrid between colonial and colonized cultures a "Third Space."[21] When addressing these debates, and in examining Western cultural influences on contemporary Chinese art, I will incorporate many previous observations that have been made regarding the history of cultural integration and social circumstances.

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[18] Hal Foster, Recording (London: New Press, 1999) 213.

[19] Huot, 127.

[20] Hou and Obrist, 16.

[21] Bhabha insists that in addition to being rendered mute, oppressed cultures participate in the formation of identities that are neither purely those of the colonists nor the colonized, but are mutually shared "Third Spaces." He does not make the claim that the powers in play should be viewed as being equal, but he does argue that colonial relations rarely consist of the simple imposition of one culture on another. Instead, they involve struggles within constantly shifting spaces that result in many kinds of dominations and that create multiple opportunities for displacement and subversion.

## 2.2 Aspects of Western Influence on Contemporary Taiwanese Art

Early 20th-century Chinese intellectuals and artists were the first to use various Western modern art approaches; many argued that they were making valid attempts to revive what they felt was a weakened, conservative art form. This is considered the first intellectual movement in modern Chinese history to direct a mainstream intellectual discourse against tradition and toward a national/cultural re-generation. This New Cultural Enlightenment Movement (新文化運動) reached its peak in 1919, the same year as the May Fourth Movement (五四運動)—both viewed as the beginning of Western influence on modern Chinese history. Three decades of war, recession, and communist insurgency prevented further developments from taking place in modern Chinese art until the 1950s and 60s, this time in Taiwan and Hong Kong. Perhaps the most important aspect of these later movements, which were led by modern artists whose primary medium was ink, was that they represented attempts to establish a modern Chinese art that combined traditional Chinese and modern Western techniques. Although these movements quickly faded in the wake of rapid modernisation, they serve as good examples of how Western visual culture has influenced the development of contemporary Chinese art.

Contemporary art in Taiwan is considered an appropriate starting point for exploring this topic because of its history of interaction with Western cultural and economic influences. Also, as art critic Alice Yang points out, Taiwan has long occupied "an uneasy political position in relation to China, and has not been easily subsumed within China's national narrative."[22] The result has been a much more complex interaction with cultural influences from the outside world compared to other Chinese societies—especially from Japan, which ruled Taiwan from 1898 to 1945. Some critics, including Yang, argue that Taiwan has been the location of three discourses affecting contemporary art: East-West, modernity-tradition, and what she describes as "three cultural spheres—high culture, popular culture, and

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[22] Alice Yang, Why Asia? Contemporary Asian and Asian American Art (New York: New York University Press, 1998) 119.

mass culture."[23] If true, this explains the complex nature of contemporary art development on the island.


## 2.2.1 Post-colonial Taiwan


The status of Chinese traditional painting was secured by the large number of artists who fled to Taiwan between 1945 and 1949 to escape the communist revolution taking place on the Mainland. One of the most influential figures to travel that route was Li Zhongsheng (李仲生, 1912-84), who was trained in Shanghai and Japan. Li is regarded as both the "father of modern art" in Taiwan and the most influential artist in terms of modern art education.[24]

However, the desire of the exiled Nationalist government (Kuomingtang, or KMT) to describe itself as the protector of true Chinese culture resulted in official support being given to Chinese ink artists. Alice Yang has noted that "with the establishment of the National Palace Museum in Taiwan [filled with artworks that the KMT "carried with them" from the Mainland], the nationalist government actively promoted Chinese ink painting in the post-war years as an important national patrimony."[25] Three Mainland masters—PuXinyu (溥心畬, 1896-1983), Huang Junbi (黃君壁, 1898-1991), and Zhang Daqian (張大千, 1899-1983)—were the central figures in the revival of traditional ink painting in Taiwan. It is uncertain whether this and other forms of traditional painting represent the legitimacy of high Chinese art during the post-war era, but they did exert substantial influence on Taiwanese contemporary art. Yang has argued that these artists' collective influence is most strongly felt through their presence (via their students and other admirers) "as jurors for official exhibitions and as

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[23] Yang, 120.

[24] In the early post-war period, there was no direct connection between Taiwan and the Western art world. Taiwan continued to depend on Japan for information on Western art until the first wave of artists returned from North America and Europe in the 1980s.

[25] Yang, 122.

high–level administrators in art institutions."[26] It is their disciples who are now at the centre of the East-West/modernity-tradition debates now taking place in Taiwan.

Taiwan's location and history have made it a fertile island in terms of cultural integration. It was a centre of Westernisation and industrialisation in the Far East at a time when Western culture was just beginning to absorb new experiences from traditional Eastern thinking. Taiwan had indirectly experienced Western influences via Japan, its colonial ruler for almost 50 years. In the 1950s, Taiwan began to confront Western culture on a massive scale. When the US decided to block the advancement of communist influence into Korea, it sent its Seventh Fleet to the Taiwan Straits to protect the island, which some military strategists viewed as "a stationary aircraft carrier" to be used as a strategic base for attacks against the communist alliance. The Nationalist government welcomed American military, economic, and industrial aid, and viewed Western technology and business practices as keys to rebuilding Taiwan. Suddenly, traditional Eastern thought became less influential compared to mainstream Western views; this change in thinking affected the reception of Chinese philosophy, literature, and art.

## 2.2.2 Abstract Expressionism in Taiwan

As Western influences multiplied in the 1950s, young Taiwanese artists established an awareness of modernity in terms of contemporary works influenced by Western abstract artists. Artists such as Taiwan-born Liao Jichun (廖繼春, 1902-67) and Mainland-born Li Zhongsheng showed their enthusiastic support for this trend by helping to establish the Fifth Moon (五月) and Eastern (東方) painting groups. Their enthusiasm for combining Chinese traditional painting and Western abstract expressionist techniques were the basis for the intense East-West debate that occurred during that time. As critic Gao Minglu notes,

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[26] Yang, 122.

"the fact that in Taiwan this debate was carried out in purely cultural and utopian terms evidences a continuity with early modern painting movements during the twenties and thirties."[27] Some 30 years later, in what was called "the '85 movement," a similar debate would take place in Mainland China. However, those artists used more diversified media to respond to "a monolithic state ideology . . . [which] presented an iconoclastic ideological utopia."[28]

Although young and developing artists influenced by Western ideas continued to come forward during the 1950s and throughout the 1960s, political interference from the Nationalist government led to frustration and disappointment. As the effort to create a true Taiwanese avant-garde lost strength, many of these artists moved overseas, and Chinese abstract expressionism thus faded into history.[29] The positive result, however, was that a number of these individuals became part of the first generation of Chinese artists to gain acceptance overseas, with some of their works appear at international shows. In the 1970s, Taiwanese artists shifted their attention to a more native-like approach in an attempt to rediscover the essence of "Taiwanese-ness," thus abandoning the modernist aspirations of the 1950s and 60s.

## 2.2.3 The Nativist Movement

Whereas the primary concern in Taiwan in the 1950s and 60s was the influence of Western ideas on traditional Chinese culture (as interpreted by the Nationalist government, controlled by ageing leaders born on the Mainland), the primary concern in the 1970s was the "Nativist movement" (鄉土運動), which was made possible when the United States recognised the PRC government as the official Chinese representative at the United Nations and in other international

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[27] Gao, 17.

[28] Gao, 19.

[29] Nicholas Jose and Wen-I Yang. Art Taiwan: The Contemporary Art of Taiwan (Sydney: Arts International, 1995) 50.

agreements.[30] Intellectuals, and later the wider public, began to question the wisdom of blindly accepting everything from the West as being superior. At the same time, nativist scholars and critics began to explore the folk art of Taiwan as the basis for an indigenous cultural consciousness. Artists, including a large number without any formal training, directed their attention to rural Taiwanese life as a source of inspiration; a group of folk artists eventually achieved prominence under the banner of a "nativist movement."

Two of the most celebrated folk artists during this period were Hong Tong (洪通, 1920-87) and Zhu Ming (朱銘, 1938- ). Hung was a working farmer and self-taught artist who was openly embraced by critics. In addition to depicting the daily lives of rural residents, his paintings reflected religious themes and popular myths (Fig. 2-4). His freedom of expression served as an important reference for artists who emerged in the 1980s. Alice Yang has suggested that Hung's influence, although similar in some ways to parallel developments in Mainland China, is distinctly Taiwanese in character. She also describes frequent appropriations of folk and popular culture as a distinctly Taiwanese phenomenon in contemporary art—for instance, the ways that Huang Zhiyang (1965-), Hou Junming (1963- ), and other young Taiwanese artists frequently use mythological and folk religious figures as major themes. But more importantly, she argues, "the artists who followed him [Hong Tong] in the 1980s and 1990s turned to folk art as a strategy for artist critique and innovation, from outside the cannons of both Chinese and Western art."[31]

The Nativist movement lost much of its power in the 1980s, when increasing numbers of young artists trained and educated abroad returned to Taiwan to begin their careers. These artists brought back news of the latest trends, and inspired other artists (and, eventually, new generations of their own students) to explore new possibilities. It could be argued that their influence, and therefore the influence of Western ideas, was one of the primary reasons for

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[30] Jose et al., 50.

[31] Yang, 125.

**Figure 2-4**, Hung Tung, *Wedding*, 1976

the dissolution of the Nativist movement toward the end of the 1970s. During this time, America still had a significant presence in Taiwan—its military had not yet completely left the island, and US business investment was increasing substantially.

## 2.2.4 The "Made in Taiwan" Age

According to Claire Huot, the 1980s generation of artists not only brought back new ideas from the West, but also new ways of promoting art. They returned with influences from western art movements dating from the 1960s and after, including new forms of abstraction, Pop Art, Arte Povera, Fluxus, and conceptual art. They made considerable contributions to museum exhibitions and various art activities, and their involvement teaching, criticism, and art administration shaped the direction of Taiwanese art in the 1990s.[32]

The decade was filled with intense activity in many aspects of Taiwanese life, including art. Large numbers of art organisations were established, and monetary commitments were made to cultural development in the form of museums, exhibition halls, and local cultural centres. The Taipei Fine Arts Museum, completed in 1983, provided an official space for contemporary artists and their supporters.

By the time marital law (imposed in the 1940s) was finally lifted in 1987, a new social standard was forming in Taiwan, with artists suddenly having the freedom to express themselves in response to the new social phenomena surrounding them. During the late 1980s, Taiwanese artists generally emphasised the new social chaos they were witnessing, and used contemporary Western art forms to get across their ideas. Several mixed Western ideas with traditional Chinese language and motifs; Yu Peng (于彭, 1955- ), Huang Zhiyang (黃志陽, 1965- ), and Hou Junming (侯俊明, 1963- ) continue to work with the

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[32] Huot, 168.

standard Chinese formats of ink painting and woodblock carving (Figs. 2-5, 2-6, and 2-7). These and other artists were clearly influenced by the Nativist movement in terms of subject matter, but as Gao Minglu explains, many artists in the late 1980s explored native religion, local culture, and folk art using Chinese traditional and Western elements "in a way that subvert[ed] both."[33]

The 1980s were marked by both a general tendency among Taiwanese artists to abandon the Nativist movement and a general sense of suspicion among the public towards contemporary art. Similar to the results of industrialisation that occurred during the 1970s, contemporary Taiwanese art appropriated from Western trends and techniques somehow appeared rushed and undigested; however, unlike technology, contemporary art was not quickly accepted by the populace.

## 2.2.5 Marginal Contemporary Taiwanese Art

During the 1990s, contemporary art in Taiwan moved in a direction of increasing pluralism. While no dominant trends or movements emerged during that decade, most Taiwanese artists did enthusiastically join in a debate on the issue of identity. The debate, according to Guo Minglu, involved a search for cultural modernity that took an oppositional orientation, "starting from the global modern or post-modern position and looking at native characteristics and local identity."[34] The debate highlighted a significant difference between Taiwanese and Western art movements: whereas those in the West tend to have traceable historical and cultural backgrounds, it appeared as though visual artists in 1990s Taiwan jumped quickly (and perhaps aimlessly) from one movement to another, perhaps due to the difficulty of digesting the broad range of Western forms and ideas. At the risk of prematurely judging developments among Taiwanese artists in the 1980s and 90s, it appears that the gap between contemporary art and public

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[33] Gao, 19.

[34] Gao, 22.

**Figure 2-5**, Yu Peng, *Endless Windy Moon,* 1993
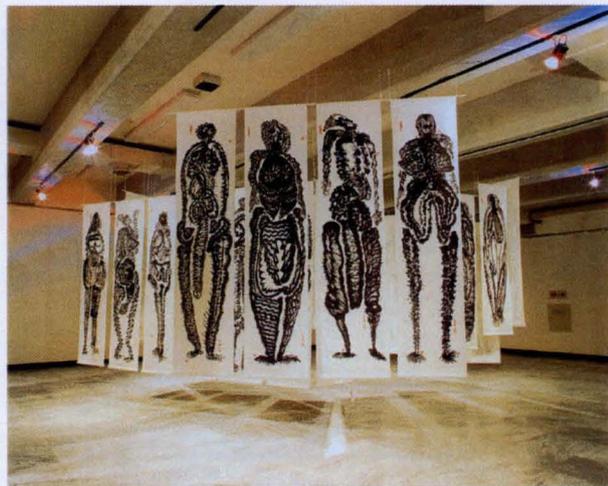


**Figure 2-6**, Huang Zhiyang, *Hsiao Maternity Room*, 1993
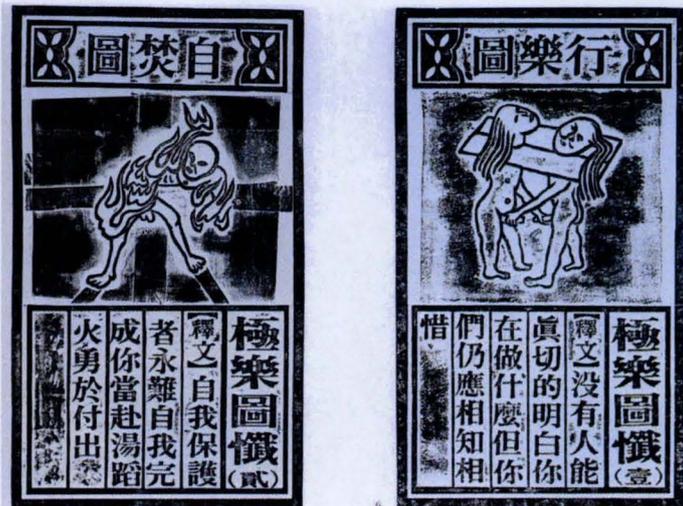


**Figure 2-7**, Hou Junming, *Erotic Paradise*, 1992

support for such art was due to an increasing lack of understanding of contemporary art plus contradictions in the country's cultural roots.

If art does indeed reflect the times and environment it grows out of, then contemporary Taiwanese artists are clearly embodiments of the confused maze of power struggles that mark 20th century Taiwanese history: colonial domination by Japan and the associated repression of Han Chinese culture (including language) until 1945, followed by the strict rejection of Japanese culture and forced appreciation of Han Chinese culture by the Nationalist government, followed by challenges of Han Chinese culture from both Western influences and indigenous Taiwanese folk culture toward the end of the century.

As discussed in an earlier section, it seems as though such contradictions and conflicts are common dilemmas encountered by all Chinese artists. The traditional Chinese aesthetic viewpoint was initially based on searching inward to understand and express one's spirituality, the concept of humanity, and the notion that humanity and the universe are one. Chinese art emphasises a recognition of the eternal and the transformation of nature. Thus, there appears to be a perpetual revolving relationship between the universe and ideas expressed in Chinese art, which to Western eyes is lacking in dramatic changes in content, medium, or technique over the last millennium.

## 2.3 Eastern Influences in Contemporary Western Art

Whereas many Asian countries began to reject—or, at least, resist—the influences of Western culture in their lives, an important number of Asian traditions have been welcomed in the West since World War II. The 1950s saw the first appearance of books and artworks reflecting eastern ideas, a reaction to the increasingly outward looking attitude found in the western countries. The following decade witnessed an explosion in what were referred to as "alternative" ways of thinking, many of them showing obvious signs of Eastern influences. The Beatles famously studied with the Indian guru Maharishi Mahesh Yogi; Europeans and Americans read works by D. T. Suzuki, Richard Wilhelm, Eugen Herrigel, Joseph Campbell, Paul Reps, Alan Watts, and Thomas Merton.[35] Mid-20th century, Western artists became increasingly influenced by Taoist and Zen beliefs.[36] John Cage began to incorporate the sitar and other oriental instruments into his minimalist compositions, and Allen Ginsburg chanted "Om" in an American courtroom. The Buddhist concept of emptiness was one of the most important ideas impacting western artists in the 1950s and 1960s, resulting in dramatic transformations in their perceptions of space in visual art. During this time, space was increasingly considered an active void filled with possibilities waiting to be recognised.[37]

## 2.3.1 The Golden Years of Far Eastern Thought

The 1950s and 1960s may be considered a golden era in terms of the Western inroads made by Eastern thought. Sources for exploration and

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[35] Gail Gelburd and Geri De Paoli, The Transparent Thread: Asian Philosophy in Recent American Art (Hempstead, NY: Hofstra University and Bard College, 1990) 10.

[36] Gelburd et al., 9.

[37] It should not be forgotten that an earlier cross-cultural current from East to West occurred in the 18th century. In art, Europeans used Eastern ideas to create an ornate style known as chinoiserie. In literature, translations of Bhagavad Gita and numerous Taoist and Buddhist texts offered an alternative world view. Gelburd and DePaoli wrote that "these mystical and philosophical notions were at first received with a Romantic sensibility; with interest in the exotic and mysterious nature of the Orient and in the quality of the picturesque." We can still find such exotic expectations among Western audiences influencing today's contemporary Chinese art.

alternative perspectives included the _Tao Te Ching_, the _I-Ching_, the _Lotus Sutra_, and the _Tibetan Book of the Dead_.[38] Western literati began to consider the ideas contained in these works, especially the attitudes expressed toward nature, as a serious alternative to European Rationalism. Gelburd and DePaoli have suggested that "Early Modernist attitude[s] dealing with wholeness, unity, and non-hierarchical ways were fertilised by Buddhist, Tao, and Hindu writings."[39] Eastern thinking also influenced debate among Western intellectuals on the abandonment of ego, a re-evaluation of "assertive" individualism, and a reorientation of the self. Whereas the Western definition of "self-centred" suggests a negative characteristic, the Eastern definition refers to a state of awareness of all universal connections, one that is centred, balanced, and in harmony with nature and the universe.

Eastern ideas considered by Western scholars and artists in the 1950s and 1960s included the concepts of "emptiness," "fullness," and "nothingness"; Hindu, Buddhist, and Taoist notions of form and void were compared with the ideas of Wittgenstein, Sartre, Heidegger, and Merleau-Ponty. Artists became increasingly intrigued by the relationship between form and void—perhaps the most obvious sign of Eastern influence during this time. John Cage (1912-92), the musician, poet, and artist, created his most famous musical composition in 1952. Called _4'33"_, it reflects the Chan (Zen) Buddhist concept of emptiness by not adding sound to the environment in which it is performed. Cage thanked his teacher D. T. Suzuki for helping him arrive at his insights into art and music.[40] Cage himself became an important mentor and inspiration to composers, choreographers, painters, and sculptors until his death. Other artists from that period who assimilated Eastern philosophical ideas into their art included Mark Tobey, Morris Graves, Ad Reinhardt, and Barnett Newman. Graves was particularly enthusiastic about injecting Eastern concepts into his paintings, commenting:

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[38] Gelburd et al., 9.

[39] Gelburd et al., 15.

[40] Richard Kostelanetz, John Cage (New York: Praeger, 1970) 45.

> Forms appear out of consciousness. In western art the picture is generally conceived as seen in a frame or through a window. But the oriental image really exists only in our mind and heart and it's thence projected or reflected onto space.[41]

## 2.3.2 Transparent Connection/Light and Space Artists

In 1990, an exhibition entitled *The Transparent Thread* was held at the Hofstra Museum in Hempstead, New York; the show featured the works of selected artists who were influenced by Eastern philosophies. [42] The accompanying catalogue is an excellent source of information on well-known artists who were influenced in the same manner. The "transparent connection" theme was used to explain the alternative world view of artists who were active between 1965 and 1985.[43]

Until the 1990s, the influence of Eastern philosophies on Western art was often either overlooked or misunderstood by art critics and art historians. A lack of understanding of Eastern philosophies resulted in oversights and misinterpretations in many of the critical analyses written in the cross-cultural environment of the 1960s and 1970s. Art historians Gelburd and DePaoli use Jasper Johns' *Target with Plaster Casts* (1955) (Fig. 2-8) as an example of a work misunderstood by most critics because of their lack of awareness of Zen philosophy. Johns was influenced by a book entitled <u>Zen in the Art of Archery</u>,[44] a popular resource for information on Eastern philosophies for artists working in the 1970s.[45]According to Gelburd and DePaoli, a proper interpretation

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[41] David Clark, <u>The Influences of Oriental Thought on Postwar American Painting and Sculpture</u> (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983) 45.

[42] The list of artists includes Bruce Nauman, Carl Andre, Robert Morris, Richard Serra, Michael Singer, Michelle Stuart, Patricia Johanson, Christopher Wilmarth, Eric Orr, Robert Irwin, Sol LeWitt, James Turrell, Keith Sonnier and Robert Smithson.

[43] Gelburd et al., 48.

[44] Eugene Herrigel, <u>Zen in the Art of Archery</u> (New York: Pantheon Books, 1953).

[45] See discussions of Johns' *Target* and the painting *Tantric Detail*. Mark Rosenthal, <u>Jasper Johns: Work Since 1974</u> (Philadelphia: Philadelphia Museum of Art, 1989).
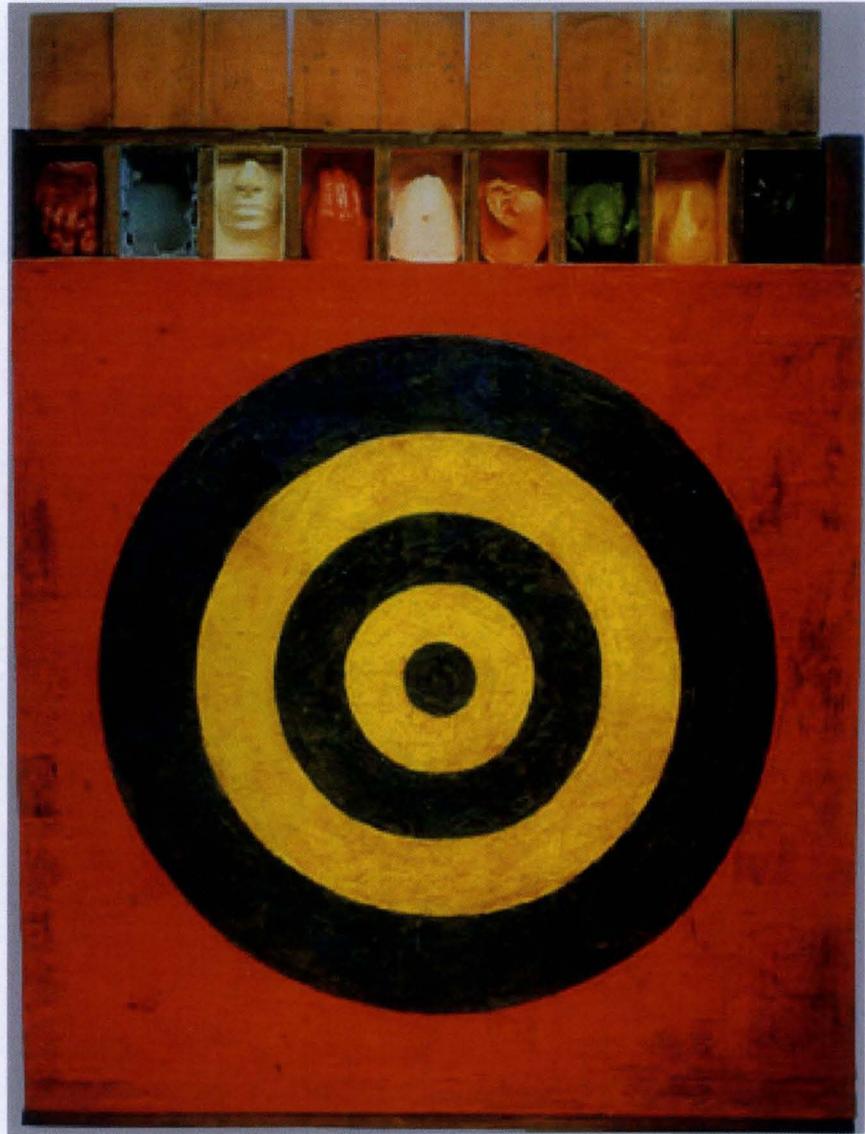
**Figure 2-8**, Jasper Johns, *Target with Plaster Casts*, 1955

of the piece would encompass the idea that "when the Zen archer talks of a bow, a string and a target, his meaning is not that of a sportsman or a hunter. In the 'Zen mind,' the target is a mandala, a centering device, a place for facing paradox and of dissolving the duality between reality and illusion. Target is a place for transformation."[46]

This particular insight—that interpretations of artists' works must incorporate the original documents that serve as an inspiration—was an important one for me during the early stages of this research. It provided me with a new angle for interpreting art, one that differed from those normally used to analyse both Chinese and mainstream Western contemporary art. This alternative perspective suggests new possibilities for the re-invention and re-interpretation of Chinese tradition in current contemporary Chinese art.

During the 1960s, a group of artists working in Southern California assimilated Eastern influences into their projects, which came to be known as "LA Glass and Plastic" artworks. Their pieces shared some elements with minimalist sculptures that were the focus of artists working on the American east coast at roughly the same time. While the minimalists expressed a desire to make the object inseparable from the material, the LA Glass and Plastic artists did the opposite. Jan Butterfield describes the latter's interest in wanting to "suggest the ripple of sunshine on water, the flicker of light through trees, a spill of moonlight."[47] Some of the Southern California artists who continued to develop their ideas as part of "Light and Space" or "Phenomenal" art were Robert Irwin, James Turrell, Maria Nauman, Douglas Wheeler, Bruce Nauman, Eric Orr, Larry Bell and DeWain Valentin. Robert Irwin in particular spoke openly about his interest in Zen Buddhism and other aspects of Eastern spiritual philosophy.[48] His contemporary, Hap Tivey, spent a full year studying Zen in the Hofuku-ji monastery in Japan. His Zen beliefs are clearly evident in the simplicity, purity,

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[46] Gelburd et al., 25.

[47] Jan Butterfield, The Art of Light + Space (New York: Abbeville Press, 1993) 14.

[48] Lawrence Weschler, Seeing is Forgetting the Name of the Thing One Sees: The Life of Contemporary Artist Robert Irwin (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982) 36.

and meditative quality of his art. In hindsight, these "Light and Space" artists may be viewed as pioneers in combining Eastern and Western elements in contemporary art; their efforts paved the way for later artists to engage even further with cross-cultural currents. Much of the work done by the Western artists mentioned in this section actually seem much more Chinese or Buddhist than the pieces currently being offered by contemporary Chinese artists.[49]

## 2.3.3 Re-thinking Site-Specificity in Land Art

Another North American art movement that was strongly influenced by Eastern philosophy in the 1960s and 1970s was Land Art. It was characterised by a different approach to media and different ways of representing ideas, yet Land Art artists shared similar social backgrounds with the west coast Light and Space artists, who were also searching for an alternative to Minimalism.[50] Concepts shared by both movements served as links between Western contemporary art and Eastern aesthetics.

Land Art was also called Earthwork, Earth Art, and Environmental Art. Its practitioners used such natural materials as rocks and soil in the construction of what were usually very large pieces. When it emerged in the late 1960s, it was considered a reaction against the industrial processes of Minimalism (although it shared the common characteristic of formal simplicity) as well as against limitations imposed on art objects due to the standard form of gallery-based exhibitions.[51] Author Robert Atkins described Earth art as

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[49] Works created by Light and Space artists emphasised "fluid spatiality" and "emptiness"—both of which are considered central to traditional Chinese aesthetics. In many cases, these artists were influenced (directly or indirectly) by other aspects of Chinese/Asian philosophy. Compared to the art created by many contemporary Chinese artists who have chosen to ignore Chinese tradition, the works of Light and Space artists have come closer to achieving the essence of Chinese aesthetics.

[50] In fact, artists such as James Turrell and Robert Irwin have been categorised into these two different groups at the same time.

[51] Hugh Brigstocke, The Oxford Companion to Western Art (Oxford & New York: Oxford University Press, 2001) 405.

a broad-based movement of artists who shared two key concerns of the 1960s: the rejection of the commercialisation of art, and the support of the emerging ecological movement, with its "back to the land" anti-urbanism and sometimes spiritual attitude toward the planet.[52]

The Oxford Dictionary of 20th Century Art makes a sharp distinction between Environmental Art and Land Art, describing the former as

An art form in which the artist creates a three-dimensional space in which the spectator can be completely enclosed and involved in a multiplicity of sensory stimulation—visual, auditory, kinetic, tactile, and sometimes olfactory. . . . The term has been loosely used, and confusingly it has sometimes been applied to Land Art or its analogues—that is, to a category of art that consists of manipulating the natural environment, rather than to an art that creates an environment to enfold and absorb the spectator.[53]

Furthermore, the word "environmental" has as its root "environ," meaning to encircle or surround. Along that line of thinking, environmental artists did much to establish a fundamentally different way of perceiving visual art. Land and Environmental artists gave audiences new ways to experience art—not only looking at it, but also walking through or being surrounded by it.

These artists started to emphasise the site-specificity of their work. It was always possible to view a conventional sculpture from a distance, but Land Art artists worked with the viewer's perception of the space occupied by the artwork. The reconsideration of site-specificity is one of the focuses of this research—that is, to see if the reinterpretation and reinvention of traditional Chinese aesthetics can enriched the context of contemporary site-specific art. Using ideas associated with Western Land Art, I will argue that the Chinese concept of *jingjie* is the link between the two.

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[52] Robert Atkins, Artspeak: A Guide to Contemporary Ideas, Movements, and Buzzwords. (New York, Abbeville Press Publishers, 1990) 71.

[53] Ian Chilvers, A Dictionary of Twentieth-Century Art (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 194.

## 2.4 Summary

In this chapter I discussed the emergence of contemporary Chinese art during the past few decades has spotlighted the dilemma of how to simultaneously recognize the influences of both contemporary Western art and traditional Chinese art. From my position as a practising artist, I began with a review of the problematic position of all Chinese/Taiwanese artists—the need to reconsider the significance of traditional Chinese art in order to relocate the current state of contemporary Chinese art. It was my intention to establish a tenable position for practising Chinese artists that transcends the monolithic "East-West" debate. Moreover, the reconsideration of site-specificity is one of the focuses of this research—that is, to see if the reinterpretation and reinvention of traditional Chinese aesthetics can enriched the context of contemporary site-specific art.

# Chapter 3

## The Concept of *Jingjie* and Chinese Landscape Art

In a Western documentary film with a very Eastern title (A Day on the Grand Canal with the Emperor of China, or, Surface is Illusion, But So is Depth),[1] the British painter David Hockney shares his enthusiasm for a 72-foot long, 2-foot tall, 17th century scroll painting by Wang Hui (王翬),[2] entitled The Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour (Fig. 3-1). "The scroll has no frame," Hockney says as he unrolls it and shows short sections to the camera. "You have to decide where you look." Hockney uses the scroll, a documentary of the Kangxi Emperor's second tour of his southern empire in 1689, to show how Chinese artists executed their vistas before Western single-point perspective became the norm.[3]

With its shifting perspective, the scroll presents a continuous travel narrative, complete with the equivalent of fade-outs and dissolves and filled with anecdotal details of daily life in towns along the emperor's route. Hockney compares it to Canaletto's[4] highly structured *Capriccio: Plaza San Marco Looking South and West* (1763) (Fig. 3-2). Viewers of this painting are limited to looking straight

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[1] A Day on the Grand Canal with the Emperor of China, or, Surface is Illusion, But So is Depth, dir. Philip Haas, prod. David Hockney, Milestone, 1998. The film follows Hockney as he analyses different depictions of space in Chinese and Western art.

[2] Wang Hui's works serve as representative examples of the Chinese landscape tradition preceding the influx of Western influence in 18th century China. Wang was a member of the *Si Wang* (四王) of early Qing dynasty painting, who borrowed heavily from the Southern School of landscape painting that flourished during the Yuan (1280-1368) and Ming (1368-1644) dynasties.

[3] Some scholars argue that Chinese art has been westernised since the 17th century. See James Cahill, The Compelling Images: Nature and Style in Seventeenth-Century Chinese Painting (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1982).

[4] Canaletto (Giovanni Antonio Canal, 1697-1768), a Venetian, was perhaps the most famous view-painter of the 18th century. He began his career painting theatrical scenery (his father's profession), but turned to topography during a visit to Rome in 1719-20. He was strongly influenced by the work of Giovanni Paolo Panini.

**Figure 3-1**, Wang Hui, *The Kangxi Emperor's Southern Inspection Tour, Scroll 11, detail.*



**Figure 3-2**, Canaletto, *Plaza San Marco Looking South and West, 1763*

ahead and focusing on a single vanishing point—the typical triangular perspective of Western paintings during that period. Hockney likens this perspective to the Western view of God: the deity recedes as we get closer, reflecting the belief that God and Man can never meet.

As Hockney points out in the film, the essential Eastern position presented in pre-18th century Chinese paintings is that "God is everywhere"—not untouchable, but inherently beside (or inside) of every individual. Chinese tradition does not emphasise the concept of God in the same sense that Westerners view a supreme deity, which makes cosmology and philosophy a clear point of separation between Chinese and Western art forms. Figure 3-3 presents Hockney's diagram of how this unique Chinese cosmology is embodied in traditional paintings. Since "God is everywhere," viewers of Chinese paintings are not limited to a single perspective, but have the freedom to interact with a scene as they see fit.

Hockney's insights, while profound, barely scratch the surface of traditional Chinese aesthetics; a lack of contemporary investigations means that numerous references and resources concerning Chinese art remain unanalysed, which also affects the presentation of alternative perspectives to the work of contemporary Chinese artists.

Hockney's most important comment concerns the fluid spatiality that may be viewed as a unique aesthetic of Chinese tradition. His insight corresponds with the suggestion made in Chapter 2 that the alternative concept of space that marks postwar contemporary art is actually a characteristic of Chinese culture. The evidence spotlights the necessity to reconsider the significance of traditional Chinese art in order to relocate the current problematic position of contemporary Chinese art. This is the goal of the current chapter: to re-examine traditional Chinese landscape aesthetics in general, and the spatial aesthetics of Chinese landscape arts in particular.
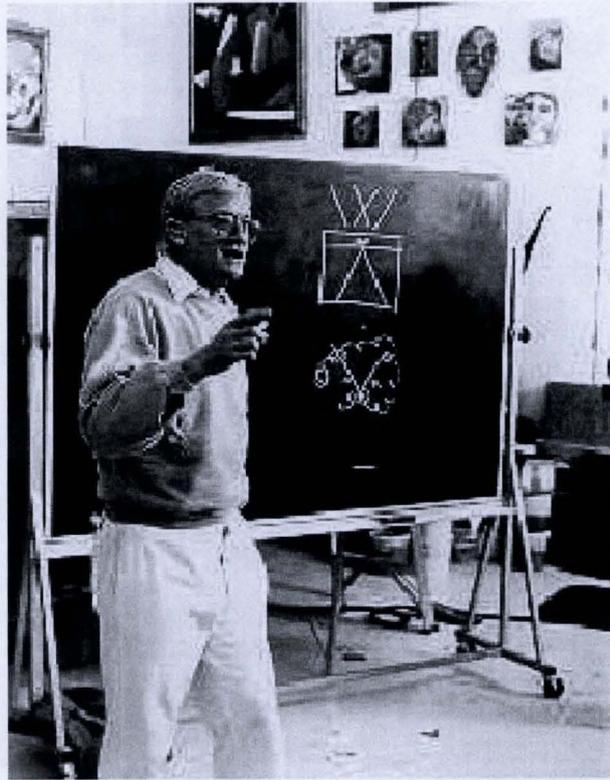
**Figure 3-3,** David Hockney's Diagram

In order to comprehend fluid spatial experiences and their representations in the form of multiple perspectives, it is important to analyse the ideology of all landscape genres and to look at how a central ideology might be applied to representation. Among Chinese aesthetic categories, the concept of *jingjie* has historically been suggested as the most essential in terms of landscape. Previous researchers have looked at this association, but to my knowledge this is the first project to focus on their spatial characteristics and embodiments as three-dimensional art forms. I will begin the task with an introduction to Chinese landscape arts and their spatial concepts, followed by a review of the philosophy and history behind *jingjie* and its connection with nature, then conclude the chapter with a discussion of the *jingjie* of place.

## 3.1 The Concept of Space in Chinese Landscape Art

Prior to the introduction of Western modernism in early 20th-century China, landscapes were a dominant theme in Chinese poetics. From the Southern (420-589) through the early Qing dynasties (1644-1911), landscape painting and other landscape arts became the most celebrated representations of Chinese visual art. The landscape ideal was not limited to two-dimensional art forms; as a genre, it had long been well presented in poetry, calligraphy, gardening, and literature. This reflects another important difference between East and West. For traditional Chinese artists, all art forms are considered almost inseparable; a typical Chinese literati had always been required to become proficient in calligraphy, painting, and poetry as part of his basic training. Together, these forms of expression served as a foundation for more complex landscape art forms, including Chinese gardens. This emphasis on unity among different art forms also influenced the sense of harmony that marked Chinese artists' attitudes toward nature. As art historian Michael Sullivan points out, "Chinese landscape painting is uniquely consistent in the "wholeness" of its presented feeling, that is perhaps because the Chinese artist's attitude, both to nature and to the art of painting itself, is a philosophical one."[5]

### 3.1.1 Fluid Spatiality

Chinese painting, especially landscape painting, is frequently recognised for its use of space. Similar to early examples of Egyptian and Greek art, early Chinese artworks (e.g., pre-Southern dynastic paintings) lacked spatial unity; they had to be experienced as a sequence of pictorial motifs or pictographs to be read (Fig. 3-4). Eventually, techniques and perspectives were transformed and enriched until Chinese artists achieved fulfilment in the form of landscape scrolls. This achievement was implied in the arrangement of a group by movement from

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[5] Michael Sullivan, Symbols of Eternity: The Art of Landscape Painting in China (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1979) 9.
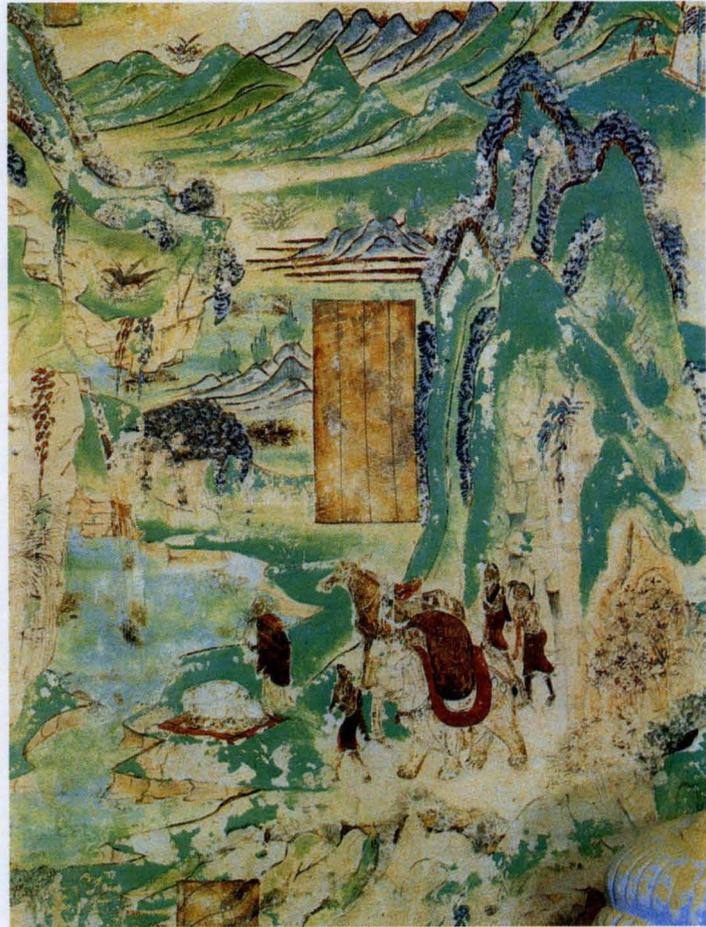
**Figure 3-4**, Tang Dynasty Cave Painting, 8th Century

motif to motif through intervals; in the extended relationship with groups, movement in time became the most memorable characteristic of Chinese design.

The hand scroll, or horizontal scroll, was an easily stored and transported Chinese creation, an alternative to early wall and screen paintings. First used for writing, hand scrolls can be traced back to the Zhou dynasty (1111-256 B.C.); the earliest examples consisted of thin, vertical bamboo slips that were bound together in right-to-left sequences and rolled up for storage (Fig. 3-5). The first hand-scroll paintings were probably illustrations added to written text; the continuous-narrative form that was borrowed from Buddhist illustrations imported from India also contributed to the development of Chinese scroll paintings.[6]

Perhaps the most important distinction between paintings on hand scrolls and in other formats is the use of sequence, which allowed artists to control the pacing of visual events and to manipulate viewer interest by shifting subject matter and story treatment. Scroll paintings are therefore best experienced over time, much like music or literature—the viewer's attention moves laterally from right to left, but can be stopped at any time to peruse or contemplate a particular passage. Design principles are thus altered by the format: like a musical piece, a scroll has a beginning, development, and an ending. Many scrolls follow a music-like sequence of exposition, development, and recapitulation; others contain dramatic climaxes.

In certain ways, scroll paintings may be considered as two-dimensional theatre. As in drama, specific themes are established so that the viewer is sufficiently prepared for screens yet to be unrolled; different artists present their individual treatments of common themes and introduce new ideas and materials. Regarding the depiction of landscape, Jerome Silbergeld has commented that a Chinese artist "might speed the viewer over smooth or rugged passages, create a

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[6] Jerome Silbergeld, Chinese Painting Style: Media, Methods, and Principles of Form (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1982) 12.
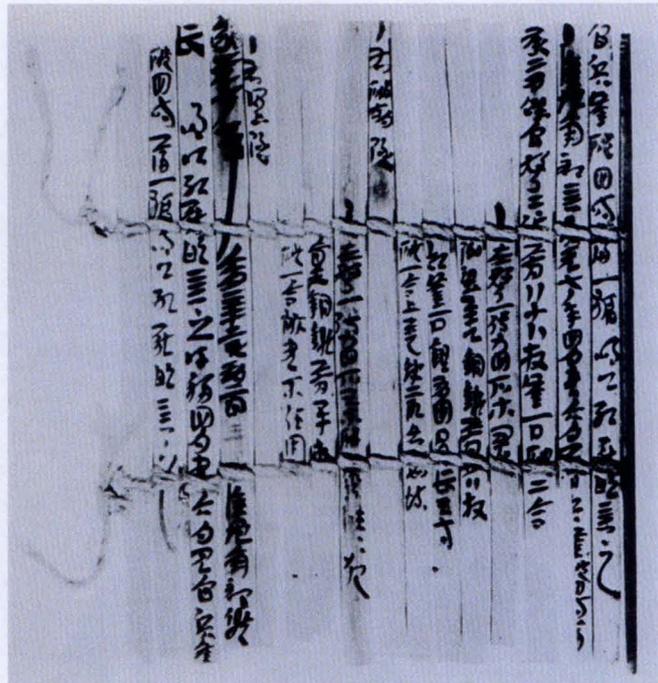
**Figure 3-5,** Writing on Bamboo Slips

sudden halt, and alternate close-up, specific views with others far away and dimly seen."[7] These musical and theatrical characteristics later played important roles in the development of Chinese gardens. A similar development of theatrical characteristics can be found in European garden design, and therefore in 19th-century Western landscape architecture and 20th-century Land Art.[8]

Nature is viewed very differently in the occident and orient. The science of perspective helped Western artists achieve the illusion of depth, thus adding continuity and measurability to the spatial unit. However, perspective has the potential of wrapping the experience of space in a straitjacket when it forces a single fixed point of view or when it limits spatial quantity. This control of space may have been helpful to the development of interior scenes, but it was inadequate for the satisfactory expression of space in Chinese landscape painting.

In the European tradition, the strong interest in measurable space destroyed the "continuous method" of temporal sequencing used in the Middle Ages, and promoted the 15th-century invention of fixed space as a more scientific perspective. Among contemporary artist, David Hockney showed great interest in this issue from a practical perspective. In _Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters_, Hockney takes the stand that many Western artists, starting in the 15th century, used such optical aids as mirrors and lenses for their paintings.[9] Tang dynasty (618-907) Chinese painters faced with the same problem of spatial depth re-worked earlier principles of time. They worked toward establishing perspectives that suggested a) space in which viewers might wander, and b) additional space that might exist beyond the picture frame. They presented space as a single vista viewed through an open door; by stepping through that door, one found the unlimited space of nature—a sudden, often

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[7] Silbergeld, 13.

[8] Please see Chapter 6, section 6.2.2, for a more detailed discussion of theatricality and European garden design.

[9] David Hockney, Secret Knowledge: Rediscovering the Lost Techniques of the Old Masters (London: Thames & Hudson Ltd, 2001) 7.

breathtaking experience of space extending in every direction, including toward an infinite sky.

For Chinese, the rendering of landscape as a single-point experience is limiting because it violates their experience of nature. Outdoors, their eyes are compelled to turn in every direction to take in the scene. A perspective in which lines converge toward the eyes of the spectator is much truer to psychological fact than their convergence toward a vanishing point. Instead of reaching for a scientific interpretation, Chinese artists have long insisted on an artistic presentation. A multiple viewpoint or fluid spatial perspective is an artistic vision, one that the human eye cannot take in all at once. As Jerome Silbergeld noted, "Its spatial inconsistency becomes especially apparent at certain points where the artist had to seam together his disparate scenes."[10] Pre-Qing Chinese landscape artists used a principle of moving focus, through which a viewer's eyes and imagination could wander through miles of landscape, scaling mountain peaks and descending into deep valleys.

## 3.1.2 The Chinese Concept of Place

Based on this background, I will suggest that the idea of contemporary three-dimensional objective space was imported from the West, and that the traditional Chinese notion of space has always implied time as a fourth dimension. The concept of an inherently static, unchanging three-dimensional space did not exist in China prior to the introduction of Western philosophies. To support this argument, I will discuss two important Chinese concepts: *kong jian* (空間, "space and place") and *tianren heyi* (天人合一, "heaven [including nature] and man are one").

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[10] Silbergeld, 37.

## *Kong Jian* (空間)

The original Chinese concept of space is considerably more psychological than quantifiable; it is strong in terms of dynamic experience and human subjectivity. The literal meaning of the characters *kong* (空) and *jian* (間), "empty space," implies more of a sense of "place" than the concept of "space" as Westerners view it. Günter Nitschke is one of several contemporary scholars who argue that this emphasis on place is a mark of many traditional Eastern cultures.[11]

Now understood as representing emptiness or void, the *kong* ideograph originally meant "hole in the ground" (part of the character represents a cave). The second character, *jian*, is interpreted as both "space in between" and "specific space or time." Originally, the character contained the sign for sun (日) under the sign for gate (門); its literal meaning was the movement of sunlight through a doorway.[12] Such an interpretation combines an objective environment (defined space) and a subjective feeling (the movement of sunlight). It can therefore be argued that the traditional Chinese idea of space (as expressed symbolically) is more complex than the Western notion of abstract space.[13]

Also, as noted above, *jian* contains a strong implication of time, an essential component of place, as well as the Chinese concept of space. *Jian* is also used to express the idea of abstract time; because abstract time cannot be viewed separately from space or place, there is no English equivalent, and perhaps no Western equivalent in terms of the concept itself. The literal expression of the Western concept of time (that is, minus the sense of length, beginning, or end) is translated as *shijian* (時間). The first character originally meant "forward

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[11] Günter Nitschke, From Shinto to Ando: Studies in Architectural Anthropology in Japan (London: Academy Group Ltd., 1993) 49.

[12] Rick Harbaugh, Chinese Characters: A Genealogy and Dictionary (Taipei: Han Lu Book & Publishing Co., 1998) 243 (in Chinese).

[13] In comparison to traditional Western notions of space (which frequently emphasise "abstract space"), the Chinese concept has always included time and duration. In this context, I consider the traditional Chinese notion of space is the more complex of the two.

movement of the sun," but it is now used to represent "hour," "season," and "time." Rarely used by itself, it is most strongly associated with the *jian* character. In Japan (where Chinese characters are referred to as *kanji*), the literal expression for "time" is "space in flow," which adds the dimension of space.[14] *Jian* (place) may therefore be considered an important link between the Chinese concepts of time and space. The development of Chinese aesthetics grew from these indigenous interpretations of space, place, and time; they serve as the foundation for many Chinese artistic expressions.

## *Tianren Heyi* (天人合一)

Historical accounts show that the foundation of Chinese landscape art incorporated a human-centred attitude towards nature. When the genre was already at an advanced level of maturity in the 9th and 10th centuries, there was no European equivalent; there would be none until such post-Renaissance artists as Claude Lorrain (1600-1682), Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665), and Peter Paul Rubens (1577-1640) would begin to present a more sympathetic attitude towards nature.[15] However, landscape art did not become the major genre in the West until the 19th century.

The different approaches to spatial perspective reflect different views of the relationship between man and his surroundings. Chinese artists have a long history of embracing their surroundings in terms of architecture, music, lyric poetry, and landscape painting, all devoted to achieving the philosophical ideal of *tianren heyi*—the unity of heaven (a multifaceted concept that encompasses nature) and man. While the character for *tian* (天) is literally translated as "sky" or "heaven," it can also be interpreted as the Eastern counterpart of the Western concept of God—from a Chinese philosophical perspective, an ultimate reality.

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[14] Nitschke, 53.

[15] Landscape was not a major theme for European artists until the post-Renaissance period. Artists such as Claude Lorrain, Nicolas Poussin, and Peter Paul Rubens began paying attention to "landscape" and considered it as important as the main theme. This sympathetic attitude towards nature became the predecessor of Western landscape painting.

The historical roots of the *tianren heyi* concept can be traced to the *Zhong Yong* (中庸, "The Book of the Middle Way"). The idea eventually became a central tenet of Taoism and Confucianism. James Liu has discussed the Taoist Zhuang Zi's (莊子) comments on the "idea about self-oblivious contemplation of Nature leading to intuitive union with Tao."[16] Zhuang himself wrote, "One who forgets about things and forgets about heaven [nature] is called a self-forgetter; when one has forgotten one's self, this is called 'entering heaven [nature]."[17] According to this philosophy, as soon as one's self is forgotten, the barrier between subjective consciousness and objective reality will no longer be felt; in its place will be a strong identification with all things in Nature. This non-dualistic attitude toward both nature and the dynamic relationship between subjectivity and objectivity sits at the core of all Chinese philosophy.[18] The mutual relationship between subject and object is common to many schools of Chinese philosophy, but primarily to Taoism and Chan (Zen) Buddhism. The concept has gone through continuous development throughout the history of Chinese art.

Three discourses are implied by a belief that "Nature and man are one." First, men are part of nature, and humankind is part of natural production. Second, there are rules of nature, and man must obey these rules. Third, the ideal life comes from the unity of man and nature. From these, it is possible to comprehend the Chinese attitude toward nature as the foundation of Chinese aesthetics. It follows that the idea of Nature and man as one is the primary

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[16] James J. Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975) 31.

[17] Zhuang Zi, Zhuang Zi Yinde (莊子引得) (trans. James Liu) in Chinese Theories of Literature,38.

[18] This belief can be traced to the Zhou period, before China became a unified entity. During China's first dynasty (the Han, 206-220 B.C.), the Confucian scholar Dong Zhongshu (董仲舒) proposed the idea of "the meeting of nature and man, becoming one." However, the term *tianren heyi* was not used until the Song dynasty; by that time the concept had gone beyond mere acceptance as philosophical common sense to one of a guiding Chinese aesthetic. Lai Yanyuan(賴炎元), Chunqiu Fanlu Jinzhu Jinyi (春秋繁露今註今譯) ["Contemporary Interpretation on the Book of History and Philosophy"] (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1992) 65.

ontological concern of Chinese philosophy and aesthetics—an attitude embodied in many art forms.

## 3.2 The Development of *Jingjie*

The three most common English translations of *jingjie* are "boundary," "situation; condition," and "state of mind."[19] None of these terms adequately describe the spiritual aspect of *jingjie* that has exerted such a strong influence on Chinese art, poetry, literature, and philosophy. Etymologically, the character for *jing* (境) consists of *tu* (土), meaning "ground," and *jing* (竟), meaning "to conclude." Since a literal translation of "ground that concludes" makes no sense in terms of an individual's mental condition, it is necessary to break down the *jing* (竟) component into *ren* (人), meaning "person," and *ying* (音), meaning "music" (Fig. 3-6). This makes the original meaning of the entire ideograph "a person concluding a musical performance."[20] An appropriate interpretation may be that *jingjie* describes the physical and mental condition of an artist, as well as the transformation of his surrounding environment, during a musical performance. Such an interpretation would also imply a time component.

*Jingjie* has been considered an aesthetic category since the beginning of written Chinese history, but it was never formally discussed or analysed in a systematic manner until Wang Guowei (王國維, 1877-1927) considered it in his late Qing work, *Renjian Cihua* (人間詞話, "Remarks on Lyrics in the World of Man").[21] Wang (who was classically trained) spent some of his life in Europe, and was influenced by such Western thinkers as Arthur Schopenhauer (1788-1860) and Friedrich Nietzsche (1844-1900).[22] His appropriations of certain metaphysical terms and concepts are still a part of modern Chinese criticism. He is considered one of the very first Chinese scholars to attempt integrating Western philosophy and Confucianist thinking into a new literary theory. However, he was very late

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[19] Liang Shiqiu (梁實秋), ed., A New Practical Chinese-English Dictionary (Taipei: Far East Book Co., 1970) 183.

[20] My personal interpretation.

[21] Wang Guowei (王國維), *Haining Wang Jingan Xiansheng Yishu* (海寧王靜安先生遺書) ["The Testament of Mr. Wang Jingan in Haining"] (Taipei: The Commercial Press, 1976).

[22] Liu, 47.

境 界

土＋竟　　田＋介

(Ground)　　　　(Field)＋ (Divisions between people)

音＋人

(Music) + (Person)
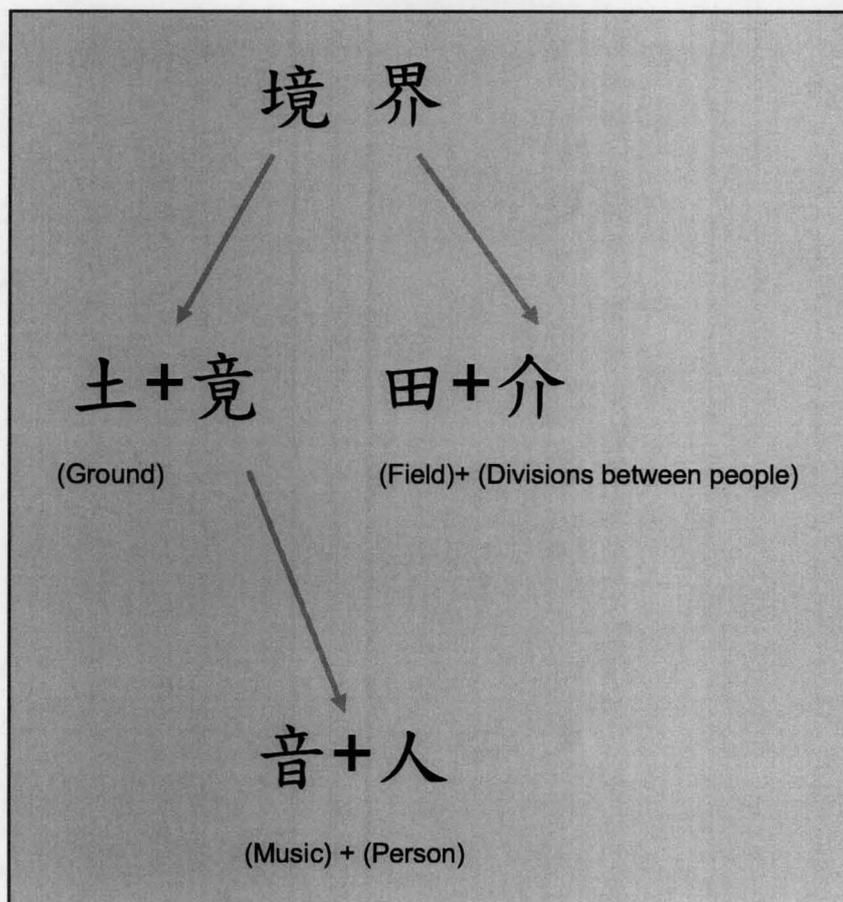
**Figure 3-6**, The Etymological Diagram of *Jingjie*

regarding *jingjie*; the concept had already exerted a strong influence on many Chinese poets and artists who preceded him.

### 3.2.1 The Historical Development of *Jingjie*

The *jingjie* concept first appeared in a book that was a product of both Confucianism and Taoism, the <u>Yi Zhuan</u> (易傳, "Commentaries on the Book of Changes"), published during the late Zhan Guo (Warring States) period (403-221 B.C.). According to the <u>Yi Zhuan</u>, *jingjie* was preceded by the ideas of *yi* (意, "intention"), representing subjectivity, and *xiang* (象, "image and form"), representing objectivity. During the Southern dynasties, Liu Xie (劉勰, 466-520) proposed the concept of *yixiang*, which emphasised the idea of interaction between the two. This was a turning point for *yixiang* to make the transformation from a philosophical to aesthetic concept.

Although *jingjie* was discussed in the <u>Yi Zhuan</u>, the term *jing* was not used in poetic criticism until the Tang dynasty; today it is closely associated with Chan thought, especially because of its association with the Buddhist idea of *jing*. With the full integration of Buddhism into Chinese culture by the end of the Tang dynasty and the abundance of creative poetry that was written during that period, artists analysed their own creative experiences in terms of more substantial theory. The concept of *jing*, as the first stage toward the development of the *jingjie* idea, was proposed by such poets and artists as Wang Changling (王昌齡, 698-757), Jiao Ran (皎然, 720-805), Liu Yuxi (劉禹錫, 772-842), and Sikong Tu (司空圖, 837-908).

*Jing* as an aesthetic category was first considered by Wang Changling in his <u>Shi Ge</u> (詩格, "The Regulation of Poetry").[23] According to Wang, there were three *jing* (conditions) in poetry: "the *jing* of the material world, the *jing* of

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[23] Ye Lang (葉朗), <u>Zhongguo Meixue De Kaizhan</u> (中國美學的開展) ["The Development of Chinese Aesthetics"] (Taipei: Jin Feng Press, 1987) 150.

emotion, and the *jing* of intention." As subject matter for poetry, the *jing* of the material world meant the natural landscape, the *jing* of emotion meant life experiences, and the *jing* of intention meant inner mental conditions. During the mid-Tang, the Buddhist monk and poet Jiao Ran reinforced this idea of *jing* in all of his books, including the *Shi Yi* (詩議, "The Discourse of Poetry") and *Shi Shi* (詩式, "The Style of Poetry").

However, it was Liu Yuxi (劉寓錫) who first gave an intentional interpretation of the *jing* concept, stating succinctly that "*Jing* is created beyond image [form]."[24] This crucial change in the understanding of *jingjie* transformed early Chinese appreciation of the physical world toward the psychological. The idea of "beyond image/form" also corresponds with an early theory of painting proposed by Xie He (謝赫) during the Southern dynasties; he was the first to use the idea in an aesthetic sense. In his *Guhua Pin Lu* (古畫品錄, "The Record of Ancient Paintings"), Xie wrote:

> If [we] are limited by the material world, then [we] will not see the essence.
> If taken beyond image, then we can fulfill the spirit.
> It can be said it is miraculous![25]
> 若拘以體物，則未見精粹；若取之象外，方厭膏腴，可謂微妙也。

Xie's meaning was that an artist should not be limited by the material world but should break through it; any artwork thus created could reach an exalted state. While it cannot be said that this idea directly led to the development of *jing* during the Tang dynasty, it did represent a close relationship between historical theories of painting and poetry in China. After the Southern dynasties, the Chinese changed their focus from *xiang* (象, "image" or "form") to *jing* (境, "condition") in both literature and visual art.

During the late Tang, the *jing* concept was further elaborated by Sikong Tu (司空圖) in his *Ershisi Shipin* (二十四詩品, "Twenty-four Qualities of Poetry").

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[24] The original sentence is: *jing shengyu xiangwai* (境生於象外).

[25] James J. Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975) 45. The translation is my own.

He articulated 24 different styles of *jing* in poetry and made connections between his idea and Taoist beliefs. He employed aesthetics taken from Lao Zi and Zhuang Zi to develop his theory of *jing*. He argued that an artist has his own subjective aesthetic concern through which he can perceive and represent the objective and authentic *jing*. Sikong Tu concluded that the creation of *jing* did not arise from a subjective or objective world, but from a combination of the two.

While it was still being debated, the notion of *jing* had already become an important link between Chan Buddhism and art (especially calligraphy and painting) and poetry. In the pursuit of enlightenment, Chan masters refrained from directly describing *jing* to their students; they actually had a phrase for their teaching approach: *Moyi jing shiren* (莫以境示人),[26] or "not presenting *jing* directly to the people." However, without *jing* there can be no awakening, and late Tang dynasty Chan masters frequently emphasised this point when they used poetry and painting as *jingjie* metaphors for discussing paths toward enlightenment.

In terms of art criticism, references to *jingjie* were made during the Song (960-1279), the Ming, and well into the Qing. By the Song dynasty, the *jingjie* concept had already been included in discussions of drama and novels in addition to poetry and painting. But the idea did not really come into widespread use until the Ming and Qing dynasties, when the idea that "poetry, calligraphy, painting and Chan are one" (詩書畫禪一體化) became a guiding principle for artists and literati.[27] This integration was a key step in the establishment of a Chinese aesthetic. According to Chinese scholar Pi Caogang (皮朝綱), "the Buddhist Chan became the aesthetic Chan"[28] during this period.

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[26] The original phrase came from Wudeng Huiyuan (五燈會元, "Collated Essentials of the Five Flame [Records]"), roll 4, Chan master Zhao Zhou section (趙州禪師篇). Shi Puji (釋普濟), ed. Wudeng Huiyuan, (Taipei, Guofeng Press, 1980)134.

[27] Pi Chaogang (皮朝綱), Chanzong De Meixue (禪宗的美學) ["The Aesthetics of Zen"] (Kaoshiung, Taiwan: Li-Wen Press, 1995) 102.

[28] Pi, 103.

Surprisingly, despite the foundation that was created during the Ming and early Qing dynasties, further development of the *jingjie* concept did not occur; the one exception is the above-mentioned work of Wang Guowei during the late Qing.[29] This is not to say that *jingjie* theory has not exerted an influence on contemporary Chinese, since the confrontation with modern Western culture gave artists and critics plenty of ideas with which to re-evaluate *jingjie* representations. Historically, the development of *jingjie* theory can be ascribed to two major confrontations with foreign cultures, the first being Indian (the exporter of Buddhism to China) and the second being all Western countries. The latter influence has allowed such contemporary Chinese scholars as Li Zhehou (李澤厚), Ye Jiaying (葉嘉瑩), and James Liu (劉若愚) to compare *jingjie* theory with Western philosophy.[30] The integration of some outside ideas has helped them to establish a more substantial analysis of a theory born and raised in the East.

## 3.2.2 Harmony and Dynamism between Subjectivity and Objectivity

Lee Zhehou has described *jingjie* as an archetypal characteristic of Chinese poetry and painting (especially lyric poetry and landscape painting), but not of Chinese novels or drama.[31] One possible explanation for this difference is that poetry and paintings have traditionally emphasised the personal expression of an artist much more than for novels and plays. For Chinese artists, personal expression often came in the form of responses to the perceived realities of their surroundings rather than expressing their mental conditions—as is the case in

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[29] In my opinion, the greatest interest in *jingjie* theory was shown during the late Qing dynasty. Due to the politics surrounding Mao Zedong's "Cultural Revolution" in the 1960s, Mainland Chinese scholars had to give up their projects, and much of their previous work was destroyed.

[30] For a comparison of *jingjie* and Western philosophies, see Li Zhehou (李澤厚), Meixue Lunji (美學論集) ["Aesthetic Theories"] (Taipei: Sanmin Press, 1996). Ye Jiaying (葉嘉瑩), Wang Kuowei Jiqi Wenxue Pipin (王國維及其文學批評) ["Wang Kuowei and his Literature Criticism"] (Canton: Canton People's Press, 1982). James J.Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

[31] Li Zhehou (李澤厚), Meixue Lunji (美學論集) ["Aesthetic Theories"] (Taipei: Sanmin Press, 1996) 341.

Western expressionism.[32] Chinese artists have long considered the harmonious representation of subjectivity (personal expression) and objectivity (nature or social surroundings) as the highest goal to be achieved through their work. *Jingjie* thus describes a world created by the artist, neither partly nature nor a floating concept hidden in the subconscious.[33]

The difference between the created world of *jingjie* and the subjective expressionism or objective realism that are commonly found in Western art may be clarified by looking at a Chinese word that has occasionally been used interchangeably with *jingjie*—*yijing* (意境). In Chinese, *yijing* carries a much stronger connotation of objectivity and subjectivity sitting side-by-side. The subjectivity aspect is carried by *yi*, interpreted as "meaning, idea," and the idea of objectivity comes from *jing*, interpreted as "environment." The combination of characters in *yijing* indicates a paradox, an idea that is neither subject nor object. However, according to Buddhist-influenced Chinese thinking, there is no conflict between these two ideas. This non-dualistic acceptance of two seemingly opposing concepts sharing the same space is considered by many as the fundamental difference between Western and Chinese aesthetics.[34] However, a similar idea has been proposed by Western phenomenologists. In the same manner that Chinese philosophers affirm the solidarity of the "I" and Nature, as well as the inseparability of *yi* and *jing*, Western phenomenologists affirm the inseparability of noesis (consciousness or perception) from noema (the object of

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[32] *Expressionism*, which refers to art that is devoted to expressed emotions, is usually associated with Western modern art. Here I am referring to the general idea of expressionism as it is found throughout Western history.

[33] As a created world or created place, *jingjie* has been suggested by such scholars as Ye Taiping (葉太平) as unique among Chinese aesthetic categories. He believes that landscape painting was the earliest and most successful embodiment of *jingjie* in that it emphasised two-dimensional empty space. He also cited the appearance of created places in *yuan lin* (園林, "Chinese gardens"), *jia shan* (假山, "artificial mountains") and *pen jin* (盆景, "bonsai") as three-dimensional paintings—all considered typical embodiments of *jingjie*. The articulation and composition of space in a created place remained at the heart of most traditional Chinese artists' concerns. Ye Taipin, Zhongguo Wenxue Zhi Meixue Jinshen (中國文學之美學精神) ["The Spirit of Aesthetics in Chinese Literature"] (Taipei: Buffalo Book Co., 1998) 323.

[34] It should be noted that Western dualism is now being challenged on many fronts—for example, the efforts of such contemporary philosophers as Merleau-Ponty (Phenomenology of Perception; London: Routledge, 1994) and of numerous environmental artists working in Europe and North America.

consciousness or perception), or of lived experience from the world of experiences.

Whereas *yijing* carries a strong connotation of paradox, *jingjie* contains a strong connotation of the dynamic process required to attain a unity of subjectivity and objectivity. *Jingjie* is the preferred term for anyone wanting to imply the idea of a state of completeness or a fulfilled creative process; *yijing* is the better choice when one wishes to emphasise the co-existing ideas of subjectivity and objectivity as part of the creative process. *Yi* (意) is a combination of *qing* (情, "feelings" or "passion") and *li* (理, "reason" or "logic"), and *jing* (境) is a combination of *xing* (形, "form" or "shape") and *shen* (神, "spirit" or "soul"). Accordingly, the two primary tasks of an artist may be to master form and to extract spirit, while reaching for harmony between emotion and rationality.

It has been suggested by the contemporary Chinese scholar Li Zhehou (李澤 厚)[35] that *xingshen*, as a sub-category of *jingjie*, has become one of Chinese literature's most important discourses. He suggests that "the tradition and characteristics of Chinese aesthetics is the unity of *xing* and *shen*."[36] The *xingshen* discourse represents a transition from a physical to spiritual focus in the creative process. *Xing* is best translated as "form"—a basic element in both Eastern and Western art. However, form takes on different meanings in different contexts—for instance, nature, style, or shape. In Chinese criticism and theory, *xing* usually indicates appearance, with *xingsi* ( 形 似 , "shape-like" or "appearance-like") used to indicate the basic quality of a piece of art. Chinese artists, however, have always sought to go beyond mere imitations of nature, striving instead to transmit the spirit of nature through form—that is, to achieve a level of *shensi* (神似, "spirit–like" or "god-like"). In Guo Shaoyu's words, traditional Chinese artists have always looked for ways to express "sound in the

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[35] Li, 343.

[36] Li, 344.

air, colour in appearances, the moon reflected in water, an image in the mirror"[37] rather than simply showing the moon in the sky or an object in one's hand.

In the *xingshen* discourse, *shen* may be described as an artist's equivalent of a Chan Buddhist's concept of *emptiness* as an ultimate goal. Poets are accustomed to using Chan terminology to describe this concept—for example, *chan* (參, "commune with"), *wu* (悟, "awakening" or "enlightenment") and *fa* (法, "method" or "law," equal to the Sanskrit *dharma*). In his commentary <u>Cang Lang Shi Hua</u> (滄浪詩話, "Cang Lang's Remarks on Poetry"), Yan Yu (1180-1235) wrote:

> The ultimate attainment of poetry lies in one thing:
> entering the spirit [*rushen*].
> If poetry enters the spirit,
> it has reached perfection, the limit,
> and nothing can be added to it.[38]
> 詩之極致有一，　曰入神。　詩而入神，至矣盡矣，蔑以加矣。

The phrase *rushen* (入神) has also been explained as "entering the realm of the marvelous or divinely-inspired" and "entering into the life of things and capturing their spirit or essence."[39] The *shen* idea thus implies transcendence or penetration of the physical world. Yan also wrote:

> In general, the way of Chan lies in miraculous awakening alone, and so does the way of poetry. Meng Xiangyang [a Tang-dynasty poet] was far inferior to Han Tuizhi [another Tang-dynasty poet] in learning. The reason why his poetry nevertheless surpassed the latter's was nothing but his complete reliance on miraculous awakening. Only through awakening can one "ply one's proper trade" and "show one's true colours."[40]
> 大抵禪道惟在妙悟，詩道亦在妙悟。且孟襄陽學力下韓退之遠甚，而其詩獨出退之之上者，一味妙悟而已。惟妙悟乃爲當行，乃爲本色。

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[37] Liu, 40.

[38] Guo Shaoyu (郭紹虞), ed., <u>Canglang Shihua Jiaoyi</u> (滄浪詩話校譯) ["Emendations and translations of Canglang's Remarks on Poetry"] (Peking: n. p., 1962) 6. The translation is my own.

[39] Liu, 37.

[40] Liu, 38; Liu's translation.

According to this excerpt, the creative experience of making art is similar (if not identical) to the religious experience of spiritual awakening and the quality of a piece of art depends on the artist's transcendental experience of the physical world.

*Yan* also implies that art and poetry embody the artist's or poet's intuitive apprehension of the reality that lies beyond words, which rests on the paradoxical assumption that it is only by means of words that an artist can reveal the *huajing* (化境, "transformed state of being," the Taoist equivalent of Chan emptiness), and therefore no longer have any need for words. This idea of achieving a heightened state of awareness and abandoning the need for words was expressed by Zhuang Zi as: "One who has caught the fish can forget the trammel . . . one who has caught the meaning can forget the words."[41]

In an earlier section, I discussed the idea of *shen* as the spirit or essence of things; however, *shen* is sometimes used to denote the spirit or intuition of an artist. Thus, reaching *huajing* (a transformed state of being) can be interpreted as an encounter of the spirit or intuition of the artist with the spirit or essence of nature—what Qing dynasty poet *Wang Shishen* (王士慎, 1634-1711) called *shenhui* (神會, "what the spirit encounters"). Wang claimed that the ultimate aim of poetry was the same as the ultimate aim of Chan—the attainment of spiritual awakening. He wrote:

> "To discard the raft and climb ashore" is what experts in Chan consider to be the *wujing* [悟境, "awakened state"] and what experts in poetry consider to be the *huajing*[化境, "transformed state of being"]. Poetry and Chan are the same; there is no difference between them.[42]
> 「捨筏登岸」，禪家以爲悟境，詩家以爲化境。詩禪一致，等無差別。[43]

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[41] The original sentence came from Zhuang Zi (*Wuaiwu* section) (莊子外物篇). Zhuang Zi, Zhuang Zi (莊子) ["Analects of Zhuang Zi"] (Taipei, Lixu Press, 1990) 69.

[42] Liu, 44; Liu's translation.

[43] Wang Shishen (王士慎), Daijing Tang Shihua (帶經堂詩話) ["The Poetics of Daijing Tang"] (Shanghai, n.d, 1760)112.

His last point is debatable, since any encounter or transformation of natural form to spirit is a process of creation for an artist, through which feelings are expressed and responses are given to the artist's surroundings. Since personal feelings help stimulate the creative process, the transformation from *xingsi* to *shensi* may be considered one form of a dynamic process that connects the physical with the spiritual. Furthermore, Chinese philosophers have always analysed the word *qing* (情, "feelings") side-by-side with *li* (理, "reason"). *Qing* has mostly been considered a personal emotion that cannot exceed the boundaries of *li*. As a social standard, *li* sits with rationality at the center of Confucian thinking; it has been described as the objective aspect of the world that contrasts with the subjectivity of the artist.

In summary, *jingjie* indicates an integration and dialectical relationship between subjectivity (*yi*, which includes *qing* and *li*) and objectivity (*jing*, which includes *xing* and *shen*). In their use of *yijing*, critics usually emphasise the dynamic process that begins with the separation and ends with the integration of *yi* and *jing*. In contrast, the term *jingjie* holds a stronger connotation of the inseparable relationship between subjectivity and objectivity. It is therefore reasonable to consider that *yijing* and *jingjie* imply the same concept, but place different emphases on the integration of subjectivity and objectivity. Perhaps the most succinct description of the connection between the subjective and objective was written by Liu Xie in his *Wenxin Diaolong* (文心雕龍, "The Literary Mind: Elaborations"):

> The spirit should be expressed through form,
> Subjective feelings stimulate the process;
> Although the object is created from shape and form,
> The profound objectivity is captured by the mind.[44]
> 神用象通，情變所孕。物心貌求，心以理應。[45]

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[44] My own translation.

[45] The original sentence came form <u>Wenxin Diaolong</u>, Shensi the 26th (文心雕龍 神思第二十六). Liu Xie (劉勰), <u>Wenxin Diaolong</u> (文心雕龍) ["The Literary Mind: Elaborations"] (Taipei, Jinfeng Press. 1988) 87.

## 3.3 The *Jingjie* of Place

As mentioned in an earlier section, the three primary English translations of *jingjie* are "boundary," "situation; condition," and "state of mind."[46] However, none of these terms adequately describe the spiritual aspect of *jingjie* that has exerted such a strong influence on Chinese art, poetry, literature, and philosophy.

Lexically, *jingjie* not only represents a Chinese aesthetic category but also an individual's spiritual/emotional condition.  Its usage has also been expanded to cover the spiritual and psychological condition of a place, which allows one to separate the *jingjie* discourse into a *jingjie* of people (人之境界) and a *jingjie* of place (場所之境界).  The first is commonly used as a precise indicator of one's psychological condition, and the second combines psychological condition with physical environment in the form of boundaries and conditions.  The *jingjie* of place may be generated by a real place, such as a garden, but it is equally possible to be generated by an imaginary place, such as a landscape painting, poem, or play. Contemporary Chinese scholar Chen Congzhou (陳從周) has observed that late Ming dynasty Chinese opera, literature, and garden design literally belong to the same *jingjie*, but it is difficult to analyse them as such because of the forms of their presentation.[47] However, on an individual basis, the *jingjie* of place and its relationship with artistic representations, illusions, and illustrations has been noted in many traditional landscape paintings and poems.  For example, the spirituality of place is evident in the "created" mountain place described by Ming dynasty Chan master Hanshan Deqing (憨山德清):[48]

> Flat lake's autumn water merges with the winter sky.
> The ancient trees are limned with frost, the falling leaves are red.
> The stone path and the footbridge are free of human tracks.

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[46] Liang, 183.

[47] Chen Zhi (陳植), Yuanye Zhushi (園冶注釋) ["Commentary on Yuanye"] (Taipei, Ming Wen Books, 1993) 242 (in Chinese).

[48] Hanshan Deqing (憨山德清, 1546-1623) was an influential Ming dynasty monk.  He is known for his commentaries on Buddhist, Taoist, and Confucian texts, as well as for his poetry.

A single hut is locked away deep inside the clouds.[49]

平湖秋水浸寒空， 古木霜飛落葉紅，
石徑小橋人跡斷， 一菴深鎖白雲中。

This poem demonstrates the ideal Chinese aesthetic criteria for the *jingjie* of place; the *jingjie* of the mountain landscape affects and then reflects the Chan master's *jingjie*, and so the poem expresses the dual spirituality of the geographical space and the observer. Apparently, the *jingjie* of place requires the involvement of a viewer/participant, since it emerges from an interaction between the two.

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[49] Red Pine, Mike O'Connor and Paul Hansen, The Clouds Should Know Me by Now: Buddhist Poet Monks of China, trans. Red Pine (Boston: Wisdom Publications, 1998) 131.

## 3.4 Summary

In this chapter I discussed the concept of *jingjie* in relation to its development in Chinese history. I also demonstrated that the Chinese concept of *jingjie* is one embodiment of the uniquely fluid spatiality found in Chinese landscape arts. The fluid spatiality and the Chinese notion of place are considered as the core of Chinese aesthetics. The significance of *jingjie* to contemporary Chinese art rests in the dynamic relationship between the psychological/emotional status of the viewer/participant and the spirituality of a place. In the next chapter I will discuss the historical development of *jingjie* as embodied—perhaps most successfully—by the Chinese garden.

# Chapter 4

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## Illusory Chinese Gardens and the *Jingjie* Instrument

> Do not consider void as an illusion,
> But consider the reality as an illusion.
> Illustrate scenes and transform them into one's emotional consciousness.
> From the beginning to the end,
> It will become as smooth as the floating clouds and the running waters.
> This is the difficulty.[1]

> 不以虛爲虛，而以實爲虛，畫景物爲情思；
> 從首至尾，自然如行雲流水，此其難也。

The subject of this verse is the creative process. Fan Xiwen (范晞文) wrote these lines during the Song dynasty (960-1297) in his *Duichuang Yeyu* (對床夜語), a work of poetic criticism. Read from the perspective of *jingjie*, the lines emphasise the mutuality of subjective emotion and objective scenes in the creation of a poem, but they can easily be applied to other genres in traditional Chinese art—including the design of gardens.

Aesthetically, a central characteristic of Chinese gardens is said to be an emphasis of *zaojing* (造境)—that is, the creation of *jingjie*. Establishing that sense of *jingjie* is thought to exert a greater effect on the perceived beauty of a Chinese garden than its physical construction (i.e., architectural elements and gardening materials). I will argue that the articulation of *jingjie* is far more evident and accessible in Chinese gardens than in other art genres, since a well-crafted garden can evoke both a psychological and psychic sense of *jingjie* in a viewer. Especially during the Ming and Qing dynasties (thought to be the

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[1] Fan Xiwen (范晞文), Duichuang Yeyu (對床夜語) ["The Night Dialogue of Facing the Bed"] (Taipei, Xin Wenfeng Publication: 1965) 135; my own translation.

period in which the art of garden making matured) the creation and appreciation of *jingjie* became central issues for this form.[2]

The creators of Chinese gardens borrowed aesthetic values from the traditions of landscape painting and landscape poetry. Instead of using language, lines, composition, and colour, garden designers used physical materials and objects to create a sense of *jingjie*. However, garden designers, like poets with their words and painters with their inks, tried hard not to become obsessed with objects and materials, treating them instead as tools to express ideas.

It is clear that poets, painters, and garden designers shared something else in common—that is, they all looked at their finished works as instruments and generators of *jingjie*. In the same way that a landscape painter uses his brush to create illusive images, garden designers might use a bonsai tree to give a sense of illusion or the mysterious; in limited spaces, such illusions dissolved boundaries between the microcosmic and macrocosmic aspects of a garden. This illusory characteristic complemented the idea of *jingjie*; such critics as Liu Yuxi (劉寓錫) used the phrase *jing shengyu xiangwai* (境生於象外, "*jing* is created beyond form") to describe it.[3]

The *jingjie* of a Chinese garden is not a simple reflection of artificial settings or architectural constructions, but a focused attempt to evoke "images beyond images" (*xiangwai zhixiang*, 象外之象) and "scenes beyond scenes" (*jingwai zhijing*, 景外之景).[4] For Chinese viewers and participants, this experience of "illusory representation" has long been considered as being more rich than simply experiencing the simple scenery of a garden—an achievement that is dependent upon the creation of *jingjie*.

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[2] Ye Lang (葉朗), Zhongguo Meixue De Kaizhan (中國美學的開展) ["The Development of Chinese Aesthetics"] (Taipei: Jin Feng Press, 1987) 189.

[3] See section 3.2.1

[4] This point was first raised by Sikong Tu in his Ershisi Shipin (二十四詩品, "Twenty-four Qualities of Poetry"). See Zeng Zuyin (曾祖蔭), Zhongguo Gudai Wenyi Meixue Fanchou (中國古代文藝美學範疇) ["Ancient Chinese Literature and Aesthetic Categories"] (Taipei: Wenjin Press, 1987) 306.

In this chapter, I will discuss the development of Chinese gardens and their illusory characteristics in relation to the Chinese concept of space. I will also attempt to describe in detail the principles used to create a sense of *jingjie* in Chinese gardens. Finally, some examples of typical Chinese gardening techniques will be analysed to see if their patterns and principles can be appropriated, reinterpreted, and transformed for use in contemporary Chinese art.

## 4.1 The Philosophical Foundation of the Chinese Garden

Before describing the connection between *jingjie* and the development of the Chinese garden, it is important to remember that the *jingjie* concept did not achieve maturity until the Tang dynasty (618-907), and that the term *jingjie* was not used on a regular basis until even later. The precursors of the Chinese garden under discussion can be traced to the earliest Chinese historical records, meaning that the concept was developed long before it became a favourite topic of poets and artists. The landscape arts and a more focused appreciation of nature both emerged during the Southern dynasties (420-589); at the same time, Chinese garden concepts were integrated with other art genres, and the form eventually became one of the most important representations of *jingjie* aesthetics. Originating from the first imperial pleasure parks and hunting grounds, Chinese gardens went through periods of emphasis on religious and aesthetic values before evolving into their most mature form as sophisticated imperial and literati settings during the Ming (1368-1644) and Qing (1644-1911) dynasties.

## 4.1.1 The Development of the Chinese Garden

### Pleasure Parks

Chinese gardens are usually called *yuanlin* (園林), a combination of the characters for garden (*yuan*) and forest (*lin*); they are occasionally referred to simply as *yuan*. The more formal *yuanlin* term was first used during the Southern dynasties, when poets and artists started to pay close attention to gardens as a theme for their work. The basic *yuan* concept can be traced back as early as the Shang dynasty (1751-1112 B.C.), to the first historical records of the Chinese kingdom.

According to these records, parks were initially established for the hunting and leisure needs of the Chinese king during a time when the monarchy was being

developed in tandem with advancements in agriculture. The last Shang king, surnamed Zhou (紂), is said to have created the first imperial park as a means of demonstrating his power and wealth.[5] All subsequent kings and emperors came to use large, extravagant parks as symbols of their self-perceived greatness. In the 11th century B.C., King Wen (文王) of the Zhou dynasty created one of ancient China's greatest landscape projects, the *Ling You* (靈囿) ritual terraces. The park, the first to feature artificial hills and pools, became an early model of the Chinese *you* (囿) garden concept—a place constructed within a "defined territory" of a natural landscape, with artificial features added as enhancements.[6]

The Chinese character *you* (囿) consists of *wei* (囗, "enclosure") and *you* (有, "having something"). The literal translation of "having something inside an enclosure" describes the idea of a preserved site that is part of, yet separated from, the natural landscape—a central *you* characteristic. Unlike *jing*, which indicates a sense of subjective experience, *you* originally implied no more than an objective description of a garden's basic physical features. However, by the end of the Shang period, the word carried the meaning of "an enclosed place designed purposefully for pleasure."

## Religious Gardens

While gardens continued to serve as places of pleasure for ancient Chinese kings, their design features began to integrate the philosophical and religious concepts developed by early Chinese intellectuals. During the Zhan Guo (Warring States) period (403-221 B.C.), both the general public and intellectual elite were obsessed with the Taoist legend of the "three holy mountains on the sea." Chinese kings paid for expeditions to find these holy mountains, which were

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[5] Sima Qian (司馬遷), The History of the Shang Dynasty, in the *Shiji* (史記) ["History Record"] (Taipei: Taiwan Commercial Press, 1995).

[6] *Daya Lingtai* (大雅靈台), in the Shijing (詩經). Zhou Manjiang (周滿江), ed., Shijing (詩經) ["Book of Odes"] (Taipei: Wanjuan Publications, 1990) 136 (translated by Tony Kline).

said to contain sacred medicine allowing for immortality.[7] The first-ever Chinese emperor *Shihuangdi* (始皇帝, 221- 207 B.C.) not only paid for exploratory missions to find the legendary mountains, he also used ancient Taoist texts to recreate a symbolic representation of the legend in his imperial garden. It is said that he created the landscape to help him fulfil his own fantasy of immortality. He also walled off his vast hunting preserve, the *Shanglin Yuan* (上林苑), which was filled with rare beasts, birds, and trees offered as tributes from vassal states. His efforts were built on the concept of a park as a microcosm of an entire empire.

Soon the Chinese started to reduce the holy mountain legend so that it would fit as a microcosm in the form of smaller gardens. The *yici sanshan* (一池三山, "one pond with three mountains") style, which is very well known to admirers of both Chinese and Japanese gardens, originated from these religious fantasies (Fig. 4-1). The sacred mountain theme that was transformed into illusory miniature landscapes eventually became the basic prototype of Chinese gardens; the sacred implications can be seen even today.[8] During the late Han dynasty, the idea of the Buddhist paradise of *Aimda* was incorporated into the Taoist legend and added to the microcosm concept of Chinese garden design.

As the Qin dynasty faded, the new imperial leaders decided to preserve the *Shanglin Yuan* to symbolise the new regime's ascension to power. Subsequent Han dynasty (206-220 B.C.) emperors continued to build imperial gardens reflecting ideas taken from *Shihuangdi*, which was accepted as a model of the Empire in miniature. As officials, merchants, and members of extended royal families began to accumulate wealth, some private gardens were established

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[7] Sima Qian , Shiji; see section entitled Fengchan Shu (封禪書) ("The Book of Worshipping Heaven and Earth").

[8] Feng Zhongping (馮鍾平), Zhongguo Yuanlin Jianzhu (中國園林建築) ["Chinese Garden Architecture"] (Taipei: Mingwen Books, 1989) 6.
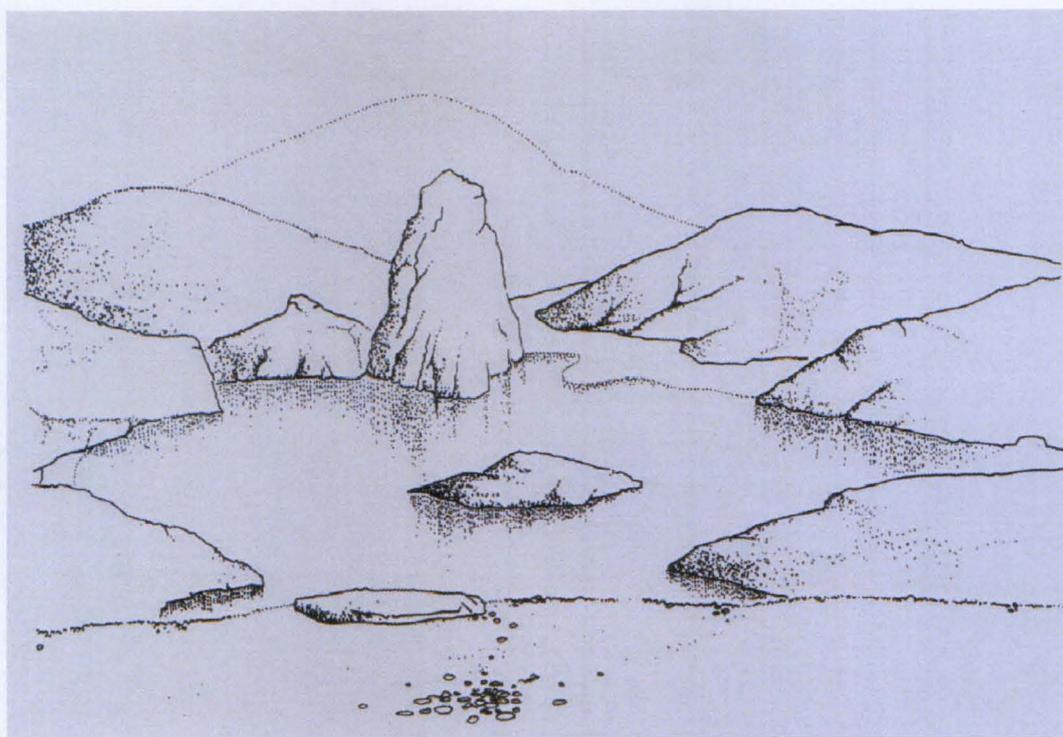
**Figure 4-1,** The Typical Composition of the *Yici Sanshan* Style

during the Han.[9] Two contradictory trends during this period were simplicity and the ostentatious display of wealth. However, the idea of the Chinese garden as a symbolic microcosm remained unchanged until the beginning of the Southern dynasties.

## Aesthetic Gardens

The Southern dynasties were marked by an unending series of wars and conflicts among individual kingdoms and whoever claimed to be the central imperial authority. Literati and artists who were frustrated with politics sought spiritual liberation in exile and retreat; instead of working for short-lived regimes, they indulged in life in the countryside. Thus, a dark age in terms of politics and social order was a golden age for philosophy and aesthetics, which set the stage for alternatives to strict Confucian ideology. This period was also marked by the integration of Indian Buddhism into mainstream Chinese thinking; Buddhist concepts, which emphasise spiritual liberation, contributed to Chinese aesthetic reforms. Many literati went into seclusion in search of liberation, and their appreciation of nature was transformed into an obsession with landscape arts.

As mentioned earlier, it was during this period that the term *yuanlin* first appeared, replacing the simpler concept of *you*. The significance of this new term is revealed in the Chinese character for *yuan* (園), which consists of *wei* (囗, "enclosure") and *yuan* (袁, "man with a long robe"). In Chinese tradition, long robes were symbols of status that were worn by royal family members, literati, and government officials. The character carries implications of self-consciousness and subjectivity.

Encouraged by the fledgling development of art theory (with its strong emphasis on nature), landscape painting and landscape poetry gained prominence. Artist-poets began designing and building their own gardens. The poet Tao

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[9] The first recorded private garden was built during the late Han dynasty by a wealthy merchant named Yuan Guanghan (袁廣漢). See Meng Yanan (孟亞男), Zhongguo Yuanlinshi (中國園林史) ["The History of the Chinese Garden"] (Taipei, Wenjing Press, 1993) 16.

Yuanming (陶淵明, 365-427) inspired the early integration of landscape arts into garden design; he was the first to use the term *yuanlin* in his writing. His landscape poems and essays, which reveal an obsession with nature, became ideal examples of *jingjie* that impacted the work of several generations of writers, poets, and artists.[10] In his famous story about a lost utopia, Taohuayuan Ji (桃花源記), Tao described a mythical journey to a mahogany garden. This story exerted great influence on all landscape arts, especially garden design. The religious goal of finding legendary holy mountains was gradually replaced by this metaphor of visiting an ideal world, a metaphor that was recreated in countless Chinese gardens.[11]

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[10] Tao's ideology is evident in the following lines from his poem, Returning to Live in the Country (歸園田居詩). Taken from Xu Wei (徐巍), Tao Yuanming Shixuan (陶淵明詩選) ["The Poetry Collection of Tao Yuanming"] (Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., Ltd, 1990)67 (translated by Tony Kline):

Young, I was always free of common feeling.
It was in my nature to love the hills and mountains.
Mindlessly I was caught in the dust-filled trap.
Waking up, thirty years had gone.
The caged bird wants the old trees and air.
Fish in their pool miss the ancient stream.
I plough the earth at the edge of South Moor.
Keeping life simple, return to my plot and garden.
My place is hardly more than a few fields.
My house has eight or nine small rooms.
Elm-trees and Willows shade the back.
Plum-trees and Peach-trees reach the door.
Misted, misted the distant village.
Drifting, the soft swirls of smoke.
Somewhere a dog barks deep in the winding lanes.
A cockerel crows from the top of the mulberry tree.
No heat and dust behind my closed doors.
My bare rooms are filled with space and silence.
Too long a prisoner, captive in a cage,
Now I can get back again to Nature.

[11] Tao's utopian journey became a metaphor for experiencing *jingjie* in a Chinese garden, which Song dynasty poet Luyou (陸遊, 1125-1210) described as "the very end of mountains and rivers, as if there is nowhere to go. However, after a turning point of a willow's shadow and bright, shining flowers, there is a village standing in front of you." Xu Wei (徐巍), Tao Yuanming Shixuan (陶淵明詩選) ["The Poetry Collection of Tao Yuanming"] (Taipei: Yuan-Liou Publishing Co., Ltd, 1990)132.

## Literati Gardens

Landscape painting became the dominant genre in China during the Tang dynasty. It was also during this period that landscape painting theory and the *jingjie* concept started to play important roles in Chinese garden design. Also during the Tang, many artists turned to artificial landscapes—that is, the design and building of gardens—as an alternative form of expression to complement their poetry and painting. Their efforts also resulted in great works of art that expressed their appreciation of gardens and landscape ideals.

The use of landscape painting techniques in garden design was referred to as *xiyi huaben* (悉依畫本, "completely according to a painting"). Such famous landscape poets as Wang Wei (王維, 701-761), Du Fu (杜甫, 712-770), and Bai Juyi (白居易, 772-846) created poetic works for their favourite gardens. After building his own garden, the *Wangcuan Bieye* (輞川別業), Wang Wei made a painting of it—known as the *Wangcuan Tu* (輞川圖). Bai Juyi, who was celebrated for his poetic gardening technique, employed poetic principles to demonstrate the *jingjie* of both poems and gardens.[12]

Finally, with the development of the *yijing* concept (discussed in the preceding chapter), the idea of subjective consciousness started to appear—not only in poetry and painting, but also in garden design.

## Ming and Qing Gardens

The middle part of the Ming dynasty was marked by strong economic development in southern China, especially in the city of *Suzhou* (蘇州). With increased personal wealth came the use of private gardens to demonstrate the personal characteristics, power, and money of landlords, officials, and

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[12] During the Tang dynasty, many gardens were built by literati in their private dwellings. Examples include Pei Du's *Wuqiao Zhuang* (裴度之午橋莊), Li Deyu's *Pinquan Zhuang* (李德裕之平泉莊), and Bai Juyi's *Lushan Caotang* (白居易之廬山草堂).

businessmen. To serve their needs, a number of individuals gained fame and fortune as professional garden designers and artisans. Many of them were classically trained artists and poets who had the skills necessary to experiment with and improve the aesthetics of garden design. A form of garden theory and criticism was established during this period. In 1631, the artist Ji Cheng (計成, b. 1582) published the _Yuanye_ (園冶, "Book of Gardening"), the first systematic analysis of the Chinese garden and gardening.[13] Ji not only described gardening techniques, he also addressed garden design principles put forth by previous intellectuals. His book included a straightforward discussion of how to apply the _jingjie_ concept to gardening. For example, he used the term _jingjie_ in the book's sections on how to construct a foundation and rockery.[14]

More gardens were established during the Qing than in any previous dynasty; most of the best examples that still exist today were created or recreated during the Qing.[15] Because of the demand for gardens, this period was considered the pinnacle of professional Chinese garden design in terms of technique, management, and artistic expression.[16] The large number of Qing dynasty essays written on gardening not only demonstrates how popular gardens were during that period, but also spotlights the close relationship between Chinese literati and their gardens. Many garden designers (literati and artists) remained frustrated by imperial politics, and turned to gardens as places of solace and

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[13] _Yuanye_ was written in the late Ming dynasty (1631) by artist Ji Cheng (計成). Due to the author's political difficulties, the book was ignored during the Qing dynasty (1644-1911). However, during the 1920s, it was rediscovered by Japanese gardeners, who promoted it as the oldest gardening book in the world. This triggered interest on the part of Chinese scholars, who put much effort into studying this "lost book." Since its republication in 1931, it has been considered a classic of Chinese gardening literature.

[14] Chen Zhi (陳植), _Yuanye Zhushi_ (園冶注釋) ["Commentary on Yuan Yeh"] (Taipei: Ming Wen Books, 1993) 65, 69, 200-203.

[15] For the most part, the development of Chinese gardens came to an end at the end of the Qing dynasty. The Chinese civil war and Cultural Revolution prevented Chinese scholars from furthering the tradition or conducting detailed research on this important cultural legacy. Recently, some efforts have been made to initiate studies of this topic. During the civil war and Cultural Revolution, many ancient Chinese gardens were destroyed. Although some gardens recovered, studies in this field are limited.

[16] Additional texts on garden design were published during the Ming and Qing dynasties. Examples include Qian Yong's _Luyuan Conghua_ (錢泳的履園叢話), Li Yu's _Yijiayan_ (李漁的一家言), and Shen Fu's _Fusheng Liuji_ (沈復的浮生六記).

solitude in addition to outlets for their creative energies. As in their poems and paintings, their gardens were usually built around at least one subject theme. Literati gardens thus came to be viewed as three-dimensional paintings that could be experienced by visitors, and as material poems that could be seen and touched by viewers.

It is my opinion that the development of gardens and garden design during the Ming and Qing dynasties also influenced the integration of the *jingjie* concept into Chinese novels and plays. Many writers tried to create imaginary gardens in their work to express their aesthetic observations. Gardens were frequently used as backdrops for stories and drama productions, especially those that dealt with love.[17] Garden paths and the use of space were put to good use to create dramatic effects, which were highly appreciated by educated viewers and readers. The association of literature with gardening enriched the art of garden design and construction. Similar to an empty stage, a Chinese garden became a space in which the viewer—with the help of the artist—completed the story.

## The Chinese Garden Exported

The transmission of Chinese gardens to other parts of the world was crucial to the influence that they still exert on art and philosophy.[18] The Chinese garden concept was exported to Japan during the Tang dynasty (8th century) and to the West via trade routes as early as the 13th century.

Chinese Buddhism spread to Japan in the 5th century, and was followed by Chinese art, literature, and architecture during the next 300 years. One of the

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[17] For example, the play *Mu Dan Ting* (牡丹亭, "The Peony Pavilion"), written by Tang Xianzhu (湯顯祖), is a love story that takes place in a private garden. Also, the novelist Cao Xueqin (曹雪芹) created a maze-like garden called the *Taguan Yuan* (大觀園, "Prospect Garden") in his famous novel, *Honglou Meng* (紅樓夢, "Dream of the Red Chamber").

[18] The movement of Chinese during the Ming and Qing dynasties helped to promote the construction of Chinese gardens in other parts of the Chinese-speaking world, as well as in the West. Several Qing dynasty gardens can still be found in Taiwan today, the most famous and well-preserved being the Lin family garden in the city of Panqiao (板橋林家花園).

most intense periods of cultural transmission occurred during the Chinese Tang/Japanese Nai-ling period (奈良, 749-1185). The *yici sanshan* style that is common to Japanese gardens today is an extension of the Chinese Taoist holy mountain legend. The Japanese went on to develop their own style of "dry landscape" (枯山石) gardens, which are based on Chan Buddhist influences and the Chinese landscape painting techniques discussed in this chapter. Instead of real water, white sand is used to symbolize water; all other components are kept to a minimum. This style is similar to a traditional Chinese technique known as *penjing* (盆景, "miniature landscape"), which served as the origin of *bonsai*. Despite the Japanese cultural context and minimalist style, the composition and basic structure of Japanese gardens are still closely tied to their Chinese origins.

Marco Polo introduced Chinese gardens to Europeans in the 13th century. However, their ideology, physical structures, and techniques remained largely unknown in the Western world until traders and missionaries began to travel to China in the late 17th century. Chinese garden styles have been cited as having a direct influence on the emergence of landscape gardening in 18th century England, which later evolved into the *picturesque* approach. Similar attitudes towards nature in 18th-century England and pre-18th-century China led to similar attitudes toward gardening. This influence later spread to France, where it was called *Jardin Chinois* or *Jardinang-lo Chinois*. This influence on Western landscape-style gardening is discussed further in Chapter 6.

### 4.1.2 The Liminal Chinese Garden

When a garden symbolises the larger universe, its physical features may reflect other religious settings and sacred places. Western gardens have long been associated with Eden, implying a view of all gardens as sacred places. A similar attitude is found in Chinese history; as described in an earlier section, Chinese gardens have historical associations with Taoist myths of holy mountains

and Buddhist depictions of paradise.[19]  Thus, Chinese do carry within themselves images of the archetypal garden that express sacred experiences and philosophical tenets.

The Chinese art historian Nelson I. Wu pointed out that Chinese architecture arose from a holistic view that took into account philosophical, aesthetic, religious, and social aspects; accordingly, the goal in building design was to anchor man in an eternal and orderly universe.[20]  Chinese landscape painters and poets also attempted to present a holistic view that contains the same aesthetics that are found in mature forms of Chinese gardens—a unified combination of painting, poetry, plants, and architecture.

Chinese gardens required a millennium of development before achieving this mature form, yet the basic idea of a garden representing the entire universe has remained unchanged since the first one was built.[21]  Unlike Western classical philosophical schools, Chinese philosophy and aesthetics are considered inseparable from religious belief systems, as evidenced by the way that religious forms and ideologies have always been a part of Chinese art.  In one sense, it is possible to view a typical Chinese garden plan as a literal religious form as well as a sacred space; from this perspective, it is possible to explore the kinds of experiences that Chinese gardens evoke.

In his book Culture and Communication, the anthropologist Edmund Leach discussed typical structures and forms associated with myth, ritual, taboo, and

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[19] The Buddhist paradise called *Aimda* was an idea promoted by adherents to "pure-land Buddhism," one of five Chinese Buddhist sects. Unlike the Western notion of paradise, it is a world that exists between "the ultimate reality" and our secular world.  It is considered a place where good Buddhists continue their cultivation of compassion and insight after death.

[20] Nelson Ikon Wu, Chinese and Indian Architecture: The City of Man, the Mountain of God, and the Realm of the Immortals (New York: G. Braziller, 1963) 46.

[21] The earliest written record of Chinese gardens or their predecessors is found in the Shijing ("Book of Odes"), a collection of songs compiled in the 4th century BC. Some historians believe the first great landscape project using ritual terraces was built by King Wen during the Zhou dynasty (1066-221 B.C.).

religion.[22] Underlying these mytho-logic forms, he found a universal pattern that supports the everyday logic of conventional events, a pattern associated with the interruption of normality and the transcendence of boundaries. Leach provided a diagram (Fig. 4-2) to help his readers understand his concept of a sacred space, and explained that:

> There is always some uncertainty about just where the edge of category A turns into the edge of category not-A. Whenever we make category distinctions within a unified field, either spatial or temporal, it is the boundaries that matter; we concentrate our attention on the differences, not the similarities, and this makes us feel that the markers of such boundaries have special value, including "sacred" and "taboo."[23]

In his description of the role of mediators between social states, Leach observed an archetypal structure—regardless of whether the mediator was a prophet, a ritualised form of behaviour (such as a sacrifice), or an actual building (such as a church). In all cases, the common aspect of the mediator is that he, she, or it takes on "liminal attributes—being both mortal and immortal, human and animal, tame and wild."[24] For instance, the Biblical prophets who mediated between the City of God and the City of Man occupy a dual place "in the wilderness." The crossing of frontiers and thresholds is always hedged with ritual, as are transitions from one social status to another.

Similarly, the creators of Chinese gardens also mediated between contradictory notions—an extravagant pleasure palace with a harem versus a Confucian farmhouse with its simple vegetable plot, or a Taoist Abode of the Immortals versus a setting for boating parties—the same kind of "liminal zone" that Leach described. Chinese gardens shared many other mediating roles with ritual places that sought to cut across normal social time, that is, to disrupt the

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[22] Edmund R. Leach, Culture & Communication: The Logic by Which Symbols are Connected. An Introduction to the Use of Structuralist Analysis in Social Anthropology (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1976) 2.

[23] Leach, 35.

[24] Charles Jencks, "Meaning of the Chinese Garden." The Chinese Garden: History, Art & Architecture. Ed. Maggie Keswick. (London: Academy Editions, 1978) 195.
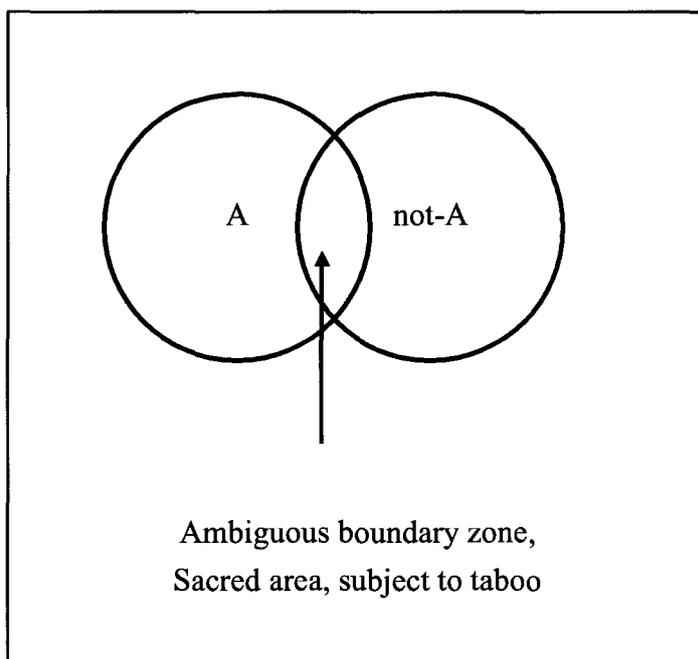
**Figure 4-2,** Edmund Leach, 1964

normal flow of events with the insertion of a sacred event. The sacred event is still bound by real time and spatial restrictions, but it marks a shift in status that is both instantaneous and timeless, and that may even be experienced as duration-less. As in an effective play, a convincing Chinese garden leads to the transcendence of one's sense of discrete, ordered intervals; the resulting new order is one of the events themselves.

In order to distinguish between a Chinese garden as a liminal zone or as a transitional place between spiritual and earthly realms, it is necessary to consider its physical setting and plan. Chinese gardens were built for a variety of purposes: contemplation, solitude, composing poetry, meditation, entertaining friends, or a noisy banquet. In _Honglou Meng_ ("Dream of the Red Chamber"), the imaginary family garden is inhabited not only by the young master of the household and his sisters and cousins, but also by all of their attending maids and serving girls. All of the novel's dramatic sequences take place in the maze-like, imaginary _Taguan Yuan_ (Prospect Garden) (Fig. 4-3). The setting reflects the long-held belief that Chinese women of high status (especially members of royal families) should not go out into the everyday world, thus making the garden their entire universe.

Chinese gardens have more architectural elements than other cultures. Both private and imperial Chinese gardens had architectural elements purposefully placed within them. In other words, it can be said that Chinese gardens are "built" instead of "planted." These architectural elements are always placed according to an orderly rectangular plan; in large households, they are always arranged as part of a progression of courtyards. Unlike single buildings, gardens and their architectural features are instantly recognisable because of their irregularities; they are places where the ordinary is transformed into something new and delightful.

Nelson Wu analysed this orderly garden plan in his book, Chinese and Indian Architecture. He described how patterns containing squares and circles appear in many different Chinese contexts (e.g., building plans and Buddhist mandalas) to respectively signify earth and heaven. As he explained:

**Figure 4-3**, *Taquan Yuan* (Prospect Garden), Illustration, Qing dynasty.

When a man leaves this courtyard and enters his garden, thus away from organised society, he is not the social man who has to act myopically to eternal values so that he may function well in immediate situations, nor is he the biological man who is constantly becoming and is responsible for reproduction. He is, instead, the eternal man of Chinese landscape painting and poetry whose growth, adolescence and obligation for reproduction are either behind him or are not his concern. His physical being has been idealised to become a means to an intellectual end.[25]

Space in a Chinese garden is more playful than useful, and above all metaphorical; the act of moving from conventional architecture to a garden represents liberation from Confucian rectitude and formalism. Designed to reflect the ancient Chinese notion of *tienyuan difang* (天圓地方, "heaven is round, earth is square")—a Chinese garden plan naturally embodies the symbol of the Buddhist mandala and produces a mysterious labyrinthine construction (Fig. 4-4). As the mandala radiates from the centre, one finds a series of alternating and concentric circles and squares that begin and end with either a square (suggesting order and the knowledge of man) or a circle (suggesting chaos and the truth of nature). While a well-designed Chinese garden should represent either a mandala or labyrinth, it should not obviously resemble either one. In an ideal garden, one that reflects fundamental *tienyuan difang* ideology, earth is symbolised by the surrounding walls and heaven is symbolised by a pool of water in the garden's centre.

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[25] Wu, 46.

**Figure 4-4**, A Typical Buddhist Mandala

## 4.2 Principles Used in the Creation of a Chinese Garden

According to the above discussion, the key to understanding the Chinese garden is learning how it represents the world as a microcosm. Throughout Chinese history, this idea has been embodied in many art forms—for instance, the Chinese *penjing* (盆景, "miniature landscape"). One of my central arguments is that the illusory characteristic of Chinese art is most clearly expressed in the Chinese garden.

For centuries, Chinese have described a well-designed garden with such terms as "solid poetry" and "a three-dimensional painting." Chinese painters are famous for recording their favourite landscape scenes; when they were unable to make more than one visit to an impressive scene, many recaptured their experience in the form of a garden. In a like manner, Chinese garden designers appropriated ideas from paintings and poems. The spirit underlying Chinese gardens was clearly expressed in the 16th-century manual *Yuanye*; its author, Ji Cheng, repeatedly emphasised the importance of establishing *jingjie* in order to create a successful garden. As explained in the preceding chapter, the mere recreation of an ideal form of nature was insufficient; an artist had to find and express the *jingjie* that existed beyond the created scenes.

Two principles are considered essential to creating *jingjie*, especially in Chinese garden design. The first is "the mutuality of positive and negative space" (*xushi xiangsheng*, 虛實相生). In order to organise garden space so as to extend the experience of place, a garden designer must employ techniques such as separating, blocking, and borrowing scenes. The second principle is "emphasising the emptiness, not the materiality" (*yimin zaikong buzaishi*, 意命在空不在實). A traditional garden does not emphasise scenes constructed with solid materials, but those that evoke a sense of emptiness. The *jingjie* of a garden is amplified by illusory light, sound, shadow, and smell.

## 4.2.1 The Mutuality of Positive and Negative Space

Chinese consider *xushi xiangsheng* an important spatial and aesthetic concept. Confucians and Taoists both consider the universe as a dynamic combination of the negative and the positive—the well-known *yin* and *yang*. The universe is viewed as constantly alternating between life and death and the positive and the negative; the positive cannot be separated from the negative, and *yin* and *yang* cannot exist independently. This relationship is a fundamental principle in Chinese art, especially in terms of how space is established and projected.

Chinese landscape painters are famous for the ways in which they emphasised unpainted space, using it to create illusory effects of a distant landscape. Empty space could be viewed as empty sky, clouds, or water, depending on the *jingjie* created by the artist. The early Qing artist Xuan Chongguang (笪重光) discussed this effect in his essay <u>Hua Quan</u> (畫筌, "Commentary on Ancient Chinese Painting Theories"). He noted that: "With the mutuality of positive and negative [space], wherever there is unpainted space, it becomes the marvellous *jingjie*."[26] The mutuality of positive and negative is also clearly expressed in Chinese calligraphy and architecture. A calligrapher depends on the balance of a brush stroke (black) and the empty space (white) to express a Chinese character. Called "considering white as black," (計白當黑), this technique is not only revered in calligraphy, but also in architectural design.[27] A typical Chinese architectural plan not only shows a concern for positive material features, but also for the negative spaces (e.g., courtyards) created by surrounding buildings and other architectural elements. When properly executed, the result is a dwelling that connects interior and exterior space.

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[26] My own translation. The original sentence is "*Xushi xiangsheng, wuhuachu jiecheng miaojing*" (虛實相生，無畫處皆成妙境。). Xuan Chongguang, <u>Hua Quan</u> (畫筌) [ "Commentary on Ancient Chinese Painting Theories" ] (Taipei: Fusan Press, 1986), 112.

[27] This term was first proposed by the Qing calligrapher Deng Shiru (鄧石如) as an essential principle of Chinese calligraphy.

Chinese garden designers used this principle of connecting interior and exterior space to develop techniques for organising positive and negative space. Mature garden designs present a musical experience of space constructed from a combination of positive and negative, bright and dark, and black and white. By further manipulating and reorganizing space, Chinese garden designers created multi-dimensional experiences. Some of their most powerful design tools for managing existing space and extending the experience of limited space were *fenjing* (分景, separating scene), *gejing* (隔景, blocking scene) and *jiejing* (借景, borrowing scene). Using plants, rocks, or architectural features, designers could extend the psychological space of a visitor, as if the original space were physically expanded.

## 4.2.2 Emphasising Emptiness

In a poem describing his visit to the *Shizi Lin* (獅子林, Lion Grove) garden, Qing dynasty scholar Zhao Yi (趙翼) reduced the essence of Chinese gardens to a simple principle: "emphasising the emptiness, not the materiality."[28] According to this concept, Chinese gardening can be described as the art of organising space in a sequential and changeable manner that intensifies the psychological response of the viewer.

As Ji Cheng stressed, a landscape artist concerned with *jingjie* infused his work with a sense of his mental condition. A similar reflection of subjective emotion can be found in many Chinese garden designs. To achieve this effect, designers were careful to avoid over-manipulating the experience and to purposefully leave a certain amount of blank space for visitors to explore. The *Yuanye* author claimed that there were "no definite rules for the planning of gardens."[29] In his "painting chapter," Ji used a classical Chinese technique known as "evocative description" to describe the emotional effect of a beautiful

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[28] Feng, 147.

[29] Chen, 35.

scene. He instilled in his readers the desire to make gardens that triggered similar responses, but failed to give any details on how to do so.

Chinese garden designers have always been encouraged to avoid the obvious and to seek the unusual and unexpected. Secret places are especially desirable, since they represent some of nature's most delightful effects. Walls should be hidden by creeping plants or vines, buildings should be partly concealed by trees, and what Ji Cheng described as "sequestered spots"[30] should be interspersed throughout. It was important that anyone enjoying the more intimate parts of a garden should be able to "gaze far away, as over endless waters,"[31] with the phrase "as over" hinting at the illusive effect found in many Chinese gardens. The spirit of creating illusion was hinted at in these lines:

> Although produced by humankind,
> Consider [the garden] as if created by Nature.*32*

雖由人作，宛如天開。

To achieve the *jingjie* of emptiness, Chinese garden designers took advantage of the illusory effects that could be created with light, sound, shadow, and smell. Shadows could be created by the sun or moon being blocked by flowers, trees, or clouds; the sounds of wind, rain, water, and birds were considered as important as a garden's physical features.[33] These illusory elements touched the subjective emotions of visitors, and served as bridges between subjectivity and objectivity. They also reinforced the idea of *jingjie* being created "beyond the form," "beyond the scene," and "beyond the image."[34]

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[30] Chen, 49.

[31] Chen, 233.

[32] Chen, 44.

[33] See section 4.3 of this chapter for example of illusory elements used in Chinese gardens.

[34] The first mention of this concept was made by Liu Yuxi, who used the phrase *jing shengyu xiangwai* ("*jing* is created beyond form"). Sikong Tu used the phrase *xiangwai zhixiang* ("images beyond images") and *jingwai zhijing* ("scenes beyond scenes").

Garden designers also borrowed a technique from landscape painters to create this illusory effect. Called *Sanyuan Fa* (三遠法, "the rules of three distances"), it allowed viewers to observe scenes beyond a single perspective (Fig. 4-5). The rule was adaptable to three-dimensional gardens because their viewing perspectives are almost never fixed on a single point.

As visitors move through a Chinese garden, they meet with multiple scenes that inspire a variety of experiences. The Ming dynasty artist Ji Cheng described the ideal Chinese garden as consisting of

> Excellent scenes from all different places,
> Condensed in one single square inch of landscape.[35]

> 多方景勝，咫尺山林。

These lines express an essential attitude for creating a microcosm in a Chinese garden. Similar ideas were expressed by critics and theorists of Chinese painting—for instance, "see [large-scale] greatness through the small" (由小見大), "less exceeds more" (以少勝多), and "using the simple to symbolize the complex" (以簡寓繁).[36]

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[35] Chen, 197; my own translation.

[36] Ruan Haogeng (阮浩耕), Liti Shihua (立體詩畫) ["Three Dimensional Poetry and Landscape"] (Taipei: Shuquan Press, 1994), 152-153.

**Figure 4-5,**
*Emporor Minghuang's Journey to Shu,* Detail, 8th century,
An early example of the *Sanyuan Fa* perspective painting

## 4.3 Physical Structure

In The Poetics of Gardens, Charles Moore, William Mitchell, and William Turnbull Jr. make the claim that any garden "is partly an extension of architecture—a fragment of a city—and partly natural paradise."[37]   In contrast, in a Chinese garden there is always an emphasis on the architectural elements, viewing it as a place for social and literary gatherings.   A typical Chinese garden is a calculated mix of architectural elements (walls, pavilions, bridges, and galleries) and natural materials (including rocks, water, and plants).   To use a musical metaphor, architectural elements and gardening materials were composed in the same manner as tones might be chosen and re-arranged to create music. Moore, Mitchell, and Turnbull show their understanding of this concept when they point out that:

> to compose is to adjust the balances and tensions of *yin* and *yang*—water and mountains, human order and the Tao of nature, sun and shadow, breeze and stillness, sound and silences—to create new relations that carry meaning for us.[38]

For the Chinese garden designer, the main task has always been to compose a "natural" world in a seemingly casual but actually precise manner.   Lines are better crooked than straight; balance is better when asymmetrical; showing everything at once should take a back seat to presenting layers for discovery.   Of course, Chinese gardens share common elements that serve as important structural components: high walls and enclosures, paths and bridges, and rocks and ponds. In the hands of a talented designer, these elements may be arranged so as to represent universal patterns reflecting sacred places.

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[37] Charles W. Moore, William J. Mitchell, and William Turnbull Jr., The Poetics of Gardens (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1988) 6.

[38] Moore et al., 13.

## 4.3.1 Rocks

The Chinese word for "landscape" is *shanshui* (山水)—literally, "mountains and water." For centuries, the combination evoked images of the Holy Mountains described by Taoists, which lead to landscapes becoming a central theme in Chinese painting, poetry, and gardens. The term also suggests the fundamental mutuality of *yang* and *yin*, of masculine strength and feminine softness, and the aesthetically satisfying juxtaposition of rough with smooth that is perhaps best represented as a still rock and a flowing stream.

The term *shanshui* expresses additional meaning in light of the Chinese myth of genesis, *pangu kaitian* (盤古開天), in which rivers are described as the earth's arteries and mountains as its skeleton. The story helps to explain the strong Chinese obsession with stones. Mountains, minerals, meteorites, and rocks battered and molded into strange shapes are considered superior to man-made sculptures because of their layers of accumulated significance. At best, rocks taken from the bottom of Lake Taihu (where it is said the most perfect ones are formed) represent a concentration of the creative forces of the Tao (Fig. 4-6).

For a Chinese, the emotion expressed by garden rocks is largely one of the picturesque and the wild. While climbing over or through them, or when simply pondering their suggestive shape, a viewer/visitor can easily imagine being perched on a mountaintop surrounded by elemental forces. This particular experience is not considered calming—that effect is properly left to water—but confusing and unnerving. Such a reaction agrees with ancient principles as expressed by Ji Cheng, the author of *Yuanye*, who stated that rocks should "appear wild, as the Tiger Mountain in *Suzhou*."[39] The key word here is "appear"; even though a garden rockery or a miniature mountain on a scholar's desk might resemble a terrifying precipice, they are best viewed as conventionalised and

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[39] Chen, 214.

**Figure 4-6**, Rock from Lake *Taihu*

stylised impressions of wildness.[40] For however grand a "craggy and precipitous" rockery might be with its ravines and forests, it is still a miniaturisation of the real thing. Spending time in real wilderness has never been particularly appealing to Chinese, except for a handful of celebrated Taoist hermits, and so natural qualities have always be easier to appreciate in miniature.

The lions of *Shizi Lin* serve as another example of the power of garden rocks. The Lion Grove is not only a substitute for a real mountain, it is also a representation of a fierce wilderness beast. Visitors pass by rock piles with the shapes of bushy manes, mouths, tails, and paws that reach out from stones and hollows set between old, gnarled pines, pieces of petrified wood, and needle-like limestone stalagmites. These elements compete in a contest of the grotesque; similar to the effect of certain Op Art and Islamic patterns, the eyes continually move between light and shadow and solid and void. The suggestive shapes found in *Shizi Lin* increase the sense of confusion over relative size, so that space, and therefore time, are suspended.

## 4.3.2 Water

To the Chinese, water serves as a necessary balance for mountains; without water, it is impossible to present Nature in perfect harmony. Mountains represent the masculine *yang*—upright, bright, hard, and bony. The *yin* aspects of water have been described as receptive, yielding, wet, and dark. However, this relationship is revered in a phrase from the Analects of Confucius: "The wise enjoy the waters, the benevolent enjoy the mountains; the wise are active, the benevolent are placid; the wise are happy, the benevolent live long."[41] Here water serves as the active principle while the fixed and motionless mountains sit

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[40] Chinese *penjing* (盆景, "miniature landscapes") include miniature plants (e.g., bonsai trees) and stones. Small stones were frequently found in gardens and on the desks of literati. An extreme example of the obsession with rocks is their use in calligraphy brush holders, considered a functional object in pre-ballpoint pen China. The name of these objects, *anshan* (案山), means "mountain on the table."

[41] Fu Peirong (傅佩榮), Lunyu (論語) ["Analects of Confucius"] (Taipei: Lixu Press, 1988) 145.

passively and reflectively. In associated literature and poetry, mountains and water are usually described as containing within themselves at least one aspect of their opposite.

In a pond's reflection, a semi-circular bridge becomes complete, producing the round shape that the Chinese hold as a symbol of perfection. The mirroring water enhances the beauty of surrounding pavilions and hills, an effect made even more magical by the reflections of adjacent buildings. For these aesthetic reasons, as well as to preserve the balance of *yin* and *yang*, the author of the *Yuanye* garden manual argued that the best possible site for a garden was alongside a lake with a view of mountains beyond.

In the absence of such a site, water supply was the most important factor in choosing where to build a garden. The soil could not be broken until water sources had been fully investigated. Gardeners would use the dirt removed from streambeds and artificial pools to make the hills that augmented the natural terrain; the phrase "digging ponds and piling mountains"[42] expressed the idea that a garden was in the process of being built. This technique was even more true in private gardens, where designers had much less space in which to recreate idealized lakeside views (Fig. 4-7).

Small pools dug near pavilions or beside main reception halls had to evoke feelings of depth and distance in addition to reflecting the buildings' images; streams a few yards long had to appear as though they flowed into the garden from distant hills. Hence the many meanders of a Chinese garden's pools and rivulets, their sudden disappearances and reappearances, and the characteristically Chinese trick of blocking a visitor's progress with a wall that allows a stream to flow underneath.

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[42] Chen, 59.

**Figure 4-7**, The Reflection Created by the Central Pond in *Wangshi Yuan*, Suzhou

In private gardens, water was often diverted and distributed among many small, scattered areas instead of flowing into a single pond or lake, symbolising the Chinese garden principle of "divide and multiply." A garden named the *Zhuozheng Yuan* (拙政園, Humble Administrator's Garden), also in Suzhou, has as much water as land. It is famous for its complex arrangement of interconnecting pools that are cleverly arranged to hide paths and to give the impression that water is flowing away from the viewer towards some undefined destination (Fig. 4-8).

The heart of the *Wangshi Yuan* is its small pond. Surrounded by rough-edged rocks, it presents the illusion of being larger than its actual size because its irregular shape makes it impossible to view in its entirety. Surrounding the pond are group halls and summer houses, some set back behind rocks and terraces, some right at the water's edge. Across from the wide entrance to a gallery, which is reached via a narrow doorway to the adjacent courtyard, stands a small pavilion whose roof rises above the courtyard wall. Seemingly floating in the lake, with its stilts half-invisible among the rocks, this pavilion serves as a focal point in the midst of water.

## 4.3.3 High Walls and Enclosures

The concept of "enclosure" is an essential characteristic of Chinese gardens; as previously described, one component of the Chinese character for garden (*yuan*, 園) is the character for "enclosed space." A typical private Chinese garden is located in a courtyard, protected from the surrounding countryside or urban thoroughfares by walls that are 6 to 8 feet tall. Walls are critical to the garden's illusory effects, since they separate different areas and establish a sense of calm. They also serve as backdrops for dancing shadows and silhouettes of bamboo or plum tree branches.

**Figure 4-8,** The Spatial Illusion Created in *Zhuozheng Yuan*, Suzhou

Especially in a densely populated city such as *Suzhou*, a high wall functions as a separating device.

Behind the elements of rock, soil, and water, a wall provides a stable, balancing theme that runs through an entire garden. In addition to separating a garden from the outside world, a wall also helps to create numerous inner spaces that may express individual sub-themes that sequentially support the garden's main theme. Walls are usually built according to function: curved or crooked inner walls versus straight and tall boundary walls; in either case, they are usually covered with roof tiles (Fig. 4-9). On walls that follow site contours, these tiles are used to give the effect of a "flying dragon" that winds through the air. Other walls are solidly built so as to represent a mountain, or a distant range of hills rising behind the garden's rocks and shrubs. As each day advances, the sun casts different patterns on the wall, altering its sense of solidity. At sunset the mood may become suffused with the melancholy that is characteristic of more evocative and elliptical styles of landscape art.[43]

Garden designers often experimented with walls, making them glossy so as to resemble mirrors, or using them to serve as unobtrusive boundaries that are scarcely visible behind trees and rocks. A circular hole cut into this kind of wall can produce a spectacular effect on moonlit nights: as the wall disappears in shadow, a circle is cast on the ground before it—much like the moon itself. Some walls surrounding residences were built 10 or 20 feet high; shorter walls were built to enclose private courtyards, to support plants, or to divert water around a residence. A popular practice was to puncture walls in order to create a "leaking windows" effect. Circular "moon gate" passageways were often cut into walls but left doorless (Fig. 4-10). Other shapes commonly cut out of or carved into walls were petals, leaves, fans, and vases.

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[43] In a very popular interpretation of these walls, Maggie Keswick said that they are to the garden what unpainted areas of silk are to landscape painting–not merely a background, but an evocation of infinity. Thus, garden walls are considered enclosures that both divide space and symbolically extend it. Maggie Keswick, The Chinese Garden: History, Art & Architecture (London: Academy Editions, 1978) 163.

**Figure 4-9,** Hill Walls with Tiled Roof, *Yu Yuan*, Suzhou
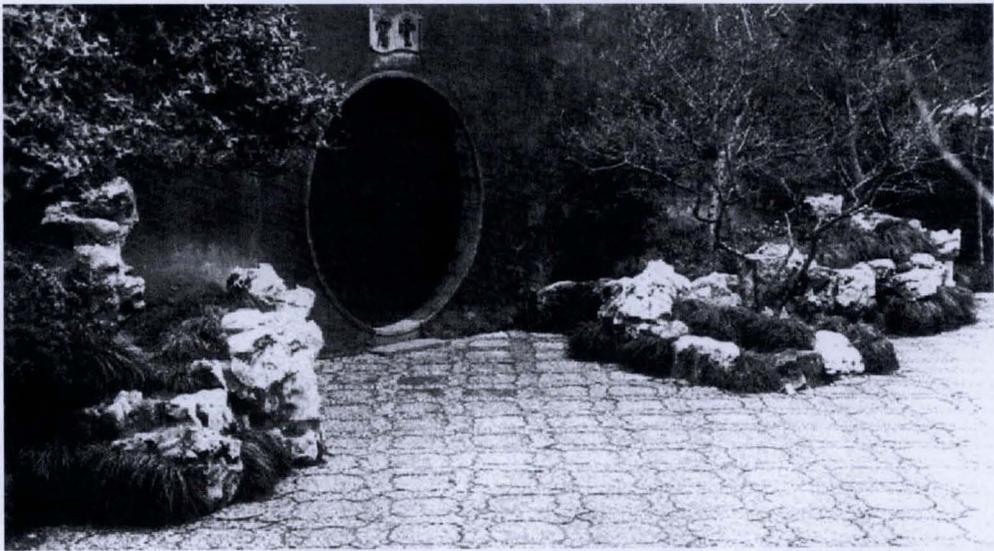


**Figure 4-10,** A Typical Moon Gate, *Wangshi Yuan*, Suzhou

## 4.3.4 Paths and Bridges

In Chinese gardens, paths and bridges serve two basic functions: first, as physical connections between different sections, thereby serving as a medium between positive (architectural) and negative (courtyard) spaces; second, as a metaphor for a journey to the holy mountains of the Taoist legend. As visitors walk through a garden, its paths and bridges lead them to a range of emotions and experiences that transform their perceptions of time and space—a microcosmic life journey.

Similar to an open gallery in function and decoration, paths and bridges accompany a garden viewer. More elaborate bridges have intricate patterns carved into their balustrades, sometimes constructed from marble, while paths are paved with stone, brick, or pebble mosaics arranged in distinct patterns with names such as "cracked ice." These repeated themes and their transformations help to unify the range of spaces and to harmonise the elements that surround a garden walker.

A complex bridge might be one whose potential is celebrated in white marble, with a half-moon curve that is completed by its reflection in water, and with relief sculptures of lotuses or lions (Fig. 4-11). In simpler gardens, plain slabs of stone might carry a visitor over a stream, or present a zigzag path to a pavilion standing in the middle of a lake or pond, perhaps accented by mosaics. Stones or bricks might be arranged in a simple herringbone pattern. In other cases, coloured pebbles, stone chips, and roof tiles turned on their edge were used to create delicate geometric designs or representations of birds and flowers.

What distinguishes these paths from those commonly found in Western gardens is the constant change from one pattern to another, with rhythmic alterations that announce functional changes. Even if visitors walk around a Chinese garden looking only at their feet, it will be easy for them to recognise

**Figure 4-11,** A Typical Half-Moon Bridge, Suzhou

scenic shifts. Pebble mosaics are often used to define different spaces and to emphasise changes in mood. One may be formal and geometric, followed by one that is gentle and feminine.

## 4.4 Summary

Westerners are not as familiar with Chinese gardens as they are with Japanese gardens, which explains (at least in part) why the philosophy and history of Chinese gardens has never been fully analysed in the context of contemporary art. In this chapter I have reviewed the philosophical development and physical structure of Chinese gardens in order to demonstrate their connection with the *jingjie* concept, which has deep roots in Chinese poetry and painting. Compared to these art forms, the importance of Chinese garden design has been largely overlooked, even though garden designers have achieved high levels of sophistication in terms of three-dimensional representations. I then demonstrated how the *jingjie* concept entails complex ideas found in Chinese poetry and landscape painting that are essentially ignored in contemporary Chinese art. In the next chapter I will use this background to establish a link between Chinese gardens and sacred places.

# Chapter 5

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## The Sacred Place and Chinese Gardens

In the preceding discussion, the embodiment of *jingjie* was demonstrated in Chinese garden design through spatial organisation and certain essential elements, including gateways connecting a garden with the outside world, pathways leading to symbolic garden centres, and demarcated enclosures. These essential characteristics were considered means of emphasising the spirit of a specific place. However, the anthropological literature and mythology offer a great deal of evidence that these techniques were not exclusive products of Chinese ingenuity, and that similar approaches to creating connections to a specific place can be found throughout the world—especially in religious and ritual sites that anthropologists call "sacred spaces" or "sacred places."

Long before modern anthropologists came up with definitions of sacred spaces and places, the Romans expressed the Western idea of spirit of place as *Genius Loci*. Although the idea of sacred sites is found in all cultures, their psychological effects in relation to their physical organisation have yet to be systematically explored (although a few recent attempts can be found in the anthropology and architecture literature).[1] Contemporary research on sacred places may eventually establish a connection between Chinese garden design and the universal patterns of sacred place in relation to the human obsession with place.

In this chapter, I will discuss the concept of sacred place in relation to Chinese garden design. I used the structure of sacred places—including their physical (e.g., paths, thresholds, and enclosures) and psychological patterns (e.g., spiritual journeys)—to describe an archetypal model that has been shared across

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[1] Scholars such as the mythologists Mircea Eliade (Sacred and the Profane, 1968) and Joseph Campbell (The Hero With A Thousand Faces, 1949) and the architectural historians Christian Norberg-Schulz (Architecture: Meaning and Place, 1986) and Tadahiko Higuchi (The Visual and Spatial Structure of Landscape, 1983) have analysed the significance of sacred place.

cultures for many centuries. The discussion will also address the kinesthetic experience of passing through an architectural setting, and the role that our bodies play in meaningful interactions with specific places. The concept of sacred place will also be proposed here as a distant influence to the development of site-specific Land Art in the 1960s.

## 5.1 The Spirit of Place and Site-Specificity

In the same way that the concept of *jingjie* has been described as a central idea to Chinese gardens, the experience of a sacred place has been suggested as universal by many researchers. The mythologists Mircea Eliade (1907-86)[2] and Joseph Campbell (1904-97)[3] made significant contributions to this area of research; their analyses of sacred sites and rituals have influenced academics in disciplines ranging from religious studies to art history, architectural history, anthropology, and geography. Some of those scholars have tried to describe place-centred sacred experiences in terms of site structure. The architectural historians Christian Norberg-Schulz (1926-2000) and Tadahiko Higuchi (1945-    ) analysed architectural sites from a spiritual perceptive in an attempt to inject architectural discourse with a strong dose of psychology.

While these efforts to consider the site-specificity of sacred places have provided us with a new understanding of them, most have been limited to known cultural phenomena and existing architectural sites. They may be inadequate for analyses of contemporary built environments, especially Land Art and other site-specific artworks. Almost all of these studies support the idea of a universal pattern shared by all sacred sites, meaning that the experience of a sacred place should be accessible to audiences from different historical periods and with different cultural backgrounds.

This suggestion leads to the central question to be addressed in this chapter: Is the Chinese garden a marker of a specific spiritual place or of sacred places in

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[2] Eliade's analysis of religion assumes the existence of "the sacred" as the object of worship, appearing as the source of power, significance, and value. He argues that humanity often apprehends "hierophanies"—physical manifestations or revelations of the sacred—but not just in the form of symbols, myths, and rituals.

[3] Campbell was the well-known and respected American mythologist and comparative religion scholar who wrote The Hero With A Thousand Faces (New York: Princeton University Press, 1949) (his examination of the archetype of the hero), The Masks of God (New York: Penguin Books, 1968) (an exploration of complex mythological heritages and their implications for modern humanity), and the multi-volume Historical Atlas of World Mythology (New York: Harper & Row, 1989). He died before he could finish the final project, but he did complete sections on the early stages of human culture.

general? The question also addresses the issue of the relationship between the sacredness of place and site-specificity. Answering this question requires a discussion of the origins of sacred places and what defines them.

### 5.1.1 Dwelling and *Genius Loci*

Sacred places have many origins, uses, and forms that generally conform to consistent, identifiable themes. Although many sacred places have natural features (for instance, caves and mountains), human modifications are very common. It is the human touch that demarcates a sacred place from the natural landscape. Accordingly, the important similarities exist between the creation of art and the marking of sacred places. From the perspective of archaeological studies of prehistoric cultures, it can be argued that it is difficult to distinguish between the making of art and religious acts. Therefore, this investigation begins with an analysis of sacred places according to their "built" aspects.

The architectural historian Christian Norberg-Schulz has made numerous attempts to identify the spirit of place from an architectural standpoint.[4] His articulation of this spirit can be traced to the Roman concept of the *Genius Loci*, which was said to be contained not only in religious architecture and sacred places, but also in non-religious architectonic sites. Although his approach is from an architectural perspective, I will suggest that his understanding of the sense of place provides a useful foundation for revealing meaning in a sacred place.

The Romans believed that every independent being has its *genius*, or guardian spirit, which gives life to people and places, accompanies them from birth to death, and determines their character or essence. The Roman term *Genius Loci* thus refers to the spirit of place. Such animist beliefs are found in

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[4] In addition to his book on the spirit of place (Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture, London: Studio Vista, 1980), Norberg-Schulz also addressed the topic in Existence, Space and Architecture (London: Studio Vista, 1971) and Architecture: Meaning and Place (Milan: Electra Spa, 1986).

many cultures; as mentioned in an earlier chapter, the Chinese have long used the concept of *fengshui* to determine the energy of a place and to give it an anthropopathic character according to its natural environment.[5]   According to Chinese folk religious beliefs, every village or territory has its own guardian spirit, called *Tudi Gong* (土地公, "local god of land [place]") (Fig. 5-1).   The practice of worshipping *Tudi Gong* is still part of daily life in most Chinese societies.[6] Such worship suggests that humans experience their environment as consisting of definite characteristics.   As in many other cultures, past and current, Chinese believe that survival, growth, and success depend on a good relationship with a geographic place in a physical and psychic sense.

From a phenomenological perspective, Norberg-Schulz's analysis of ancient and modern sites is actually an attempt to determine what those spaces mean, what makes a space a "place," and how its *Genius Loci* is realised.   Perceiving a space as a place means perceiving it as being animated and having been formed in a particular way.   In Norberg-Schulz's analysis of what constitutes an architectonic space, he speaks of things "taking place" because it is not possible to imagine any activity without place.   That is, all activities exist in vertical and horizontal dimensions that are equivalent and proportional to the dimensions of the earth, sky, and ourselves as we perceive such ratios.   He also asserts that all activities exhibit aspects of centralisation, direction, and rhythm—the concrete properties of both space and time.

The *genius* of a place is its ability to ground us psychologically and physically.   In other words, by means of a spatial or architectonic form, architecture provides us with a foothold in space and time.   According to Norberg-Schulz, the three spatial aspects of architecture—place, path, and domain—are interrelated and dependent upon each other.   The domain of a place

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[5] In Chinese tradition, a site with excellent *fengshui* is referred to as a "Dragon cave."   In other cases, a *fengshui* master will give animal names to sites that he feels have the characteristics of each animal—e.g., turtle cave.

[6] In Taiwan, a sacred *Tudi Gong* site is found in almost every village and town.   Some have elaborate Buddhist or Taoist temples built on them, others simply have a mark on an old tree or stone.   *Tudi Gong* worship is still popular today as a local folk religion in Taiwan.
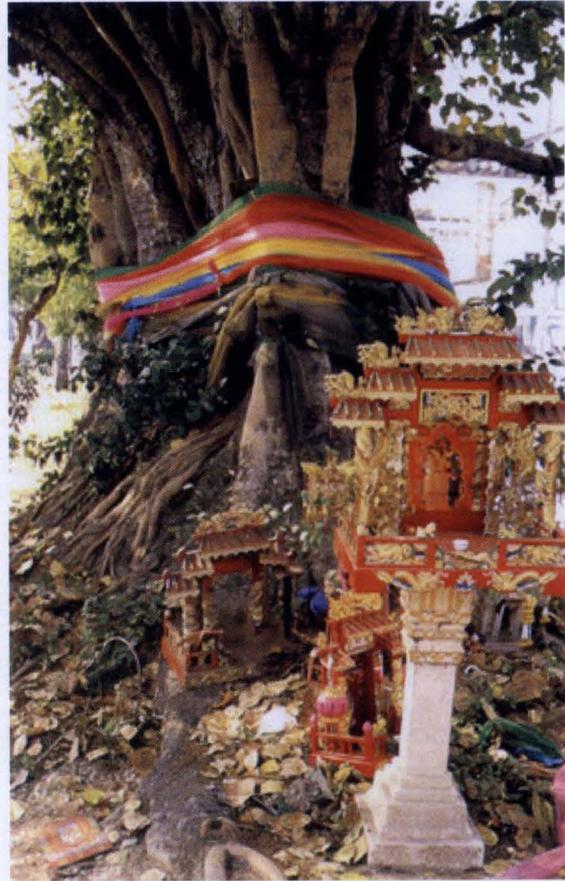
**Figure 5-1,** A Local *Tudi Gong*, Taipei

is its metaphorical meaning, or what we make of it; this is its *Genius Loci*. Norberg-Schulz is not simply concerned with architecture or space as it is conceived architectonically; he is also concerned with existential space—that is, where human consciousness lives.

## Dwelling

The concept of a dwelling is usually considered as being not only physically but also psychologically essential to humans. Throughout the history of the species, humans, as parts of social groups, have identified themselves with specific geographic locations. They go through a constant process of orientation and reorientation to gain a sense of belonging in whatever place they choose to live—a process that is at the symbolic centre of numerous rituals and religious ceremonies. As fundamental elements of human consciousness and society, religion, rituals, and mythology have long served as means of explaining the world and the place of humans within it. The associated belief systems provide answers to existential questions, and thus offer a degree of security in an otherwise insecure world. Despite differences in form and detail, belief systems are thought to be part of the universal experience of being human.[7] It seems to be a psychological necessity for all human societies to associate themselves with a specific place. To fulfil this desire, symbolic centres have been built to affirm the position of humans in the world; they serve as shelters and dwellings for the human mind.

Martin Heidegger has argued that dwellings and existential footholds are synonymous.[8] Man dwells in places where he can orient himself and identify himself with an environment; another way of stating this is that man dwells where he experiences the environment as being meaningful. Therefore, the notion of dwelling goes beyond the idea of shelter. The act of settling into a place is often

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[7] Maureen Korp, Sacred Art of the Earth: Ancient and Contemporary Earthworks (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1997) 53.

[8] Martin Heidegger's concept of dwelling is considered essential by contemporary architectural historians, especially Norberg-Schulz. Heidegger originally described the concept of dwelling in his essays "Building Dwelling Thinking" (1951), which were collected and translated into English by Albert Hofstadter, and published under the name Poetry, Language, Thought (New York: Harper & Row, 1971).

found as part of creation myths; the creation of sacred places provides the existential means for people to establish a centre and thus define their places in the world.

In other words, the identity of an individual or group may be contingent on a sense of belonging to a place, the creation of which is a fundamental human activity that has a strong psychological component. This component was particularly apparent in archaic societies, whose self-definitions and senses of well-being were often intimately connected to specific places. To be meaningful, a place needs to project an environmental identity that gives its inhabitants a sense of connection. This often manifests itself in the belief that such places are at the centre of the world, beyond which lies the undifferentiated unknown. A sense of community based on shared values is typically connected with a specific place, which explains why religion and mythology are often deeply rooted in definitions of meaningful places.

The idea of place is also imbued with meaning in an architectural context. A physical enclosure creates a context for an experience, and the meanings communicated by the elements that form the space help individuals to identify with it. According to Norberg-Schulz, meaningful architectural spaces have typically enabled humans to "gain an existential foothold" in the world, and therefore "can be defined as a concretisation of man's existential space."[9]

Architecture has traditionally helped in establishing a sense of meaningful place and in articulating people's beliefs. Humans constantly construct their environments as a means of establishing their "place" in the world, making a place, in one sense, a space with distinct character. Since ancient times, *Genius Loci* has been recognised in Western culture as the concrete reality that man has had to face in order to come to terms with his daily life. If architecture is meant to visualise *Genius Loci,* then the task of an architect is to create meaningful places in which humans can dwell.

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[9] Christian Norberg-Schulz, Existence, Space and Architecture (London: Studio Vista, 1971) 12.

Accordingly, I will argue that site-specific artists have similar tendencies toward creating meaningful places—that is, visualising *Genius Loci*. [10] Examples include Robert Morris's *Observatory* in Oostelijk Fevoland, the Netherlands (1971) (Fig. 5-2), Robert Irwin's *Nine Space/Nine Trees* (Washington, 1983) (Fig. 5-3) and James Turrell's *Skyspaces Series* (1975-present) (Fig. 5-4). These works move toward transforming ordinary space into meaningful space, in an architectonic sense. Although not all of them can be identified as architectural works, they were all "built" to emphasise the spirit of their specific locations.

According to these examples, the roles of landscape architects and contemporary site-specific artists have overlapped during the last few decades. The structure, organisation, and articulation of these places have served to reflect the artists' personal belief systems instead of their religions. I therefore argue that the aesthetically interesting has replaced traditional religious beliefs in contemporary structures. That is, architecture and site-specific artwork both serve as legible structures that express and communicate philosophies associated with human existence. Thus, a sacred place can be defined as an architectural setting where place and meaning are powerfully synthesised.

## 5.1.2 Sacred Place

The term *sacred place* often implies a place with spiritual power that is exclusively devoted to a deity, a belief system, or some ceremonial use. Sacred places are generally set aside as demarcated landscapes. Whether created by natural forces (e.g., rocks and caves) or completely artificial, there is almost always evidence of some human intervention at a sacred place. Thus, sacred places can be viewed as powerful visions that are realised and reified in architectonic space.

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[10] See Chapter 5, section 4.1.1.

**Figure 5-2,** Robert Morris, *Observatory*, Netherlands, 1971



**Figure 5-3,** Robert Irwin, *Nine Space/Nine Trees*, Washington, 1983
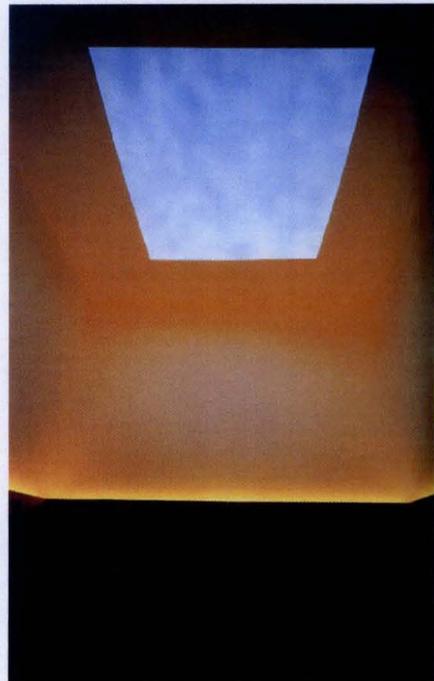


**Figure 5-4**, James Turrell, *Space that Sees*, 1993

Furthermore, sacred places are organised spaces, usually designed according to the dictates of a belief system or culture. As organised spaces, viewers and visitors respond to them autonomically. The result is usually the recognition of a sacred power that is specific to that place, a power which may or may not be recognised as being associated with a sacred being. People from different cultures—even those removed in time and geography—have been known to experience religious responses to sites that are considered sacred to other people; it is not necessary to be a Christian or a Catholic to experience the consecrated atmosphere of a church.

The terms *sacred space, sacred place, sacred site*, and *sacred geometry* have been applied to a wide range of historical examples, regardless of their function or original intent. For the purposes of this research, I will describe sacred places as "built myths"—that is, places that have been constructed to symbolise meaning and accommodate the rituals of specific belief systems. My assumption is that when we consider sacred architecture and contemporary site-specific artwork as built myths, they become linked to the psyche and its needs for spiritual orientation, wholeness, and transcendence—a reflection of Joseph Campbell's comment that myth is "the spontaneous eruption of the psyche."[11]

Sacred places, which stand apart from the profane world, communicate shared symbolic meanings and provide spaces in which to worship God or gods and to enact rituals. According to Eliade, sacred places serve as interruptions of the infinite and formless immensity that surround them. He described a sacred place as "an interruption of the sacred that results in detaching a territory from the surrounding cosmic milieu and making it qualitatively different."[12] Such breaks in "homogeneous space" establish fixed points, centred points, and places of orientation.

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[11] Joseph Campbell, The Hero With A Thousand Faces (New York: Princeton University Press, 1949) 78.

[12] Mireca Eliade, Sacred and the Profane (Fort Washington, PA: Harvest Book, 1968) 27.

These architectonic sites often symbolise spiritual paths and sacred journeys, terms that describe the processes of spiritual development. Most researchers who have explored spiritual paths (especially mythologists, including Joseph Campbell and Mircea Eliade) have done so in terms of spiritual practices, but rarely in terms of physical settings. However, sacred places can be delineated by both their psychological affects and physical settings. Such architectural elements as thresholds and paths can be discussed according to a correspondence between the architectonic aspects of sacred architecture and the belief system being served. Spiritual pilgrimages were described by Eliade and Campbell as "universal myths." By exhibiting multiple interpretations and varieties of world religions, sacred places share certain cross-cultural elements and patterns.

## 5.2 Archetypal Patterns in Sacred Places

The experience of sacred sites and the meanings they hold are often associated with their visual, spatial, and temporal compositions and structures. Such experiences can be manipulated through a variety of means and devices; sacred places have always utilised the sensual comprehension of architecture to communicate particular meanings. It appears that a range of perceptual reactions can result from rich spatial environments, as evidenced by the sequences of paths, thresholds, and enclosures found in sacred sites. All three are recurring themes in religion, mythology, and sacred architecture.

Architectural historians tend to analyse the key elements of path, threshold, and enclosure in secular terms.[13] Most have viewed their central task as analysing components and the formation of space, or (within the context of urban centres) as analysing movement and orientation. However, as Norberg-Schulz reminds us, scientific understanding alone cannot help humans gain an "existential foothold."[14] Therefore, it seems clear that paths, thresholds, and enclosures are not only fundamental ordering devices in built environments, they are also imbued with symbolic content as well.

As I stated earlier, religion and myths provide answers to fundamental questions of existence. By symbolising myths and facilitating the enactment of rituals, then paths, thresholds, and enclosures can serve the same purpose. I will use these three features to analyse relationships between religious beliefs and physical forms in sacred places, and argue that the archetypal patterns found in sacred places contain two aspects that were essential to the development of Land

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[13] It seems as though every architectural historian has his or her personal concern when analysing architectural elements. However, some commonalties arise in their books and articles, for example, their acknowledgement of path and place. Kevin Lynch, in his analysis of urban environments entitled The Image of the City (Boston: MIT Press, 1960) described path, edge, district, node, and landmark as principle components of urban landscapes and as important characteristics in the analysis of movement and orientation within a particular city.

[14] Norberg-Schulz also suggested that "A legible path sequence not only orients one physiologically, but psychologically and spiritually as well." Christian Norberg-Schulz, Genius Loci, 1979, 67.

Art and Chinese gardens: first, physical patterns of paths, thresholds and enclosures, and second, psychological patterns that symbolised a spiritual journey.

## 5.2.1 Paths

Journeys to sacred sites often follow well-established routes and paths that lead visitors through similar trials that must be passed in order to reach the threshold of the sacred destination. The transitions that accompany such a journey are often considered as central to the pilgrimage, since they address the pilgrim's personal beliefs.[15] However, the transitional process does not end at the threshold; it is not considered complete until the visitor has entered the sacred enclosure.

Beyond thresholds, paths that lead to sacred places can take on many forms—from an axial, linear progression to a labyrinthine maze—but they typically involve a series of spaces or events that become increasingly more sacred. Most path sequences symbolically, spatially, and temporally express the mythology and religion for which the paths were built. It is often through the part of the journey that takes place inside the sacred enclosure that the structure of the site reflects a visitor's pilgrimage in a microcosmic and symbolic sense. The path also entails the manipulation of scale, distance, and time so that the journey seems longer and more eventful than it actually is. During a spiritual journey, the pilgrim's awareness and engagement are enhanced by the demands of the path, the transition from the profane to the sacred, and the interrelationship between built construction and nature.

In Spiritual Path, Sacred Place,[16] Thomas Barrie divides several types of paths into two categories: linear and segmented. In the first category he puts

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[15] A pilgrim's motivation for visiting a sacred site is very different from that of a tourist. Thus, the pilgrim's journey is referred to as a pilgrimage.

[16] Thomas Barrie, Spiritual Path, Sacred Place: Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Sacred Architecture (Boston, MA: Shambhala Publications, 1996)79.

axial paths, bifurcated paths, radiating paths, grid path systems, and circumambulating paths. Linear paths are found in most Western sacred sites, especially temples, churches, and cathedrals. Examples that Barrie gives include Queen Hatshepsut's Mortuary Temple in Egypt, the Piazza of Saint Peter's Basilica in Rome, and Frank Lloyd Wright's Unity Temple in Illinois. Segmented paths also take on many forms, from "connected series" to labyrinths. Classical Greek sacred sites, Japanese Zen Buddhist temples, and Chinese gardens provide many examples of segmented paths. Barrie's list includes the Temple of Apollo at Delphi, the Acropolis in Athens, the *Daisen-in* and *Kyoto-in* of the *Daitoku-ji* Zen Buddhist Monastery in Kyoto, and private Chinese gardens in *Suzhou*.

In sacred sites, paths not only lead the way for spiritual journeys and reflect symbolic themes, they also function as essential architectural elements that divide and connect the different compositional elements of a sacred space. As discussed in Chapter 4, paths and bridges in Chinese gardens serve a similar function in connecting individual garden spaces. Segmented paths add intensity and drama to a pilgrim's journey. Labyrinthine paths are better at projecting a sense of misplacement and disorientation, with the variety of experiences brought together within the compressed volumes of different spaces.

### *Daisen-in* Temple

The *Daisen-in* Temple in Kyoto is known for its main temple building (the *hojo*) and its surrounding dry landscape gardens. As in Western governmental and religious buildings, the temple's paths were designed and built to express their importance to visiting dignitaries and pilgrims. The path to the *hojo* (Fig. 5-5) includes several sequences, thresholds, and spaces of such richness and complexity as to suggest a symbolic journey. The *hojo* (Fig. 5-6) stands as the final segment of the main path; the spiritual place stands as a separate entity. The placement of the surrounding dry landscape gardens (Fig. 5-7) makes the *hojo* appear as though it is symbolically floating in a sea of stone and sand. The layout of the temple and the surrounding grounds gives a sense of a series of concentric circles that point visitors toward increasingly sacred places.

**Figure 5-5**, Path to the *Hojo*, *Daisen-in* Temple, Kyoto



**Figure 5-6**, The *Hojo*, *Daisen-in* Temple, Kyoto



**Figure 5-7**, Dry Landscape Garden, *Daisen-in* Temple, Kyoto

In addition to serving as symbolic microcosms, the gardens alongside the paths serve as illusory meditative objects.   Everywhere on the grounds one finds examples of the traditional Chinese gardening technique called *jiejing* (借景, borrowing scene), which incorporates distant views into a garden's design. Strollers can gaze outward toward open vistas that contrast with the compressed paths.   The placement of the garden and architectural elements evoke certain psychological responses.   A horizon created by the garden space is reinforced by the orientation of the main building; the main effect is one of an enclosed world that appears unlimited (Fig. 5-8).   The vistas allow viewers to ground themselves in either the main building or the greater world beyond, inferring a unity between the earth and the cosmos.   This manipulation of architectural elements in *Daisen-in* is identical to the manipulation of space in a traditional Chinese garden, but on a different scale.

As described in an earlier chapter, Chinese gardens and landscape paintings were imported to Japan by Zen (Chan) monks.   Many of those paintings depicted hermit monks living in harmony with nature, far removed from society.   Japan has many examples of Zen temples that are literal recreations of Zen hermitages, with segmented paths that symbolise the pilgrimages of students visiting their Zen masters.

## 5.2.2 Thresholds

Reaching sacred places entails the following of paths and entry sequences, with the latter usually beginning with a threshold.   Clearly marked entry points are places where decisions are made regarding whether or not to start a journey. These points serve to separate sacred ground from its surrounding profane territory.

It is essential for a threshold to define an enclosure and to serve as its entrance, the only way through which a visitor can gain access to the sacred place. A threshold thus acts as a transitional zone that separates and joins the inside and
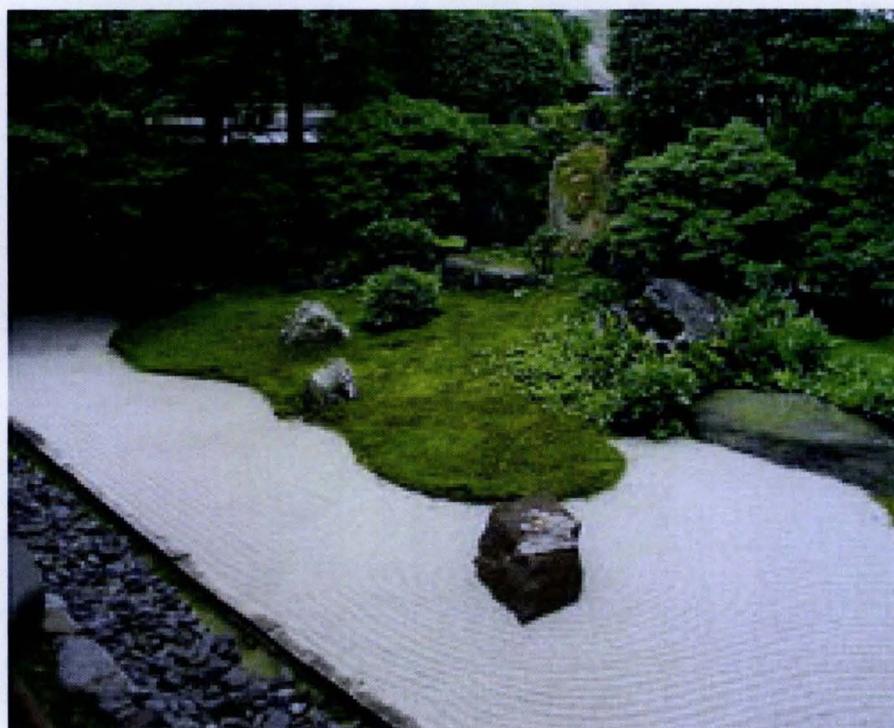
**Figure 5-8**, View of *Daisen-in* Temple, Kyoto

outside. These types of transitional spaces not only establish boundaries, but also symbolise passages from one mode of existence to another. It is for this reason that bridges and narrow gates are commonly used in myths concerning spiritual transformation. In the same manner, entry rituals have long been used to help spiritual sojourners shed the concerns of the outside world in acts of purification that prepare them for their journeys.

In his study of Japan's ancient sacred sites, architect Tadahiko Higuchi noted that the viewer's angle of vision upon entering a sacred site is determined by the type of enclosure being entered and/or the point of entry into the site.[17] Depending on the site, viewers are encouraged to look up or down—in some cases, at extreme angles. Some sites present themselves in their entirety at their entrances, while others limit the visitor's initial view. According to Higuchi, these variations are part of a site's constructed meaning.

In most Chinese gardens, the threshold (i.e., garden gate) (Fig. 5-9) is usually insignificant and obscured compared to the power of their settings inside high walls that, in urban centres, seem to be co-ordinated with the much higher walls of surrounding buildings. Just inside the gate, visitors are usually required to move past a door, rock barrier, or additional wall that serves as a transitional zone between the outside world and the main garden. In Chinese gardens, the threshold plays an important role in facilitating the transformation of the visitor's mindset from one state to another, from the secular world they are leaving behind to the created—perhaps sacred—world they are entering.

## 5.2.3 Enclosures

Sacred spaces are characterised by their separation from the secular world, a separation that is usually established by some form of enclosure. Enclosures mark the boundaries of sacred places, thus consecrating sacred ground and

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[17] Tadahiko Higuchi, The Visual and Spatial Structure of Landscape (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1983).

**Figure 5-9**, Garden Entrance, *Wangshi Yuan*, Suzhou

protecting it from the uninitiated; for Chinese gardens, a sense of enclosure is often established by high outside walls and inner walls of various sizes (Fig. 5-10). At other, more historical sites, these demarcations were typically accomplished architecturally according to the form and geometry of sacred places, or by surrounding them with enclosure walls. In built spaces, boundaries are formed by floors, walls, and ceilings, which are the equivalents of the natural boundaries of ground, horizon, and sky.

According to Maureen Korp, Historian Kees W. Bolle described the significance of place using such terms as "presence," a "topographical religiosity," and the "symbolism of being there."[18] Bolle argued that the quintessential importance of a sacred place comes from its form as an enclosed space. Bolle also argued that the importance of a sacred place is not the deity within, since there is no guarantee that the deity will be present at any set time. More important is the sense of physical enclosure that sets the place apart, and which keeps alive the possibility that the deity may return. In other words, enclosure makes a place significant because it is where the locus of presence resides; because the space is enclosed, it is centred upon something—an idea or deity—that makes it more intensely animated compared to spaces that are not enclosed. But Bolle also recognised that the "built" (modified) aspect of a sacred place may be no more than the pathway leading to it, and that at other sites an enclosure can take on a completely natural form—a range of mountains surrounding a valley, a river or lake, the ocean, even an astral configuration. In whatever form, the visitor must leave another place to enter the sacred space.

## 5.2.4 Psychological Patterns

From the labyrinth of King Minos to the Via Dolorosa in Jerusalem, heroic journeys and spiritual quests can be found in countless religious and mythological tales. Furthermore, the practice of pilgrimage is universal, with Christians,

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[18] Korp, 45.

**Figure 5-10**, Enclosure Created by High Walls

Hindus, Moslems, Buddhists, and Taoists all encouraged to participate in pilgrimages in search of insight and fulfilment. If we accept the argument that religions and myths share many common elements, and that architecture serves to create spatial and temporal symbols of myth and religion, then the argument that sacred places share psychological patterns must be considered.

The symbolic language of universal patterns is no longer limited to shared religious and cultural beliefs. It now includes the personal interpretation of architects who attempt to symbolise certain aspects of shared beliefs using what some consider as abstract symbolic and formal language. Certain characteristics of archetypal paths, thresholds, and enclosures are being retained, but there are many other examples of new models being transformed from the old.

A clear example of how spiritual journeys can be symbolised via architectural models is the spiral/labyrinth pattern. The labyrinth, created by King Minos, became a symbol of the hero Theseus's journey to kill the monster Minotaur, who lived inside a labyrinth (Fig. 5-11).[19] It has since lost its metaphoric association with heroic journeys, but it still represents the physical structure of a sacred site, and as such can be used to analyse the relationship between archetypal structures and their symbolic meanings.

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[19] Theseus was raised by his mother, the Princess of Troezen, and journeyed as a young man to Athens, killing monsters and villains along the way. In Athens, he asserted his right to Aegeus' throne. The Minotaur, a creature with a human body and the head of a bull, was held captive in a labyrinth built by King Minos of Crete.
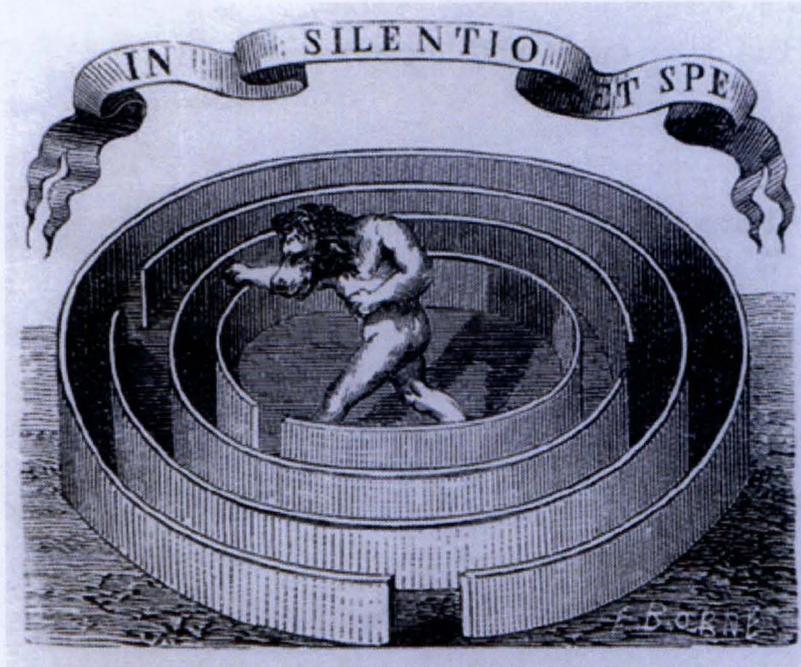
**Figure 5-11**, Minotaur and Labyrinth, 18th-Century Etching

In the same manner that sacred places have always represented sacred centres that could only be entered by paths and gateways symbolising initiation, built structures also symbolise rites of passage and spiritual transformation. Through the concretisation of spiritual myths or heroes' journeys, built structures came to symbolise and accommodate the enactment of pilgrimages. Thus, built sacred places became settings for ritual observances—symbolic narratives facilitated by the architectural setting of path and place. It is a pattern that sets the stage for transcendent experiences. Through ritual, one is able to approach the divine; as Joseph Campbell pointed out, "by participating in a ritual, you are participating in a myth."[20]

There is a corollary between the myth of the hero's journey and the path and place of sacred architecture (Fig. 5-12). Campbell observed that the hero's journey appears as either a physical trial or spiritual quest, with the latter consisting of a process in which the familiar is abandoned and the unknown is entered, willingly or otherwise. The myth of the spiritual quest is characterised by the dual process of retreat from and return to the world. The hero follows a sequence of separation (suggesting both physical and psychological distance), initiation, and return; during the pilgrimage, the hero experiences many rites of passage that result in his or her return as a spiritually transformed individual. In most myths, the journey is divided into four segments: the finding of the path, trials along the path, the attainment of a spiritual place, and the return.

This basic story appears in many forms, across cultures and through history, influencing such scholars as Eliade and Campbell to make the case for what Campbell described as the "universal myth." A premise mentioned by both is that world religion, through exhibiting multiple interpretations, share certain fundamentals. Pilgrimages (analogous to heroic spiritual journeys) are found in all the word's major religions; their characteristics are strikingly consistent, whether it involves Christians visiting Bethlehem or Moslems making their required *hajj* to Mecca. These pilgrimages share strong similarities with the

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[20] Campbell, 45.

**Figure 5-12**,
A 15th-Century Florentine Painting,
Minotaur and Labyrinth in a Hero's Journey

hero's journey: spiritual preparation for the journey, separation from everyday life, trials and rituals along the way, arrival at the sacred place, and the return in a changed state. The architecture of sacred places accommodates the enactment of this shared ritual.

## 5.3 A Distant Connection to Land Art

Starting in the late 1960s, North American artists began to shift from the Minimalist perspective of "less is more" to "less is more, but it's not enough."[21] Dramatically changing direction from the purely aesthetic approach of Minimalism, Land Art artists embraced a wide range of natural, ecological, spiritual, and religious agendas. The movement started out with a small group of conceptualists who were committed to confronting modernist ideology and the commodification of the "white cube"; over the last three decades their initial efforts have grown to include a diverse collection of forms, approaches, and theoretical positions. Most researchers today focus their attention on aspects of form and format in their examinations of Land Art; many consider it an extension of Minimalist sculpture, and only a few have made the effort to address its psychological dimensions. [22]

Since Land Art is considered difficult to categorise in terms of a conventional genealogy, a handful of art historians and critics have called these site-specific artworks "primitive" constructions,[23] perhaps reflecting their belief that the materials used by contemporary environmental artists are too rough and unrefined. On another level, however, such remarks are purposefully intended to make a connection between Land Art and tribal arts, especially from Native American cultures.

Because of this association, references to "primitivism" are tied to concepts of what anthropologists call "sacred space" or "sacred place" (in the

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[21] "Less is more, but it's not enough" was a public billboard and postcard work done by Robert Hout in 1977. The initial phrase was borrowed from Miles van der Rohe. Franz Schulze, <u>Miles van der Rohe: A Critical Biography</u> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995) 45.

[22] Traditional art historians are convinced that certain chronological connections exist between Land Art and its predecessors, such as landscape architecture, landscape gardens, monuments, and sacred sites. However, such post-modern art critics as Rosalind Krauss and Gilles. A. Tiberghien claim that the Land Art of the late 1960s was an extension of modern sculpture (beginning with Minimalist sculpture), and therefore lacks direct connections with ancient environments that were built for religious purposes.

[23] Korp, 21.

anthropological literature, these terms are used interchangeably). As shown in an earlier section, sacred places are ritually demarcated areas where extraordinary events associated with supernatural forces are said to occur. They are sites that pulsate with power, and are therefore recognised as places where humans can connect with the supernatural. As The Dictionary of Anthropology notes, the word "sacred," as an adjective, "refers to a quality of difference, of being separate from, and more important than, the profane world."[24]

In Art in the Land, Alan Sonfist analyses a group of artists "whose work makes a statement about man's relation to nature" by using natural materials and/or natural settings.[25] Art critic Lucy Lippard addressed similar concerns from a social/cultural feminist point of view in her book Overlap. She discussed connections between new art (including Land Art) in terms of her fascination with certain ancient sites and "the social messages from past to present about the meaning and function of art, exposed by the tensions between two such distant and disparate times."[26] Lippard posited that :

> While American artists in the '40s and '50s arrived at mythological themes primarily via classical sources, today's vanguard tends to be less interested in classical periods and has been primarily attracted by the archaic and prehistoric. These artists are rebelling against reductive purism and an art-for-art's-sake emphasis on form or image alone with a gradual upsurge of mythical and ritual content related to nature and to the origins of social life.[27]

Although contemporary studies of geography, mythology, and architecture have attempted to define and analyse spiritual practices in both traditional and modern places, little analytical attention has been given to understanding the

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[24] Thomas Barfield, ed., The Dictionary of Anthropology (Oxford, UK: Blackwell Publishers Ltd, 1997) 416.

[25] Alan Sonfist, ed., Art in the Land: A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art (New York: Dutton, 1983).

[26] Lucy R. Lippard, Overlap: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory (New York: New Press, 1983.) 1.

[27] Lippard, 5.

culture of place in terms of art history. In other words, most discussions in this area have paid little attention to the physical features of sacred places, which would be more useful in relation to contemporary studies of Land Art. Thomas Barrie, in his Spiritual Path, Sacred Place—Myth, Ritual, and Meaning in Architecture, used his analysis of ancient and contemporary sacred architecture to argue that it often symbolises spiritual paths and their goals. Barrie's book is a rich reference for the study of contemporary sacred space or site-specificity in Land Art because of his identification of archetypal patterns. A more direct attempt to understand the connection between sacred places and Land Art was made by Maureen Korp in her 1997 book, Sacred Art of the Earth—Ancient and Contemporary Earthworks.[28] Motivated by the North American naturalist tradition, Korp erased the boundary between the artistic and the religious that exists in the midst of creative moments. Despite its lack of non-Western cultural influences in its discussion of Land Art, Korp's book demonstrates the clear path from sacred places to the contemporary work of such artists as Robert Smithson, Walter De Maria, and James Turrell.[29] Her spiritual approach is an important alternative to standard analyses of site-specificity in Land Art.

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[28] Korp, 25.

[29] Maureen Korp covers a wide range of artists and artworks in her book. Most of the pieces she describes are considered essential to the development of Land Art—e.g., Nancy Holt's Sun Tunnels, Michael Heizer's Complex One/City, Walter De Maria's Lighting Field, Robert Smithson's Spiral Jetty, Charles Ross's Star Axis, and James Turrell's Roden Crater.

## 5.4 Summary

In this chapter, I looked at connections between Chinese gardens and the concept of sacred place that is shared by many world cultures. Beginning with the *Genius Loci*, I attempted to establish a connection between the spirit of place and site-specificity, using the insights of architectural historians and mythologists. The idea of sacred place was discussed and identified with archetypal patterns that I acknowledge are essential to connecting East with West and tradition with the contemporary. Furthermore, I used the physical patterns associated with paths, thresholds, and enclosures, plus psychological patterns associated with the universal myth of the hero's journey, to establish links among sacred places in different cultures, as well as between the spirit of place and Land Art.

# Chapter 6

## The *Picturesque* and the Chinese Influences on European Garden Design

In addition to the development of sacred built environments, place and land considerations have also exerted an influence on Western landscape art forms, including painting, gardening, and architecture. Especially since the Renaissance, the idea of place and land as aesthetic assets has been emphasised in landscape gardening and painting.[1] However, prior to the 18th century, attitudes toward nature were expressed in different ways by artists and garden designers, in much the same way that landscape architecture and landscape painting went in separate directions during the last half of the 19th century. In 18th-century England, the *picturesque* vogue[2] emerged from the combination of land, landscape, gardening, and art as central aesthetic concerns. The divide between landscape gardening and painting was dissolved; the landscaped garden became "a green laboratory for aesthetic experiments."[3]

In 18th-century England, the *picturesque* concept was treated as an aesthetic category in the same manner as the *sublime* and the *beautiful.* It was also treated as the theoretical foundation for English landscape gardens, which were considered a form of fine art and precursors to 19th-century landscape architecture. Historically speaking, the *picturesque* and English landscape gardens were milestones in a form of landscape art that quickly spread to other European countries. Historian John Dixon Hunt argued that "since then, there has really been no comparably fundamental change in social, political, aesthetic, and

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[1] Malcolm Andrews, Landscape and Western Art (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999) 67.

[2] When italicised, the term *picturesque* refers to the 18th-century movement in England.

[3] Andrews, 67.

psychological attitudes: we still exist in a world that was determined by what happened around 1800."[4]

The popularity of the *picturesque* declined at the beginning of the 19th century, yet it continued to inspire many artists, including J. M. W. Turner (1775-1851), John Ruskin (1819-1900), and American landscape architect Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903).[5] In this chapter, I will suggest that the *picturesque's* depiction of the relationship between man and nature continues to influence North American Landscape Architecture in the 19th century and Land Art in the 20th century. The *picturesque* concept transformed many landscape artists' aesthetic focuses from two-dimensional visual images to three-dimensional bodily experiences. Eventually, this transformation helped to establish a new sense of site-specificity and became an expression of a new relationship between man and nature in the last half of the 20th century.

Apparently, the significance of the *picturesque* not only fills a position between the sacred place and Land Art in Western art history, but also exists in parallel to the Chinese concept of *jingjie* in terms of attitudes toward nature. Thus, in this chapter I will describe a) the parallel relationship between Chinese and English gardens, with a special focus on cross-cultural influences in the development of the *picturesque*; and b) the sense of theatricality found in *picturesque* gardens in relation to landscape art forms.

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[4] John Dixon Hunt, Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture (Boston: MIT Press, 1994) 285.

[5] Hunt, 216.

## 6.1 The *Picturesque* and the Imitation of Natural Landscape

When encountering nature, humans tame, utilise, and process it for human consumption. They use it to establish dwellings, to gather or grow food, to satisfy spiritual needs, or for leisure and aesthetics. The history of human consumption of nature can be described cross-culturally, especially in terms of landscape art forms that have developed in different parts of the world.[6]

The Roman philosopher Cicero called cultivated nature—that is, landscapes containing such human cultural products as bridges, roads and harbours—*alteream naturam*, or "second nature."[7] In the 16th century, gardens were considered a means of going beyond the cultural landscape, which influenced Ciceronian humanists to invent a new term for them—"third nature." Gardens were described as small worlds where the pursuit of pleasure outweighed utilitarian needs, and where human intelligence and technological skills were used to fabricate environments where nature and art collaborated. By the end of the 18th century, gardens had become another example of how humans have the power to accommodate potentially unprepossessing scenery. From the vantage point of a garden, the physical world could be seen as a more pleasant place to be occupied and visited more safely, as if it were a painting.

Unlike the Chinese *jingjie* concept, which was reshaped through contributions from countless generations, the Western idea of the *picturesque* is much younger, generated within the specific time frame of 18th-century England by a comparatively small collection of writers, poets, painters and garden designers. But even though *jingjie* and the *picturesque* arose from different cultural contexts and philosophical foundations, they shared similar attitudes toward land and nature, and revealed strong connections between poetry, painting, and garden design. There is also considerable evidence that the development of

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[6] For example (as discussed in Chapter 3), the development of Chinese gardens went through several different stages—i.e., from a focus on pleasure, to religion, to aesthetics.

[7] Hunt, 3.

the *picturesque* was enriched by the introduction of Chinese gardening techniques and ideas developed in the 18th century.[8]

Much has been written about *picturesque* taste, both at the height of the movement's popularity[9] and by later commentators. John Dixon Hunt and Malcolm Andrews are two of many analysts who have described the influence of the *picturesque* on other aspects of Western culture.[10] Their efforts have made it possible to establish a chronology of the development of the *picturesque*, but without detailed comparisons with parallel developments in non-Western cultures. I will address these parallel developments in the following sections.

## 6.1.1 The Development of the *Picturesque*

As visualised today, a typical English landscape consists of undulating grasslands surrounding an irregularly shaped pond, lake, river, or stream crossed by a gently arching bridge, with cattle or deer scattered about and a few buildings in the distance (Fig. 6-1). A *picturesque* landscape, examples of which can still be found in many Western countries, is an idealised natural setting built from an artistic perspective—a painter's point of view. During the 18th century, the formal, geometric patterns of Tudor and Stuart England were transformed into an art form known as "the English landscape garden," or "*le jardin anglais.*"[11]

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[8] See section 6.1.2 for a discussion of the Chinese influence on the development of the *picturesque*.

[9] The two best-known writers on the *picturesque* during the 18th century were William Gilpin (famous for his guidebooks, which contained descriptions of various parts of Great Britain), and the more theoretical Uvedale Price.

[10] Contemporary scholars who have discussed the *picturesque* movement from the larger perspective of Western arts and culture include Christopher Hussey (The Picturesque: Studies in a Point of View, London: n. p., 1927); Malcolm Andrews (Landscape and Western Art, New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); and John Dixon Hunt (Gardens and the Picturesque: Studies in the History of Landscape Architecture, Boston: MIT Press, 1994).

[11] John Dixon Hunt and Peter Willis, eds., The Genius of Place: The English Landscape Garden 1620-1820 (Boston: MIT Press, 1988) 1.

**Figure 6-1**, A View in Stourhead

The transformation can be traced back at least three centuries. Religious and political revolutions in 15th-century England resulted in a transfer of power from the Church and the old aristocracy to a new generation of landlords. Property sizes shrunk, but the number of farms and sizes of grazing lands grew. The wool industry flourished and the country's agricultural economy developed at a rapid pace, which also altered the countryside. Tax and interest rate reductions and increases in grain prices created a new class of wealthy landlord-aristocrats who were interested in building large mansions with well-manicured gardens.

Louis XIV (1638-1715) used the gardens of Versailles to create a sense of absolute monarchy, including power over nature itself. However, the English aristocracy (which had already weathered a revolution that produced constitutional and parliamentary politics) found the French-style garden not only unsuitable in spirit, but also extremely expensive to maintain.

Thus, from the beginning of the 18th century, British landscape gardening focused on pastures filled with clumps of rustling trees—an image previously unseen in Europe, but encouraged by fashionable people of letters concerned with European trends. As this ideal spread to the continent, the monarchs and aristocrats of other states began to establish natural gardens as adjuncts to their more orthodox formal grounds.

A dramatic shift in attitude toward nature grew from the Industrial Revolution and the introduction of British Empiricism[12] in the 18th century. Instead of considering nature as untamed wilderness, the new empiricism encouraged the viewing of nature as a series of orderly patterns, a reflection of the idea that the universe, both physical and social, was a vast machine whose principles could be grasped by human intellect without reliance on the divine or

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[12] According to empiricism, all knowledge comes from experience. Eighteenth-century British empiricists staunchly rejected the notion of innate ideas in favour of the position that knowledge is based on both sensory experience and such internal mental experiences as emotions and self-reflection. The three philosophers of that period most closely associated with British empiricism are John Locke (1632-1704), George Berkeley (1685-1753), and David Hume (1711-76).

superstitious explanations. Such philosophers as John Locke (1632-1704),[13] David Hume (1711-76), and George Berkeley (1685-1753) encouraged the study of nature through experience instead of through booked-based reasoning.

With the Industrial Revolution came the attitude that all land was potentially exploitable, an idea that accelerated the growing sense of alienation from nature. Gardens came to represent the idea that nature itself could be manipulated; the British showed their confidence in this idea through their recreations of natural landscapes—again, a dramatic change from the traditional norm of geometric gardens.[14] With growing economic and political confidence, people began to seek the variety that was expressed in the new version of English gardens. The ecological philosopher Paul Shepard (1925-1996) described the 18th-century English garden as a rebellion against upper-class taste for opulent formalism that was the antithesis of democratic ideals.[15]

## An Artist's Vision

*Landscape*, according to a dictionary definition, is "an extensive area of land regarded as being visually distinct."[16] When the term was first introduced (or, perhaps, reintroduced) to 18th-century England, it carried a strong connotation of a picture created through an artist's interpretation or vision of nature.[17] The beauty of a landscape was dependent upon an artist's choice of composition, colour, and natural elements. The 18th-century British concept of landscape was dominated by the visions of painters, especially 17th-century post-Renaissance landscape painters who are now considered primary sources of the *picturesque*

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[13] Locke's core beliefs are found in his Essay Concerning Human Understanding (1690; New York: Dover, 1959), in which he established the principle of the human mind as a *tabula rasa*.

[14] This attitude is also reflected in the shift from the sublime to the picturesque that occurred in landscape painting.

[15] Paul Shepard, Man in the Landscape (New York: Doubleday, 1972) 80.

[16] Diana Treffry, ed., Collins English Dictionary (Glasgow: Harper-Collins, 1998) 870.

[17] John Brinckerhoff Jackson, "The Word Itself," Discovering the Vernacular Landscape, ed. John Brinckerhoff Jackson (London: Yale University Press, 1984) 3.

concept. The paintings of Claude Lorrain (1600-1682) (Fig. 6-2), Nicolas Poussin (1594-1665) (Fig. 6-3), Gaspard Dughet (1615-75) (Fig. 6-4), and Salvator Rosa (1615-73) (Fig. 6-5) were utopian ideals that were copied and revered by 17th- and 18th-century British artists and literati.[18] Their landscape paintings were considered as representative of the great classical Roman and Greek legends. These landscapes apparently represent the artists' collective desire to capture the imagination of unreachable sacred places, similar to the way in which Chinese landscape painters used the mythical holy mountains of Taoist and Buddhist legends (Fig. 6-6). This classical post-Renaissance obsession with landscape painting in England led to the emergence of the *picturesque* in the early part of the 18th century.

Historically, the term *picturesque* first came into use in England during the latter part of the preceding century. It was originally used to refer to materials that were suitable for inclusion in a painting, or, by extension, actual materials that could be conceived or viewed as if already part of a picture. Etymologically, the word has roots in other European languages—for instance, the French *"pittoresque"* and the Italian *"pictoresco."* The term came into vogue in the early 18th century, but at first had no particular association to landscape, instead meaning scenery or human activity considered proper for a painting. Today, the word connotes charm, quaintness, and colour—striking in an undramatic way, but with no clear descriptive content or precise imagery. In the 18th century the word and concept were considered much more substantive, carrying with it generally accepted pictorial connotations.[19]

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[18] During the late 18th century, British landscape painters began to produce works at a much higher level of quality, primarily due to the influences of 17th-century French and Italian landscape painters.

[19] Harold Osborne, The Oxford Companion to Art (Bath, UK: Bath Press, 1999) 867.

**Figure 6-2**, Claude Lorrain, *Italian Coastal Landscape*, 1642



**Figure 6-3**, Nicolas Poussin, *Ideal Landscape*, 1645-50

**Figure 6-4**, Gaspard Dughet, *Landscape with St Augustine and the Mystery*, 1651-53



**Figure 6-5**, Salvator Rosa, *River Landscape with Apollo and the Cumean Sibyl*, 1655
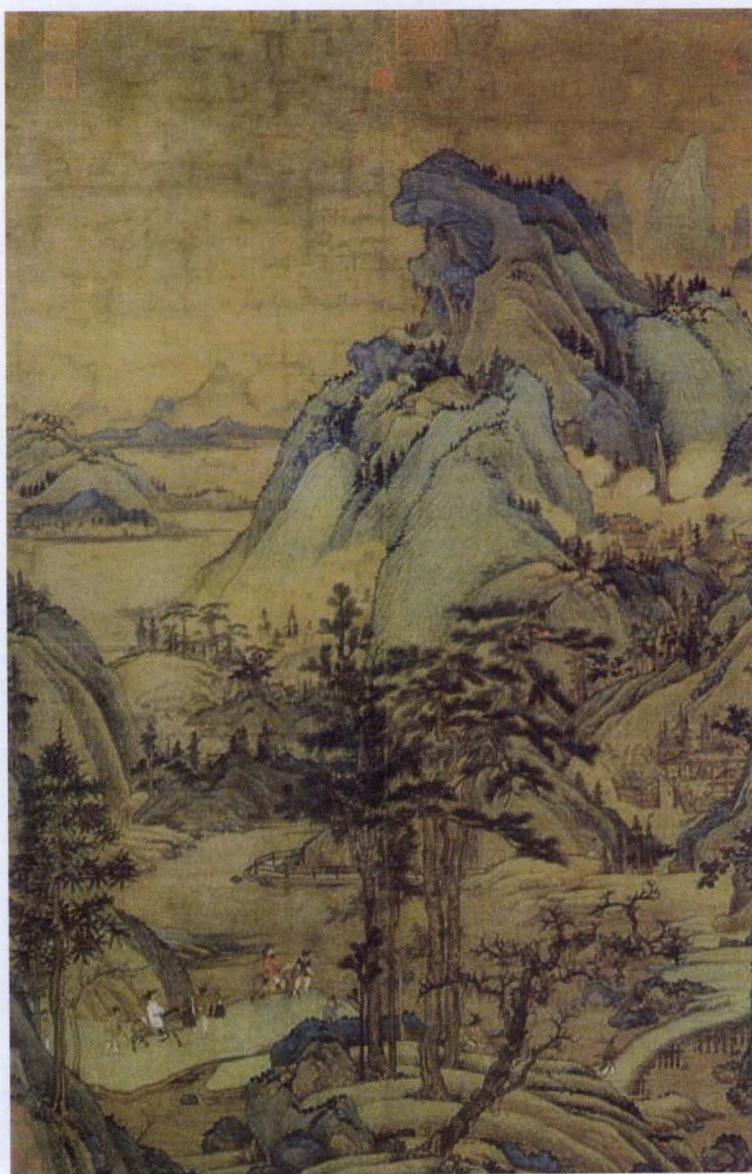
**Figure 6-6**, Quan Tong, *Journey to Quan Mountain*, 10th Century

Among the earliest theorists of English gardens were John Addison (1672-1719), Alexander Pope (1688-1744), and the third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713),[20] all of whom directly or indirectly invoked painting principles when describing models of garden design. For example, Pope claimed that "All gardening is landscape painting, just like a landscape hung up," and "You may distance things by darkening them and by narrowing the plantation more and more toward the end, in the same manner as they do in painting."[21]

For these early theorists, paintings were the best models for garden organisation because they gave the relatively new art form a sense of established and distinguished guidance. In addition, none of the three viewed gardens as anything but artificial creations, and therefore worthy of the painting analogy. They felt that paintings could teach garden designers a great deal about formal composition and the deployment of themes and meaning. Many garden designers of that period—for example, William Kent—were trained as painters, and so it was considered a natural leap for them to view their gardens as three-dimensional landscape paintings.

## *Picturesque* Traveller's Experiences

The 18th-century connotation of *picturesque* included a sense of travel. Encouraged by empiricist philosophers, travellers during this period searched for the kind of scenery that we now associate with paintings, postcards, and advertisements. When they came upon a picturesque landscape, some tourists immediately made a sketch or painting of it to confirm its pictorial value.

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[20] British writer, philosopher, and politician Anthony Ashley Cooper, also known as the Third Earl of Shaftesbury (1671-1713), was strongly influenced by his teacher, John Locke. A prominent Whig, his views were also influenced by 17th-century Cambridge Platonists, who believed in the existence of a natural moral sense in humans. Their notion of natural benevolence conflicted with the traditional Christian notion of mankind's fall from grace and with Hobbes's description of natural life as "nasty, brutish, and short." Cooper's most important philosophical work was his Characteristics of Men, Manners, Opinions, and Times, published in 1711.

[21] Quotation reported by Joseph Spence and taken from James M. Osborn, ed., Observation, Anecdotes and Characters of Books and Man (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966) 252.

One of the chief motivations of *picturesque* travellers was the recognition of the resemblance between art and nature. The idea of travel in search of natural beauty can be traced to Joseph Addison's The Pleasures of the Imagination, published in 1712. [22] Addison categorised the primary sources of the imagination's pleasures as Greatness, Uncommonness, and Beauty. He focused his own attention on what he called the secondary pleasures of the imagination, writing "We find the works of nature still more pleasant the more they resemble those of art."[23] These secondary pleasures were important to *picturesque* travellers; during the last half of the 18th century, they may be considered the primary pleasures of *picturesque* tourism.

The height of *picturesque* tourism occurred in the mid-18th century, following the publication of William Gilpin's descriptions of his travels around Britain.[24] However, Gilpin himself did not tie the term "picturesque" exclusively to landscape aesthetics; in Joshua Reynolds,[25] he wrote:

> With regard to the term picturesque, I have always myself used it merely to denote such objects as proper subjects for paintings; so according to my definition, one of the cartoons [of Raphael] and a flower piece are equally picturesque.

[22] Joseph Addison. "The Pleasures of the Imagination," in The Spectator, No. 416, July 2, 1712. Reprinted in Eighteenth-Century Critical Essays, ed. Scott Elledge (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1961) Volume I.

[23] Originally published in The Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu (1813), III, 235-236, and republished in Elizabeth Montagu, Letters of Mrs. Elizabeth Montagu: With Some of the Letters of Her Correspondents (Women of Letters) (New York, AMS Press, 1934).

[24] William Gilpin (1724-1804) was raised in the traditional manner of a member of the 18th-century British upper class. After earning two degrees from Oxford, he moved to Surrey to become a schoolmaster. During his summer holidays, Gilpin took walking tours of the English countryside, recording his trips with sketches and a running text. At the urging of his friends, he published an account of his tour to the Wye River and South Wales in 1782. He described the countryside in an exciting new way that captivated his readers. Gilpin published illustrated accounts of six additional tours. His aesthetic attitude toward landscapes, which he called "picturesque," helped shape a movement that defined 18th century British tastes.

[25] By Sir John Reynolds (1723-92), British painter. After a period in Rome (1749-52), Reynolds returned to England, where he established himself as one of the country's leading portrait painters. When the Royal Academy was established in 1768, Reynolds was elected as its first president.

Addison, John Locke, and other empiricists argued in support of a mind that allows for individual, personal vision. When we view a *picturesque* scene, each of us (artists and non-artists alike) have individual imaginations that are derived from unique visions. This congruence, which creates transactions between mind and nature, was central to the Romantic imagination, and was made manifest in the 18th-century British landscape gardening movement. It appears that during the first half of that century, the meaning of landscape was not only transformed from a representation of a scenic view to the view itself,[26] but also from the view itself to the interaction between nature and subjective consciousness. With the encouragement of empiricists and the *picturesque* concept, Europeans were enabled to subjectively express their relationship with nature. As implied by the Renaissance humanists' invention of a "third nature," gardens went one step beyond the cultural landscape of the "second nature" when representing the extent of human control over the natural environment. Gardens arguably offered a more refined, acute, and intricate expression of human experience.

## 6.1.2 The Maturity of the *Picturesque*

Three themes dominated the British *picturesque* movement in the second half of the 18th century: the rise to prominence of "Capability" Brown (1716-83), the Chinese influence in garden design, and the controversy over *picturesque* tastes and their application to garden design. These three themes are closely related in terms of attitudes expressed toward nature. Here I will suggest that *picturesque* ideology ran parallel to the Chinese concept of *jingjie*, and that the development of *picturesque* gardens was strongly influenced by Chinese garden principles.

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[26] Jackson, 3-5.

## Capability Brown

The successor of William Kent, Lancelot "Capability" Brown is considered the most radical of the *picturesque* landscape designers of this period. He emphasised such basic materials as water, trees, and the contours of the land (Fig. 6-7). Unlike Kent, Brown ignored status, mottoes, and inscriptions—and, to some extent, buildings. He stretched lawns to the walls of houses, thus eliminating terraces and other aspects of "proper" gardens. He softened the transition from garden to parkland to the point where it was hard to tell where one stopped and the other began.

Brown's most famous designs were the landscaped gardens of the Elysian Fields and Grecian Valley at Stowe, where he was head gardener in the 1740s. These landscapes were carefully managed to look natural, with groupings of trees distributed with apparent randomness and horizons incorporated into vistas that controlled the movement of the viewer's eye. The ideal of the natural landscape garden completely supplanted the formal French style during the last half of the 18th century. Brown pioneered this changeover almost single-handedly.

Returning to a site-specific focus, Brown rediscovered landscape forms, which explains why many great houses in England were set inside landscapes instead of being surrounded by traditional walled gardens. This radical return to the land is considered a major contribution of the *picturesque* movement to contemporary landscape architecture. Consequently, Brown's work is not only considered a matter of "third nature" gardening in the old sense of horticultural imposition, but also a careful management of spontaneous developments that are similar to later landscape conservation efforts.

**Figure 6-7**, Capability Brown's Design in Stowe

Toward the end of the 18th century, Brown's approach was criticised by *picturesque* theorists (including William Chamber, Richard Payne Knight, and Uvedale Price) who championed greater freedom in gardening, greater recognition of the free organic growth of natural forms, and acknowledgement of the way that time and accidents shape a landscape. They considered Brown's designs dull and imitative of busy paintings and engravings.[27] Chamber made the most vigorous attacks on Brown's approach, calling the formal garden "a travesty of nature."[28] This seems an odd criticism, seeing that Brown went out of his way to blur the distinction between garden and the primeval landscape. Instead, Chamber proposed adding Chinese elements as a means of enriching the *picturesque* garden.

## Influences of Chinese Gardens

It is very important to consider the Chinese influence on British (and European) gardening during the 18th century.[29] Chinese influences were noted before this time, but mostly in ornamental detail instead of garden essentials. The homes of the British aristocracy and royalty of that period were already filled with Chinese tea, porcelain, silks, and wallpaper (Fig. 6-8). It had become fashionable for country ladies to make their own lacquerware, copying scenes from their porcelain tea sets and cabinet wallpaper patterns.

The influence of Chinese gardens on European gardening styles reflected the *chinoiserie* vogue in 17th- and 18th-century Europe. *Chinoiserie* is a style that

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[27] Hunt, Genius, 32.

[28] William Chamber, A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening (London: n.p., 1772) 43.

[29] When discussing the meaning of *picturesque*, it is important to note similarities between Western efforts and elements of Chinese landscape gardening and painting. The concept is referred to in the Chinese phrase *fengjing ruhua, huaru fengjing* (風景如畫 畫如風景, "a scenery looks as if it is a painting, and a painting looks as if it is scenery"). The phrase is not only used to describe an exceptional achievement by a Chinese landscape painter (as the term *picturesque* was originally used in the West), it also stands as a basic principle of Chinese gardening.

**Figure 6-8**, Chinese Garden Design on a Saucer

used elaborate decoration and intricate patterns with fanciful and extravagant manifestations. Its roots go back to the Middle Ages, when intimations of Eastern art reached Europe in the form of porcelains brought back by returning travellers. In the middle of the 18th century, the enthusiasm for Chinese objects affected practically every decorative art applied to interiors, furniture, tapestries, and *bibelots*, thus providing artisans with fanciful motifs of scenery, human figures, pagodas, intricate lattices, and exotic birds and flowers to work with.

Marco Polo had brought back from China reports of lakes and fishing scenes in Southern Song dynasty gardens. He wrote glowing descriptions of what he called the "most beautiful and pleasing gardens in the world,"[30] thus capturing the attention of many Europeans. In the 17th century, missionaries and envoys to China also returned to Europe with descriptions of Chinese gardens that were translated into many European languages, including English. The disseminated knowledge was fragmentary and second- or third-hand, but the concept of imitating nature was clear. A few of the more detailed descriptions spoke about the use of hills (artificial and natural), paths, water, curved banks, and stone grottoes.

Sir William Temple (1628-99) was the first to experiment with the Chinese concept of planting (*sharawadgi*, 傻瓜拉機)[31]—the basic Chinese garden aesthetic that was to play such an important role in the British landscape movement.[32] After initial mentions of this concept by Temple and Addison, several British garden designers went searching for more information.[33] In the 1720s, the then-Lord Burlington is said to have owned an engraving of a Chinese garden made by the Italian priest Matteo Ripa, who had visited the Chinese

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[30] Fiona MacDonald, Marco Polo: A Journey Through China (Expedition) (New York: Franklin Watts, Incorporated, 1998) 145.

[31] Temple invented the term "Sharawadgi." A reference to the original Chinese word has yet to be found; its contemporary meaning implies a misunderstanding of Chinese culture.

[32] Sir William Temple, Upon the Gardens of Epicurus, or, On Gardening in the Year 1685 (London: n. p., 1692).

[33] Sir William Temple contributed an important historical perspective to the idea of the English landscape garden, locating its position in the myth of Adam and Eve before "the Fall."

imperial palace and royal gardens in Peking.[34] A Particular Account of the Emperor of China's Gardens, a book written in French by Jean-Denis Attiret in 1747, was translated into English five years later by Joseph Spence.[35] Chinese designs were also the focus of William Halfpenny's Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste.[36]

Among supporters of Chinese-style gardens, William Chambers (1723-96) was perhaps the most enthusiastic. He visited China twice for the specific purpose of studying Chinese gardens, and made three essential contributions to the incorporation of Chinese garden principles into the *picturesque* style. First, in 1757 he published Of the Art of Laying Out Gardens Among the Chinese, a re-affirmation of British landscaping principles in light of Eastern examples. In this work, he compared Chinese garden designers to European painters. Second, Chambers was invited to make improvements to the Kew Gardens in the 1750s. His work on that project was described in his 1763 book, Plans, Elevations, Sections, and Perspective View of the Gardens and Building at Kew in Surrey.[37] Last, in 1772 he published A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening,[38] a work that is considered essential to understanding the *picturesque* and to the history of Chinese influence during this period. Chambers' efforts encouraged many other British landscape garden designers to incorporate Chinese garden principles into their creations, thus enriching the *picturesque* garden ideal. Today, visitors to many modern gardens in Great Britain, including Stourhead in Wiltshire and Kew

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[34] The original copy used by Lord Burlington is owned by the British library system.

[35] European ideas about Chinese gardens were quite vague until a Jesuit named Jean-Denis Attiret visited the gardens of the Yuanming Yuan (圓明園) on the outskirts of Beijing. He described this garden in a letter dated November 1, 1743. In 1752, this letter was translated into English by Joseph Spence under title "A Particular Account of the Emperor of China's Garden near Peking." Attiret, Jean Denis, George Mason, William Shenstone, and John Dixon Hunt, eds., A Particular Account of the Emperor of China's Gardens Near Peking With Unonnected Thoughts on Gardening and Other Items (New York: Taylor & Francis, 1982).

[36] Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste was originally published in London, 1752. William Halfpenny, Rural Architecture in the Chinese Taste (North Stratford, NH: Ayer Company Publishers, 1968).

[37] It is still possible to visit Chamber's pagoda design in the Kew gardens. From a Chinese perspective it is a strange representation of a common form, yet its architectural characteristics are clearly Chinese.

[38] William Chambers, A Dissertation on Oriental Gardening (London: n. p., 1772).

Garden in London, will find such Chinese elements as arched bridges, rockeries, and pagodas (Figs. 6-9 and 6-10).

However, despite Chambers' efforts, oriental gardens did not gain mainstream popularity outside of such special projects as Kew. Art historians still debate the accuracy of Temple and Chambers' knowledge of Chinese gardening and the actual influence of Chinese garden principles on the development of English landscape gardening, despite the many characteristics they share. Due to political counteractions and the difficulty of obtaining the essence of Chinese garden design, the movement faded. However, it is my position that in the flurry of 18th-century interest in cross-cultural ideas and products, Chinese garden principles did make an important contribution to the development of English landscape gardens of that period. Chinese influences are also apparent in other forms of European art during this time, it was in the art of gardening that we can most clearly see the connection between the Western idea of the *picturesque* and the Chinese concept of *jingjie*.

**Gardening as Fine Art**

Arguably, the sense of kinship that once existed among gardening, painting, and poetry was lost following the decline of the *picturesque* at the beginning of the 19th century. As an art form, gardens were initially revived in the West during the Renaissance. However, it was not until the 18th century that gardens were considered comparable with painting and poetry as a branch of the fine arts. By the middle of the century in England, the close relationship between gardening and other fine arts was firmly established. The *picturesque* movement was an attempt to establish an aesthetic category alongside *beautiful* and *sublime*; it thus came to represent a standard of taste that gradually gained general acceptance

**Figure 6-9**, Chinese Pagoda in Kew Gardens



**Figure 6-10**, Chinese Stone Lion in Kew Gardens

throughout Europe. It may be argued that if paintings helped to structure how the natural world was experienced, it was their formal (instead of thematic) contribution that was most prominent. Countless tourists exploring the British and European countrysides were encouraged to frame their views according to the *picturesque*.

Among the earliest of the *picturesque* landscape garden theorists, Addison was arguably the first to promote this approach. He echoed the views of Sir William Temple in praising the Chinese for "concealing the art by which they direct themselves." [39] Addison's emphasis on the "pleasures of the imagination"[40] and the cultivation of good taste was influential. It was clear that many of his contemporaries were thinking of the formal lessons that landscape paintings could teach garden designers—that is, the techniques of organizing three-dimensional space via painted surfaces.

The question remains as to the significance of "the garden as an art"[41] and what gardens might possibly bring to contemporary 21st-century aesthetics. Art historian Mara Miller has suggested that:

> The garden, by providing an environment for experience rather than an object of experience, collapses the very foundation of modern aesthetic theory, aesthetic disinterest/distance, or the subject-object dichotomy. With it go concomitant notions of sharp distinctions between art and craft, fine and applied arts, and the utilitarian and the aesthetic.[42]

Accordingly, 18th–century English gardens posed questions that went beyond the modernist subject-object dichotomy, and provided an alternative art form that entailed a viewer's experience of an environment. Considerations of gardening as fine art are not only found in the parallel development of Chinese gardens, but

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[39] Temple, 45.

[40] This phrase is from Joseph Addison's papers on "The Pleasures of the Imagination," published in *The Spectator* (2 July 1712).

[41] This phrase comes from the title of Mara Miller's book, The Garden as an Art (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993).

[42] Mara Miller, The Garden As an Art (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1993) 178.

also in the contemporary works of 20th-century Land Art artists. A primary goal of Land Art has been to go beyond the creation of material objects to the creation of environments that audiences can experience. Apparently, the work of contemporary artists actually lends support to the reconsideration of gardens as a vehicle for art. Many contemporary artists have created works in relation to nature that specifically use garden characteristics—for instance, Ian Hamilton Finlay's (1925-   ) *Little Sparta* in Scotland.

In the chapter entitled "Homes and Graves and Gardens" in her <u>Overlay:</u> <u>Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory</u>,[43] critic Lucy Lippard discusses the significance of gardens and their relationship with fine art. She notes that as symbols of sexuality and fertility, death and regeneration, and the cycle of the seasons, gardens have eventually come to be viewed as spaces between maternal homes and the threatening world, and between the "normalisation and domestication of nature's sinful seductions and of her fearsome aura."[44] She also notes that gardens have long served as double-pronged allegories overlaying Christian rhetoric on pagan beliefs. In Sanskrit, the world *paradesa* means "the other world," or death; Persian gardens, called *paradises*, once served as erotic enclosures. The old Saxon word for paradise was *meadow*—a clearing in the woods, a place of light, and a sanctuary from the dark, beast-infested forests that still covered England at that time.

Art historian Stephanie Ross is another writer who has argued in support of viewing gardens as an art form.[45] She suggests principles for tracing the lineages of present-day art forms, and argues that "if, in understanding and interpreting later works, we see them as fulfilling some of the important functions of their predecessors, then it is proper to see the later works as descendants of those which

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[43] Lucy Lippard, <u>Overlay: Contemporary Art and the Art of Prehistory</u> (New York: New Press, 1983).

[44] Lippard, 45.

[45] Her "Gardens, Earthworks, and Environmental Art" was first presented in the Washington University Faculty Seminar and then collected in the book <u>Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts</u>. Salim Kemal and Ivan Gaskell,ed. <u>Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts</u> (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 158-182.

came before." She further claims that 20th-century Land Art works "fill a space in today's art world equivalent to that occupied by gardens two and a half centuries ago."[46] According to Ross's comment, there are similarities between 18th-century landscape gardens and 20th-century Land Art artworks. Like gardens, 20th-century Land Art works addressed the relationship of a piece of art to its site; like gardens, they can be ideological and hold aesthetic value. More importantly, they force us to consider our relationship with nature, as well as nature's relationship to art.

The decline of gardens as an art form occurred for many reasons, primarily some fundamental changes in the definition of fine art—that is, the ambiguous status between the artificial and the natural, between art and craft, and between fine and applied art. The development of landscape architecture in the 19th century resulted in gardening's loss of status as a "fine art." Since then, gardening and fine art have moved in different directions.

Stephanie Ross has also suggested that the decline is attributable to such incidental factors as the enormous and protracted expense of gardening on a grand scale and the difficulty of preserving gardens in their original condition.[47] Moreover, art historian Mara Miller believes that a fundamental conflict exists between the nature of gardens on the one hand and certain features of what we call art on the other. She writes:

> The status of the garden as a work of art is extremely problematic, but it repays careful study, for it is problematic in ways which are both interesting and philosophically revealing, ways which have to do with both the definition of art and the intrinsic properties of gardens.[48]

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[46] Kemal Salim, and Ivan Gaskell, Landscape, Natural Beauty and the Arts (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1993) 178.

[47] Stephanie Ross, "Ut Hortus Poesis—Gardening and Her Sister Arts in Eighteenth-Century England," British Journal of Aesthetics 25.1 (1985): 17-32.

[48] Miller, 69.

Accordingly, conventional definitions of gardens and fine art have diverged. This is especially true ever since the emergence of landscape architecture in the 19th century—that is, the meaning of gardening has been extended beyond three-dimensional paintings. Despite the broad range of approaches that artist have taken since that time, many contemporary practitioners have been influenced by gardening traditions, especially in terms of organizing space.

## 6.2 The *Picturesque* and the Organisation of Space

The contributions of the *picturesque* to landscape art can be analysed from various perspectives; its general attitude toward nature and its influence on travel and gardening have been well documented. However, the spatial composition of British landscape gardens has seldom been discussed in relation to other built environments. In this section, I will focus on the organization of space in British landscape gardens—especially their sense of theatricality, which made connections between gardens, sacred places, and Land Art possible.

## 6.2.1 From Picture Frame to Proscenium Arch

As discussed earlier, 18th-century travellers who were inspired by William Gilpin's essays contributed to the development of the *picturesque* by sketching landscapes during their journeys. For these travellers, Great Britain's topographies were safely pictorialised, and its wilderness was altered into landscaped scenery. The images they brought home with them were perhaps the first to be framed in ways that scenes are increasingly framed today—by camera viewfinders, cinema screens, and video recorders. After the decline of the *picturesque* movement, this framing process was extended to Land Art and other contemporary forms of landscape art.

*Picturesque* travellers and painters (including Gilpin) used a device called the Claude glass to capture landscape images. An equivalent of today's wide-angle lenses,[49] the Claude glass was a miniaturised version of the convex studio mirrors often used by painters of that time. Eighteenth-century travellers and painters equipped with these devices could "take pictures" (in the same manner that modern tourists use their cameras) and take home "fixed" landscape sketches mediated through a frame and viewfinder.

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[49] Claude glasses were usually encased in wallet-sized covers. The actual convex glass itself (oval, circular, or rectangular) captured images that were condensed and slightly warped.

manner that modern tourists use their cameras) and take home "fixed" landscape sketches mediated through a frame and viewfinder.

The flattened effect produced by Claude glasses was similar to that produced by proscenium arches on a stage. From darkened rooms, early 19th-century theatre audiences gazed through proscenium frames into brightly lit worlds that were organised to pull the eye toward the middle and upstage areas, in the same manner that landscape artists attempted to direct their viewers' eyes. The Nicolas Poussin painting, *Orpheus and Eurydice* (1650) (Fig. 6-11), is an example of the same effect as used in theatres during that period. Whether theatre design influenced landscape painting or *picturesque* landscapes affected 19th-century theatre design, it is clear that a close relationship existed between the two. Among others, John Dixon Hunt and Malcolm Andrews have pointed out that stage designers are skilled at constructing two-dimensional landscapes (consisting of trees, architecture, and hills) within framed three-dimensional spaces.

## *Ut Pictura Poesis* and Human Action

An 18th-century traveller's experience was associated with both landscape painting and poetry. Those associations—plus their connections with gardening—are considered central characteristics of the *picturesque* style. These interrelationships were celebrated in Horace Walpole's comment that "Poetry, painting, and gardening, or the science of landscape, will forever by men of taste be deemed Three Sisters, or the *Three New Graces*, who dress and adorn nature." [50] Scholars such as John Dixon Hunt have described the close relationships among the Three Sisters according to the concept of *ut pictura poesis*, meaning "as in painting, so in poetry" or "poetry is like painting." Taken from Horace's *Ars Poetica*, *ut pictura poesis* suggests that poetry (actually, all literature) can be discussed and analysed in the same terms that are applied to the visual arts.

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[50] Walpole's comment is taken from an annotation to a poem by Paget Toynbee in William Mason's Satirical Poems (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1926) 43.

**Figure 6-11**, Nicolas Poussin, *Orpheus and Eurydice*, 1650

I will propose three reasons why *ut pictura poesis* is important to any discussion of the *picturesque*: first, it suggests a classical composition in a painting or garden, perhaps one that corresponds to the hero's journey archetype discussed in Chapter 5. Second, the embodiment of this archetype in English landscape gardens creates a sense of theatricality that later influences other three-dimensional art forms (to be discussed in the following section). Third, the concept suggests a connection with the Chinese idea of *jingjie*, which also takes into consideration associations among poetry, painting, and gardening.

The ability of gardens to express human action in a manner similar to an historical painting demonstrates how the tradition of *ut pictura poesis* played a important role in *picturesque* gardens. Clearly, 18th-century garden designers viewed their work in terms of both painting and theatre. Their products were organised to present views similar to stage sets, but as with theatre, the scenes had to serve as environments for human action. At the end of the 17th century, gardens, drama, and painting shared similarities in terms of the representation and presentation of action that were the final flowering of the Renaissance *ut pictura poesis* doctrine.

It is easy to lose sight of the importance of this human element in *picturesque* gardens. As with other Renaissance arts, gardens that were not wholly structured around specific iconography used generally available public imagery as their focuses; these images were later codified in numerous books and anthologies of visual signs that verified certain references to a shared literature. In the 18th century, English landscape gardens maintained this practice of presenting overt messages in the form of statuary, inscriptions, and eloquent architectural design. Two important examples in this regard are Stowe and Stourhead. Visitors to the Elysian Fields in Stowe still find a variety of readable items: the Temple of Ancient Virtue, complete with a full-length statue of a famous Greek lawyer, general, poet, and philosopher; a ruined Temple of Modern Virtue; a church (Fig. 6-12); and the Temple of British Worthies (Fig. 6-13).

**Figure 6-12,** The Gothic Temple in Stowe



**Figure 6-13,** The Rotunda in Stowe

Stourhead also contains a rich repertoire of elements that convey meaning, but with a strongly personal colouring that Hoare infused into his garden.[51]

While a painting can graphically represent a significant range of human actions, a garden simply provides materials and a scenario to allow visitors—who are both spectators and actors—to partake in such actions. Whereas Poussin or Corneille might have presented depictions of significant historical or mythical human action, a garden's action, being contemporary, could not easily observe the same rules that control painting or drama. Poussin placed humans in the centre of the action, and used landscape and architectural elements as subsidiary features (Fig. 6-14). In a garden, the central focus involves temples, statues, inscriptions, and similar non-human devices; the "action" is supplied by the visitor—stimulated by scenes and their allusions—acting as a protagonist by his or her reading of these devices. The visitor is both a spectator of design elements and an actor in the garden's drama.

## 6.2.2 The Theatricality of the *Picturesque* Garden

Gardening and theatre shaped each other's development during and after the Renaissance. The author Georgina Mason is among many who have commented on "the close relationship that existed in seventeenth-century Italy between theatrical and garden design."[52] This relationship was also evident in 18th-century England. Garden designers and playwrights were constantly searching for ways to articulate human nature and existence through their respective forms. As the *picturesque* movement grew, theatrical elements were introduced into natural scenes. The Temples of Venus and the British Worthies

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[51] Stourhead was Henry Hoare II's primary interest for 40 years, beginning in 1741. While the garden is generally viewed as his creation, subsequent family members (particularly Sir Richard Holt Hoare) enriched the garden by adding shrubbery and trees.

[52] Georgina Masson, writing in Margnus von Platen, ed., Queen Christina of Sweden: Documents and Studies (Stockholm: Analecta Reginensia, Stockholm, 1996) 254.

**Figure 6-14,** Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape with St Matthew and the Angel*, 1645

at Stowe, and the Vale of Venus and Praeneste Terrace at Rousham, all serve as focuses for their respective visitors' visual and verbal dramas, often engaging them in a manner similar to the way that a play engages theatregoers.

Another link between stage scenery and the *picturesque* landscapes of historical paintings is that both have similar backgrounds for actions that unfold in the foreground. William Kent worked in both the theatre and in landscape design. In his garden drawings (Figs. 6-15 and 6-16), we see his concern with human presence and action in terms of the surrounding scenery. Those drawings also highlight the 18th-century concern with transferring thematic and formal characteristics from painting to garden design. Scenery takes on responsibility for the actions that take place within it, and visitors are required to become actors as well as spectators.

Alexander Pope and his contemporaries described gardens as composed of "scenes"; he also viewed landscapes outside of gardens as having similar qualities with stage scenery. Applied to landscapes, the word "scene" assumed that what was being described lay opposite the observer; in other words, the "scene" of a landscape is limited by an individual's vision in the same manner as a painting is enclosed within a frame.[53]

Pope also commented on the similarities between theatre and paintings with *picturesque* landscapes: both contain backgrounds in front of which human action takes place. An example that is frequently used to explain this situation is Poussin's *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake* (1648) (Fig. 6-17). The painting is noted for its expressive contrasts between its foreground tragedy and surrounding landscape, as well as the eloquent gestures of the humans involved.

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[53] John Barrell, "The Idea of Landscape in the Eighteenth Century," The Idea of Landscape and the Sense of Place, 1730-1840. ed. John Barrell, (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1972) 23.

**Figure 6-15,** William Kent, Design for the Chatsworth Hillside



**Figure 6-16,** William Kent, Drawing of Michael Drayton's Poly-Olbion

**Figure 6-17,** Nicolas Poussin, *Landscape with a Man Killed by a Snake*, 1648

## 20th-Century Theatricality

The sense of theatricality commonly found in three-dimensional art forms was eventually lost as the *picturesque* movement faded in the 19th century. It did not reappear in the dominant two-dimensional art movements of the 19th and early 20th centuries, but it was influential in minimalist works that were created in the mid-20th century. Minimalist artists, such as Donald Judd and Robert Morris, began to challenge modernist models of sculpture in the 1960s. Rosalind E. Krauss notes that these artists questioned "the logical importance of the interior space of forms—an interior space which much of previous twentieth-century sculpture had celebrated."[54] A modernist notion of "sculpture"—such as that found in the work of Nuam Gabo[55] and Henry Moore[56]—created limits which the avant-garde sculptors pushed against. Minimalists were most active in engaging an earlier understanding of sculpture and rethinking contemporary three-dimensional art forms, which eventually began to occupy a more central position.

In The Sculptural Imagination, art historian Alex Potts argues that "the once problematic status of sculpture as an art that has systematically to be distinguished from painting is no longer a major issue in contemporary art circles."[57] Sculptures need no longer be classical figures, monuments, or self-contained objects; modernist sculptors have already broken those limitations. In the current post-modern era, we no longer need to consider contemporary sculpture from a minimalist perspective, yet it is important to consider the significance of minimalist sculpture and what distinguishes it from modernist work. At the same time, we must consider why minimalism has such a strong hold on today's sculptural efforts.

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[54] Rosalind E. Krauss, Passages in Modern Sculpture (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1977) 253.

[55] Naum Gabo (1890-1977) was a constructivist sculptor whose work serves as a pure example of modernist sculpture in relation to the internal structure of the object itself.

[56] The abstract/figurative sculptures of Henry Moore (British, 1898-1986) are considered characteristic of modernist sculpture.

[57] Alex Potts, The Sculptural Imagination: Figurative, Modernist, Minimalist (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000) 3.

Traditionally, sculptural discourse has been a discourse of form and style, operating largely on a surface level that usually addresses viewer concerns about materials and the appearance of the sculpture itself. Post-war artists tried to go beyond these restrictions, transforming the object-focused approach to one that was spectator-oriented. The change began with a radical minimalist movement that entailed site, non-site, site-specific, environmental, earth art, land art, and installation pieces—all of which served to expand the limitations of modernist sculpture. Critics and art historians found that traditional lineages were insufficient for analysing post-modernist sculpture. In <u>Art and Objecthood</u>, Michael Fried wrote that the status of minimalist sculpture was a threat to the foundations of high modernism, creating "a shift which, in the end, blurred the distinctions between the sculptural and the painterly that until then had made sculpture seem a little intractable."[58]

Even though Fried opposed the sense of "theatricality" and "stage presence" associated with minimalist sculpture, he clearly identified the significance of "objecthood" in the contest between minimalist and modernist work. Fried described "objecthood" (or, more precisely, the "theatricality of objecthood") as the aura or environment created by a sculptural object. He suggested that in the 1960s, "objecthood" had become the most arguable characteristic of minimalist sculpture, which in turn set it in opposition to modernist painting and sculpture.[59]

Fried's engagement with French phenomenology, [60] especially Merleau-Ponty's work, provided him with profound philosophical insights for his specific critique of minimalist sculpture. His phenomenological approach to sculpture and the idea of "objecthood" arguably became a central position in critiques of post-modernist sculptural history. As discussed in Chapter 3, this

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[58] Potts, preface.

[59] Michael Fried, <u>Art and Objecthood: Essays and Reviews</u> (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998) 152.

[60] Fried's engagement with phenomenology can be traced to his 1963 essay on Anthony Caro.

phenomenological approach to three-dimensional artwork is also an important aspect of Chinese *jingjie* aesthetics.

I view sculpture as both the production of "a way of experiencing" and "a way of thinking." While bodily experience is important to sculpture, another way to understand it is to focus on the ideas that inform its production. Rosalind E. Krauss, a key figure of post-modernist criticism, was also strongly influenced by phenomenology. Her 1977 book, <u>Passage in Modern Sculpture</u>, is considered a "classic formulation of the new post-minimalist phenomenological sculptural aesthetic."[61] At the very beginning of her book, Krauss clearly states that:

> The history of modern sculpture coincides with the development of two bodies of thought, phenomenology and structural linguistics, in which meaning is understood to depend on the way that any contains the latent experience of its opposite: simultaneity always containing an implicit experience of sequence.[62]

Krauss also argues that the significance of minimalist sculpture rests in its relocation of the focus of the spectator from the interior to the exterior of a work—in other words, the aesthetics of sculpture have shifted from the object itself to the bodily experience of the spectator. This shift became a new focus of contemporary art in the last half of the 20th century, with theatricality increasingly considered an essential aspect of contemporary sculpture, installations, and site-specific artworks.

As I have noted in this chapter, the concepts of theatricality and objecthood are the key links between site-specificity in contemporary art and the 18th-century *picturesque* tradition. Theatricality demonstrated a connection with sacred places through experiences created in built environments. In other ways it pointed to the possibility of future development in the field of sculpture—i.e., Land Art and site-specific artworks. Furthermore, the sense of theatricality and

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[61] Potts, 12.

[62] Krauss, 4.

its understanding of space also echoed the social-political background of times when alternatives were actively being considered by artists. Some scholars have gone so far as to argue that the sense of theatricality developed in *picturesque* gardens exerted a strong influence on both Minimalism and Land Art.[63]

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[63] Art critic Sidney Tillim argues that "what I think is involved in Earth Art in particular and actual media art in general is a twentieth-century version of the *picturesque*." Sidney Tillim, "Earthworks and the New Picturesque," Artforum 7 (1968): 43.

## 6.3 Summary

In this chapter, I described how place and land considerations influenced Western landscape art forms and sacred built environments. In its role as "a green laboratory for aesthetic experiments," the 18th-century English landscape garden evolved into the embodiment of the *picturesque* and a widely accepted form of fine art. I also restated the influence of Chinese gardening on the development of the English landscape garden, especially in terms of the organisation of space, as also reflected in the *chinoiserie* vogue that captured 17th- and 18th-century Europe. This influence must be considered a primary example of cultural exchanges between East and West.

Under the influence of the *picturesque* and landscape gardening, the focus of 18th-century visual arts shifted from two-dimensional landscape painting to three-dimensional gardening. This transformation included the idea of injecting theatricality into spatial organisation. After showing how non-traditional methods of organising space that were developed in the 18th century made significant contributions to contemporary three-dimensional visual art practices, I suggested that the greatest significance of the *picturesque* was its similarities with *jingjie*, especially in terms of its attitude toward nature.

# Chapter 7

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## The *Picturesque* and Land Art

From Frederick Law Olmsted's *picturesque* projects to Robert Smithson's site-specific artworks, different contemporary approaches and attitudes to site-specificity are revealed in the diversity of contemporary landscape art forms. Furthermore, the connection between the *picturesque* tradition and contemporary interest in the spirit of place is confirmed in 20th-century Land Art. I view it as a portal through which we can understand the development of site-specificity in contemporary art. Several art historians are not only supporting the idea of a connection between Eastern influences and Land Art, they go so far as to identify Land Art's precise cultural influences.[1]

Land Art has been variously labelled as "Earth Art," "Environmental Art," and "Ecology Art."[2] Regardless of its name, it never became a "movement" in the traditional sense of that word, probably because it had no clear leaders or manifestos. However, the land and environmental projects can be described as fundamentally sculptural (in the sense of three-dimensionality) and/or performance-oriented (in terms of their emphasis on process, site, and temporality). From site-specific sculptural projects to time-based landscape activities, to ecological experiments, to marks on maps, Land Art projects were considered part of the land and examples of site-specific creativity. However, none of the artists mentioned in this chapter can be said to have belonged to anything resembling a movement in the same way that we view futurists, surrealists, or constructivists. Nevertheless, for the purposes of this research, I

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[1] As discussed in Chapter 1, the influence of Eastern thought on North American art has been openly acknowledged since the end of World War II. However, discussions on the specific influence of Eastern thought on Land Art did not take place until the 1980s. Two studies on this topic are David Clarke, The Influence of Oriental Thought on Post-war American Painting and Sculpture, (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1983), and Gail Enid Gelburd, "Far Eastern Philosophical Influences on Environmental Art, 1967-1987," diss., City University of New York, 1988.

[2] Alan Sonfist, ed., Art in the Land: A Critical Anthology of Environmental Art (New York: Dutton, 1983) xii.

will use the term "Land Art" in light of its obvious connections to other historically and culturally significant "Land" projects.[3]

Since its emergence in the late 1960s, art critics and historians have been trying to resolve several issues that were raised for the first time through Land Art. However, unlike other post-war contemporary art forms, they found Land Art difficult to access critically because of its apparent lack of both iconographical content and obvious signs for decoding.[4] Despite the shared knowledge of its socio-political background, Land Art was subject to debates concerning its origins. Some critics and art historians insisted that Land Art was an extension of contemporary sculpture, with no connections to ancient landmarks or religious settings; others argued that there were chronological connections between Land Art and other art forms and philosophies from other parts of the world, such as English and Chinese landscape gardens.

In this chapter I will describe how the *picturesque* tradition was extended and reinvented in North America after its decline in 19th-century England. Through the landscape architecture projects of Frederick Law Olmsted and his followers, a new *picturesque* tradition was established that reflected the wilderness of the New Continent; this later served as a direct influence for Land Art artists in the 1960s and 1970s. I will also use the writings of Robert Smithson to establish the same link between Olmsted's version of the *picturesque* and mid- to late 20th-century Land Art.

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[3] In fact, many artists (among them Michael Hichael and Richard Long) refuse to use the terms Land Art, Environmental Art, or Earthworks to describe their work. Many artists still prefer the general term "sculpture" to a fixed category.

[4] Maureen Korp, Sacred Art of the Earth: Ancient and Contemporary Earthworks (New York: Continuum, 1997) 25.

## 7.1 Land Art and the *Picturesque* on the New Continent

Apart from a distant connection to sacred places as suggested by certain art critics and historians,[5] 19th-century American landscape architecture[6] stands as the most direct link between the *picturesque* tradition and the Land Art movement. American landscape architects took their cues from English landscape garden designers and added their own sense of wilderness to continue and enrich the *picturesque* tradition. Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1904) is probably the most influential figure in this regard; he is not only known as the founder of American landscape architecture, but also as an inspiration to many Land Art artists and critics in the 20th century.

## 7.1.1 The Development of American Landscape Architecture

Significant changes occurred in 19th- and early 20th-century American landscape gardening and park design. Experiments with new forms and styles ultimately led to the establishment of a new profession known as *landscape architecture*. Its practitioners managed human impacts on the land, including the shaping of landforms and the creation of parks, urban spaces, and gardens. Of the earliest landscape architects, Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-52) clearly represents a Reptonian[7] tradition in America. A believer in the doctrines of

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[5] Art critics and historians (e.g., Alan Sonfist, Lucy Lippard, and Maureen Korp) believe there is a connection between Land Art and sacred place (see Chapter 5, section 5.3).

[6] The term "landscape architecture" was first used in Gilbert Laing Meason's 1828 book, Landscape Architecture of the Great Painters of Italy. Meason described the special type of architecture—e.g., Italian buildings in a verdant countryside—found in many landscape paintings from that country. John Claudius Loudon was taken with the term "landscape architecture," praised it in an article published in Gardener's Magazine, and cited Deepdene as a British example. Loudon's American admirer, John Jackson Downing, adopted the term and used it as an equivalent to the term "rural architecture." Downing's admirer, Frederick Law Olmsted, gave the term a different meaning by using it to describe a special type of scenery set amongst buildings. Central Park in New York City was the first great example of Olmsted's vision of landscape architecture.

[7] Humphrey Repton (1752-1818) was a British writer, landscape designer, and follower of "Capability" Brown. He is considered an important figure in the late 18th-century *picturesque* debates.

English landscape gardening, he is considered a pioneer of the *picturesque* style in North America,[8] and a figure who exerted a strong influence on Frederick Law Olmsted and Olmsted's disciples. Olmsted was the first American to practice landscape architecture on a large scale.[9] He gained public recognition just before and after the Civil War because of his most famous project—New York City's Central Park, which he designed with his partner, the British architect Calvert Vaux. After the war, he worked on major parks in Brooklyn, San Francisco, Chicago, and New Britain (Connecticut), among other American cities.

A time line of landscape design traditions and philosophies would begin with Lancelot "Capability" Brown and continue through William Gilpin, Uvedale Price, and Humphrey Repton in Europe and Andrew Jackson Downing, Frederick Law Olmsted, and Calvert Vaux in America. During the 18th century, Brown established what are now considered to be standard components of English landscape design: gently rolling landforms, placid water surfaces, clumps of trees, and wooded groves surrounding a country house. He used these features to create pastoral landscapes that emulated what he interpreted as uncultivated nature. Brown built over 170 private parks and gardens during his career, but since he never wrote any books or essays on the topic, whatever influence he exerted on Olmsted was through experience rather than written theatrical principle. As mentioned in a previous chapter, Brown at one time was at the centre of heated debate because of his ideas on manipulating landscape; among designers of that time, it would remain an intense controversy even after Brown's death in 1783.[10]

One of Brown's strongest critics was William Gilpin, who authored Remarks on Forest Scenery and Other Woodland Views,[11] published in 1791. Gilpin observed the unique qualities of regional landscapes and argued that they

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[8] Downing's ideas were expressed in his editorials in the Horticulturist (1846-52) and in his classic treatise on Landscape Gardening (first edition, 1841).

[9] For a while, Olmstead was associated with Calvert Vaux (1824-95), the British-trained architect who had previously been Downing's professional partner.

[10] See Chapter 6, section 6.1.2.

[11] William Gilpin, Remarks on Forest Scenery and Other Woodland Views (London: n.p., 1971).

should be preserved and enhanced instead of being changed to conform with formulaic landscapes like those created by Brown. Sir Uvedale Price later elaborated on Gilpin's ideas in his An Essay on the Picturesque,[12] in which he first described his theory of how *picturesque* principles—commonly used in landscape paintings of that time—could be applied to landscape gardening. Because they published books and essays, both Gilpin and Price influenced Olmsted, resulting in a strong connection between English landscapes and American landscape architecture.

On the other hand, Humphrey Repton (1752-1818) preferred building on Brown's landscape gardening traditions by emphasising the importance of modelling landscape designs on nature rather than on works of art. He therefore developed a set of simple design principles that emphasised convenience and beauty. His principles eventually evolved into conventions for working with grades, bodies of water, and vegetation. As seen in Olmsted's projects, Repton believed in shaping the earth so that grades appeared as if "art never interfered."[13] Similar to the Chinese, Repton also recognised the importance of subtleties in design, such as the finer points of showing the edges of woods and the manipulation of sunlight and shadow.[14] This attention to detail is also seen in Olmsted's designs.

## 7.1.2. The Father of American Landscape Architecture

In addition to Central Park, Frederick Law Olmsted's major accomplishments include Belle Isle Park in Detroit, the Stanford University campus in California, the Biltmore Estate in North Carolina, the grounds of the U.S. Capitol, and the Boston park system. In every case, he looked on nature as

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[12] Uvedale Price, An Essay on the Picturesque (London : J. Robson, 1794)

[13] Robert E Grese. Jens Jensen: Maker of Natural Parks and Gardens (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1992) 12.

[14] Regarding the manipulation of sunlight and shadow in Chinese garden design, see Chapter 4, section 4.2.2.

something to be experienced rather than to be observed and talked about. His great genius was in arranging and re-arranging nature so that every view seemed entirely natural.

Born in Connecticut in 1822, Olmsted was a self-taught student of landscape who was strongly influenced by a journey he took to Europe as a young adult. He became deeply interested in English landscape gardening, which had moved away from the rigidity of formal gardens toward a more romantic, natural look. During this time, he became fascinated with the idea of parks as ideal places in which people could experience the essence of nature. His written ideas on the value of natural scenery share similarities with those of the Romantic poet William Wordsworth (1770-1850) and the transcendentalist Ralph Waldo Emerson (1803-82). In 19th-century America, both literary movements stressed the importance of man's unity with nature.

In the spring of 1850, Olmsted travelled to England with his brothers. On the trip, he established his early understanding of the relationship between humans and nature; the framed, picturesque, and pastoral landscapes of Great Britain became templates for his future designs. His British-influenced ideas on the *sublime, picturesque,* and *beautiful* are especially prominent in his Central (Manhattan) and Prospect (Brooklyn) Park projects. Olmsted read Edmund Burke's ideas on the *sublime* and *beautiful,* Uvedale Price's Essay on the Picturesque, and William Gilpin's essays. He was also a productive writer, publishing a two-volume account of his European trip in 1852 under the title Walks and Talks of An American Farmer in England.[15] In 1857, he designed America's first large public park based on the naturalist traditions of 18th- and 19th-century English landscapes. In 1859, Olmsted returned to Europe to resume his study of private and public parks, thus establishing travel as a cornerstone of his practice.

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[15] Frederick Law Olmsted, Walks and Talks of an American Farmer in England (1851; Ann Arbor, MI: University of Michigan Press, 1967).

Landscape architectural concepts have often been inspired by social needs. Olmsted's work was a reaction to the unsanitary, overcrowded conditions of late 19th-century American cities and the need for people to escape from their immediate environments in order to restore themselves in natural settings. Instead of dismissing cities as terrible places in which to live, Olmsted tried to improve them by incorporating places of natural beauty where people could enjoy the healthful benefits of sunlight and pure air. According to the prevailing *picturesque* theory of the time, such places would allow people to interact in ways that might ease stress and prevent the antisocial behaviour that was attributed to living in crowded cities. He also felt that :

> [A] park should, as far as possible, complement the town. Openness is the one thing you cannot get in buildings. Picturesqueness you can get. Let your buildings be as picturesque as your artists can make them. This is the beauty of the town. Consequently, the beauty of the park should be the other. It should be the beauty of the fields, the meadow, the prairie, or green pastures, and the still waters. What we want to gain is tranquillity and rest to the mind.[16]

To Olmsted, the function of any park was to restore the human spirit. By offering physical and visual contrasts to city environments, parks produce involuntary responses in their visitors. He wrote, "The chief end of a large park is an effect on the human organism . . . like that of music . . . a kind that goes back of thought, and cannot be fully given the form of words."[17]

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[16] This paragraph comes form Olmsted's "Public Parks and the Enlargement of Towns," a paper he presented to the American Social Science Association at the Lowell Institute in Boston, February 25, 1870. Charles E. Beveridge, "Frederick Law Olmsted's Theory of Landscape Design", 19th Century, 3.2 (1977) 60.

[17] Charles E. Beveridge, "Frederick Law Olmsted's Theory of Landscape Design", 19th Century, 3.2 (1977): 39-40.

## 7.1.3 Olmsted and Land Art

The works of Land Art artists can be analysed as products of a renewed interest in the *picturesque*. Art critics and historians such as Gilles A Tiberghien and Sidney Tillm have looked at evidence of this connection. In Tillm's words, "What I think is involved in Earth Art in particular and actual media art in general is a twentieth-century version of the *picturesque*."[18]  Tiberghien, in his book Land Art, describes a strong association between Land Art and the *picturesque*, and cites Robert Smithson as an important Land Art figure who drew inspiration from the writings of Uvedale Price and William Gilpin. In the same book, Tiberghien also explores similarities between the *picturesque* and Land Art in terms of their shared interest in movement and texture, the latter as revealed in nature and in the process of time.

In his article Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape,[19] Robert Smithson described a legacy of understanding landscape as the product of both materials and process—a legacy started by Price and Gilpin and inherited by Olmsted. It is clearly in evidence in Central Park, which cannot be considered a static entity or a recreated paradise, but an area meant to change over time. Smithson described Olmsted as the inheritor of the *picturesque* concept. Olmsted considered nature—in relationship to humankind as well as in its dynamic relationship to itself—as a constant and uncertain process of transformation. By acknowledging this process, Smithson said that Olmstead's parks "exist before they are finished, which means in fact they are never finished."[20]

Smithson viewed Olmsted as a Land Art ancestor, someone who knew how to compose with natural elements while taking into account the changes that

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[18]  Sidney Tillm, "Earthworks and the New Picturesque," Artforum 7 (1968): 43-45.

[19]  This article "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Dialectical Landscape" was original published in the February, 1973 edition of *Artforum*, It can also be found in Jack Flam, ed., Robert Smithson: The Collected Writings (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1996) 157-171.

[20]  Flam, Robert Smithson 160.

nature was subjected to, the destruction it suffered, and the industrial and urban transformations that affected and were affected by it. Smithson viewed Olmsted as a Promethian figure who was spiritually allied with the new Land Art artists.

Smithson always expressed a clear interest in the *picturesque*. As artist Richard Serra noted, Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* "not only spirals you out into the landscape, framing vistas of the landscape, but as it dovetails back on itself, it also leads you to concentrate on its internal structure."[21] Furthermore, certain characteristics that mark Land Art, such as its emphasis on the work process and the impact of time, parallel important concerns of 18th- and 19th-century artists, garden designers, and critics. From a perspective of *picturesque*, Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* represents a kind of landscape idealisation. Situated in a demarcated location, *Spiral Jetty* represented a created world between "second nature" and "third nature."[22] The spiral was not only a simple landscape gesture that complemented (and was complemented by) the site, it was also a compact sacred place with an easily identified threshold, enclosure, and paths.

For Price and Gilpin, the two best-known theorists on the subject, the *picturesque* was defined by its senses of intricacy and variety—as opposed to the *beautiful*, which is better characterised by simplicity, symmetricality, clarity, and smoothness. A garden that is beautiful, harmonious, and symmetrical in its paths and green spaces may not be a pleasing subject for a painting. In such cases, the quality of the *picturesque* not only considers images or points of view taken of an environment, it also considers the reciprocal transformation that occurs between the act of observation and the thing that is observed. To really see a landscape, one must go through a window to explore or re-form the land. For Smithson, the value of Price and Gilpin's ideas lies in their materialist or "dialectic" conception:

> The picturesque, far from being an inner movement of mind, is based on real land; it precedes the mind in its material external existence. We cannot take a one-sided view of the landscape within this dialectic. A

[21] Richard Serra, "Interview with Peter Eisenman" Skyline, The Architecture and Design Review (April, 1983): 16-17.

[22] See Chapter 6, section 6.1.

park can no longer be seen as "a thing-in-itself," but rather as a process of ongoing relationship existing in a physic region—the park becomes a "thing-for-us."[23]

Thus, the dialectic nature inherited from the picturesque tradition was embodied in the contemporary works of Land Art and site-specific artists. Form a *jingjie* perspective, Simthson's dialectic conception can be viewed as an interaction between *yi* (subjectivity) and *jing* (objectivity), and between the inner mind of the audience and outer environment of a specific place. The ideal landscapes of Price, Gilpin and Smithson echo a Chinese *jingjie* that emphasis the dynamic relationship between man and specific places.

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[23] Flam, Robert Smithson 160.

## 7.2 The *Picturesque* Tradition and Site-Specificity

Apart from Robert Smithson's awareness of the *picturesque* tradition and various chronological connections made by art historians and critics, the influence of the *picturesque* on the Land Art movement is best understood through the works of Land Art artists. Using a sense of theatricality (or Fried's "theatricality of objecthood")[24] that was directly inherited from the *picturesque* and indirectly inherited from the concept of sacred place, Land Art artists placed a strong emphasis on site-specificity via elements commonly found in sacred places, Chinese gardens, and *picturesque* landscape gardens. In this section, I will describe how many aspects of Land Art are tied to the Chinese concept of *jingjie*, especially in terms of their shared focus on the essential elements of paths, thresholds, and enclosures. From a *jingjie* perspective, I will try to demonstrate that the format of sacred places and the *picturesque* continues to evolve within the current efforts of Land Art and site-specific artists.

## 7.2.1 The *Picturesque* and Labyrinths in Land Art

Olmsted's Central Park design contained direct influences from English landscape garden design and indirect influences from Chinese gardens. Apparently, it also contains features that embody *jingjie*. Similar to Chinese gardens, it sits in the middle of a populated city, with clearly defined boundaries that create a sense of demarcation. It was purposely designed to imitate nature in order to present an ideal landscape for the local citizenry. It also shares some common elements with a typical Chinese garden design, including thresholds, paths, and enclosures. When comparing the Central Park plan (Fig. 7-1) with the Chinese garden elements discussed in Chapter 4, we can immediately identify the park's reservoir as the central focus, one that functions as a final destination and spiritual centre. The lake is surrounded by numerous labyrinthine paths that lead

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[24] See Chapter 6, section 6.2.2, 20th-Century Theatricality.
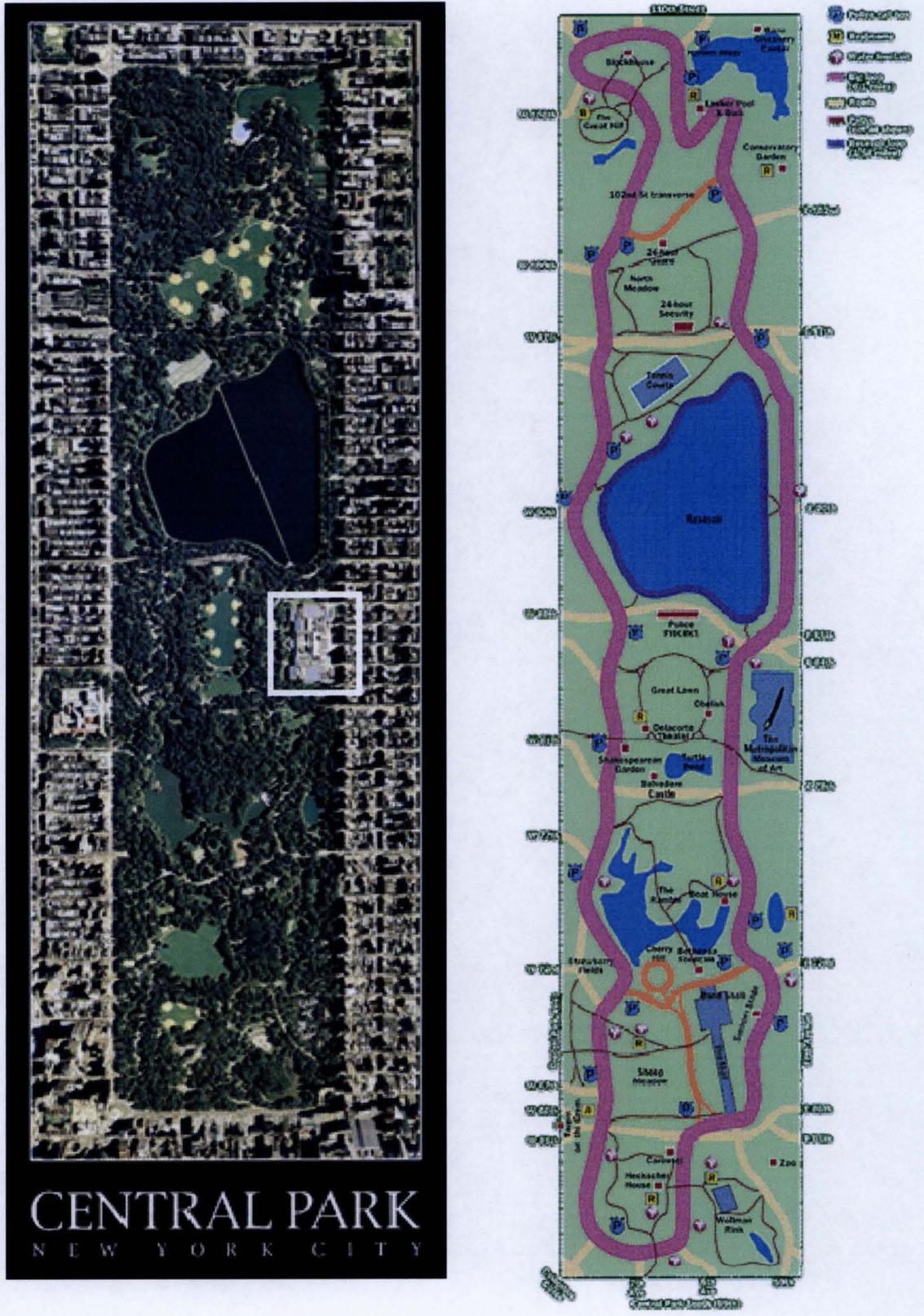
**Figure 7-1,** Plan of Central Park, New York City

visitors through a symbolic journey that takes them past various settings. It appears that Olmstead purposefully created an ideal for visitors to experience, one that is very much like the *jingjie* felt by visitors to a Chinese garden.

During the early development stage of Land Art, artworks were created in remote locations in order to allow for large-scale experimentation. As a consequence, many pieces were considered inaccessible, yet the distance between population centres and the art sites served as natural thresholds of separation, making the works similar to holy lands and sacred places that required a journey for visitation. The clearly defined boundaries in traditional gardens were transformed by the greater distances surrounding Land Art pieces, creating another type of demarcation.

Many Land Art projects reflect the concept of an ideal landscape that is clearly inherited from the *picturesque* tradition, and thus contain indirectly inherited elements of Chinese *jingjie*. Both traditions emphasised framed landscape images in a three-dimensional space. For example, many of the projects created by the British artist Richard Long (1945-  ) fit well with *picturesque* criteria. In his early work *A Line Made by Walking* (Great Britain, 1967) (Fig. 7-2), Long used photography to present ideally framed images with indications of specific places that reflected the *picturesque* concept. More direct links with the *picturesque* are seen in his later works, including *Stone in Nepal* (Nepal, 1975) (Fig. 7-3) and *Stones in the Pyrenees* (France, 1975) (Fig. 7-4). The walking traces that are found in his photography serve as archetypal elements of paths, and can also be considered indicators of human presence and the theatricality associated with the *picturesque* tradition. Although Long did not consider himself a member of the Land Art movement, his works nevertheless represent an important connection between the European tradition and the later development of Land Art in North America.

**Figure 7-2**,
Richard Long,
*A Line Made by Walking*,
England, 1967



**Figure 7-3**,
Richard Long,
*Stones in Nepal*,
Nepal, 1975



**Figure 7-4**,
Richard Long,
*Stones in Pyrenees*,
France, 1975

Apart from traditional forms of landscape architecture and landscape gardens, ways of presenting an ideal landscape were no longer restricted to three-dimensional, built places. Photography, film, maps and texts were used by Land Art artists to facilitate or enhance the experience of their projects. In hindsight, it is likely that more people learned about Land Art through documentaries and books than by making the required journeys to the sites. In many cases, Land Art artworks are temporary installations, meaning that they can only be visited by a limited number of viewers.

This is especially true for the creations of Christo (1935-   ) and Jeanne-Claude (1935-   )—both of whom were featured in numerous newspaper/magazine stories and television reports. Christo's *Running Fence* (California, 1972-76) and *The Umbrellas* (Japan-USA, 1984-91) (Figs. 7-5 and 7-6) are modern versions of framed *picturesque* images that were repeatedly shown to audiences through the format of documentary film.

Labyrinthine patterns were also employed by many Land Art artists to create models of specific built places. As discussed in Chapter 5, labyrinths echo archetypal patterns commonly found in *picturesque* landscape gardens and Chinese gardens. This is especially true of pieces that use labyrinths for the purpose of creating segmented paths. Richard Long demonstrated a similar interest in labyrinths in his work *Connemara Sculpture* (Ireland, 1971) (Fig. 7-7), while Robert Morris' contemporary sculpture *labyrinth (Philadelphia Labyrinth)* (Philadelphia, 1974) (Fig. 7-8) was a direct appropriation of a prehistoric myth that used segmented paths and enclosures with a threshold. Viewers who entered this work experienced a sense of a temporal-spatial journey in a self-contained space.

Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (Utah, 1970) (Fig. 7-9), a well-known Land Art project, represents the most direct connection with labyrinths. Built near the Great Salt Lake in Utah, *Spiral Jetty* included a spiral path leading from the lake shore to the centre of a second spiral sitting over the lake. The spiral was a
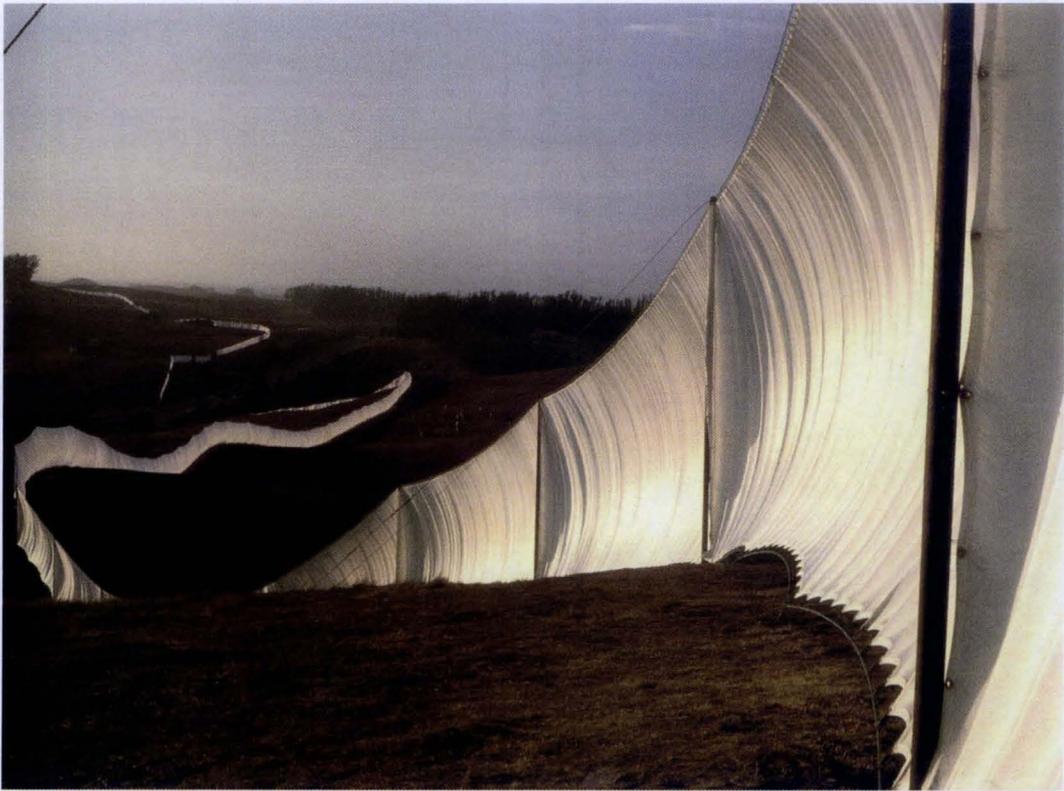
**Figure 7-5**, Christo and Jeanne-Claude, *Running Fence*, California, 1972-76



**Figure 7-6**,
Christo and Jeanne-Claude,
*The Umbrellas*,
Japan-USA, 1984-91
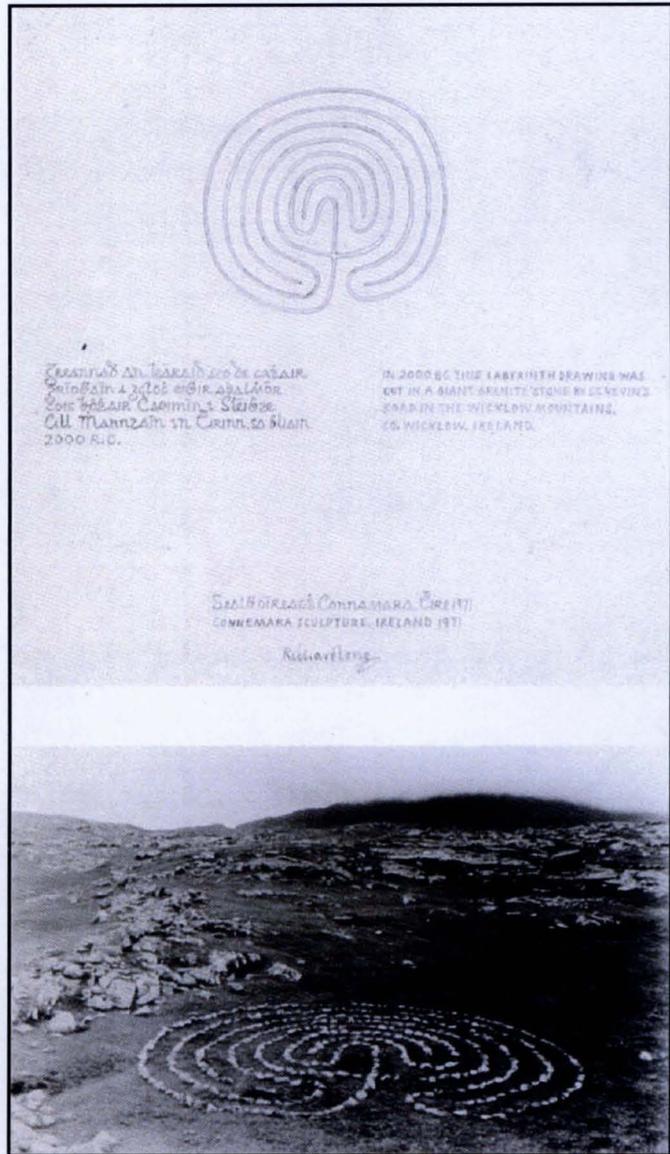
**Figure 7-7,**
Richard Long,
*Connemara Sculpture*,
Ireland, 1971

**Figure 7-8,**
Robert Morris,
*Labyrinth*,
Philadelphia, 1974

**Figure 7-9**, Robert Smithson, *Spiral Jetty*, Utah, 1970

simple yet powerfully symbolic representation of a journey, while other elements implied temporal and spatial experiences. Using text, photography, and film, Smithson constructed an influential contemporary belief system. From a mythological point of view, the remote locations of his built sites served as natural time/space thresholds representing the ideas of pilgrimage and a contemporary version of sacred places. At the time, Smithson claimed that this work did not have physical boundaries, although its remoteness gave viewers plenty of time in which to make the transformation from the urban energy of Salt Lake City to the more contemplative environment of the lake itself. Analysed from the perspective of *jingjie*, *Spiral Jetty* was an ideal world created within the natural landscape but demarcated from nature; furthermore, it contained a threshold, path, and enclosure. Similar uses of the labyrinth pattern can also be found in some of Smithson's other works, such as *Spiral Hill and Broken Circle* (Holland, 1971) (Fig. 7-10) and his unfinished *Ottawa Project* (Fig. 7-11).

Also from the *jingjie* perspective, the significance of labyrinthine patterns in Land Art not only demonstrated a strong historical connection to Western and Eastern cultural traditions, it also emphasised site-specificity through a sense of bodily experience. According to Gilles A. Tiberghien,

> What is important in this use of this motif by the Land Art artists is that, in addition to its reference to prehistoric, Cretan, and Renaissance examples, it emphasises on the present moment. The centre of the labyrinth is its complex expression, since it is the limit of the subject and the world, as well as the limit of the past and the present. This means there is no centre as such; as soon as the centre is reached, it is surpassed, just like an instant of time, which disappears as soon as it is grasped.[25]

Land Art artists explored duration, perception, and self-orientation processes in their projects, and experimented with the experiences of place and body in a manner that echoed the concept of theatricality.[26] Robert Morris's *Observatory* (Netherlands, 1977) (Fig. 7-12), whose features corresponded to the sunrise points

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[25] Gilles Tiberghien, Land Art (New York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995) 152.

[26] See Chapter 6, section 6.2.2.

**Figure 7-10**, Robert Smithson, *Spiral Hill and Broken Circle*, Holland, 1971
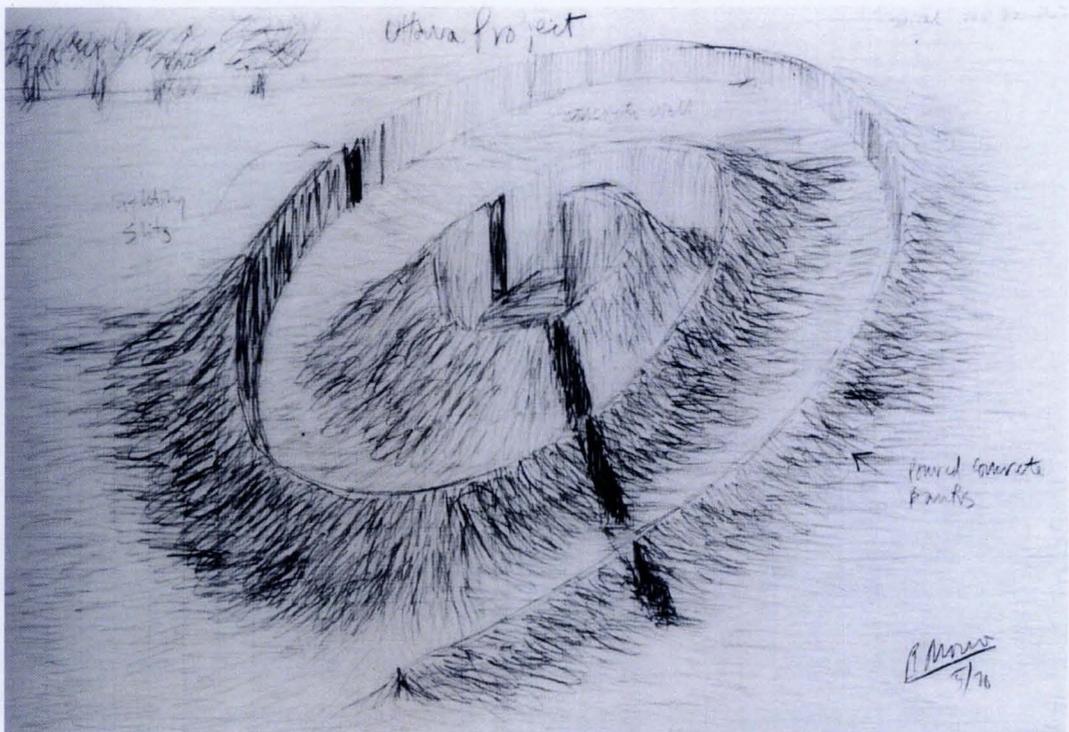


**Figure 7-11**, Robert Morris, *Ottawa Project*, 1970

**Figure 7-12**, Robert Morris, *Observatory*, Netherlands, 1977

on the horizon during the winter and summer solstices, indicated a strong human presence expressing temporality. The same theme was explored in *Spiral Jetty*, *Labyrinth*, Richard Long's photography, and many other Land Art works. From the Chinese philosophical perspective discussed in Chapter 4, this emphasis on the temporal in an ideal built world can be considered an embodiment of Chinese *jingjie*.

## 7.2.2 Site-Specificity in Land Art

In this section, I will describe common elements shared by the *picturesque* tradition and Land Art. These commonalties lead to a shared sense of site-specificity via the spatial concept of theatricality and an emphasis on objecthood that transcends materiality. From a *jingjie* perspective, these commonalties echo a Chinese gardening tradition that emphasised "the mutuality of positive and negative space" and "emptiness."[27] Furthermore, the physical structures that represent these commonalties can be identified with archetypal sacred place patterns. These elements—which are common to Land Art, the *picturesque* tradition, Chinese gardening principles, and sacred places—play important roles in my own work.

In 1965, Donald Judd wrote that conventional media and rectangular canvases were no longer adequate for contemporary expression, and therefore called for an art that took advantage of alternative materials, colours, and spaces.[28] Judd's argument was very similar to those expressed by critics in mid-18th century England. For example, Uvedale Price and William Gilpin believed that the art of gardening was a product of materials and processes.[29]

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[27] See Chapter 4, section 4.2.

[28] Donald Judd, "Specific Objects", Donald Judd: Complete Writings 1959-1975 (Halifax: Nova Scotia College of Art and Design; New York University Press, 1975) 181-89.

[29] See Chapter 6, section 6.1.3.

Furthermore, garden designer "Capability" Brown's approach to landscape gardens and his emphasis on natural materials seem to embody Judd's assertions. Those same concerns were addressed by mid-20th century minimalists, many of whom went beyond existing limitations of materiality. In the same way that a Chinese garden can evoke the *jingjie* of "images beyond images" and "scenes beyond scenes,"[30] the intent of most Land Art artists for their site-specific artworks has been to create a liminal environment between nature and spectator via the manipulation of materials.

Prototypical Land Art artists in the 1960s were Walter De Maria (1935- ), Michael Heizer (1944- ), Dennis Oppenheim (1938- ), and Robert Smithson (1938-73). Their work grew from preceding minimalist efforts, but many of their pieces were stylistically, cross-culturally, and cross-historically related to much older sacred built environments (see Chapter 5). Noting the many common elements of sacred places, *picturesque* gardens, and Land Art, I argued that the focus of site-specificity is a consequence of Land Art. The three characteristics of Land Art that reveal this tendency are landscape gestures, landscape idealisation, and landscape beyond materiality.

## Landscape Gestures

During the early development of Land Art, a simple mark of human modification on the land could be considered a landscape gesture. Walter De Maria's *Las Vegas Piece* (1969) (Fig. 7-13) and *Desert Cross* (1969) (Fig. 7-14), Dennis Oppenheim's *Negative Board* (1968) (Fig. 7-15) and *Cancelled Crop* (1969) (Fig. 7-16), Michael Heizer's *Double Negative* (1969-70) (Fig. 7-17), and Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* (1970) can all be considered forms of painting that used the land as a canvas. These simple landmarks served as initial emphases on specific places, acts that turned ordinary landscapes into significant or sacred places. Similar to the notion of sacred place, these "landscape gestures" usually consist of demarcated landscapes with a certain degree of human intervention.

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[30] See Chapter 4, section 4.2.2.

**Figure 7-13**, Walter De Maria, *Las Vegas Piece*, Nevada, 1969
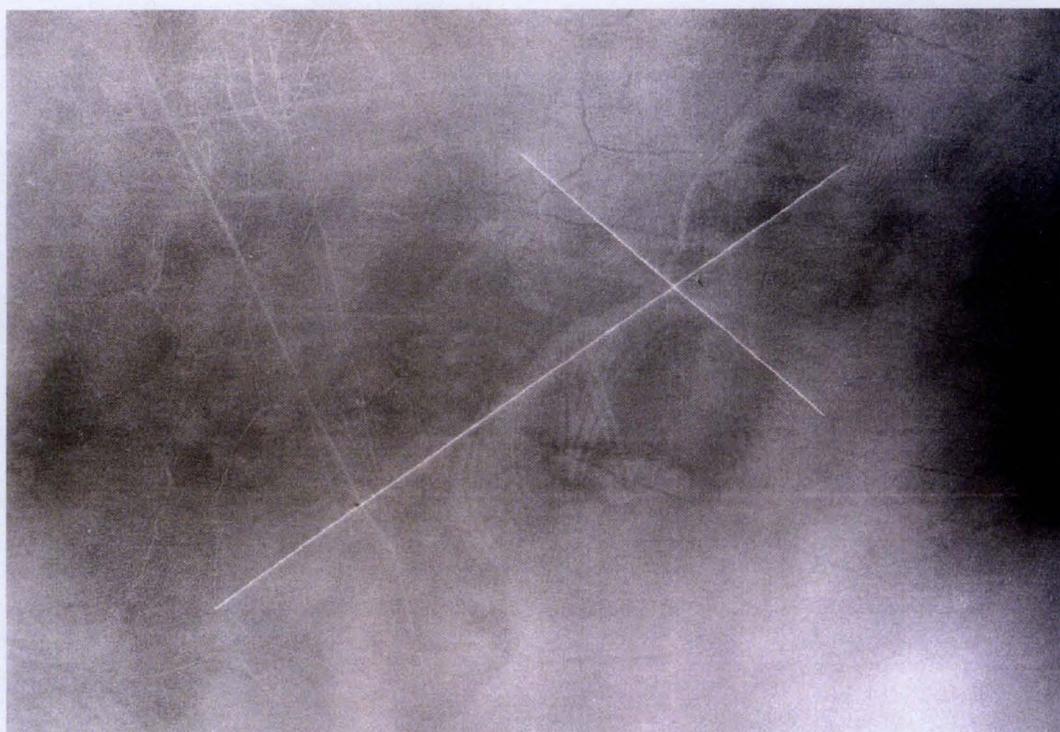


**Figure 7-14**, Walter De Maria, *Desert Cross*, Nevada, 1969

**Figure 7-15**, Dennis Oppenheim, *Negative Board*, Maine, 1968
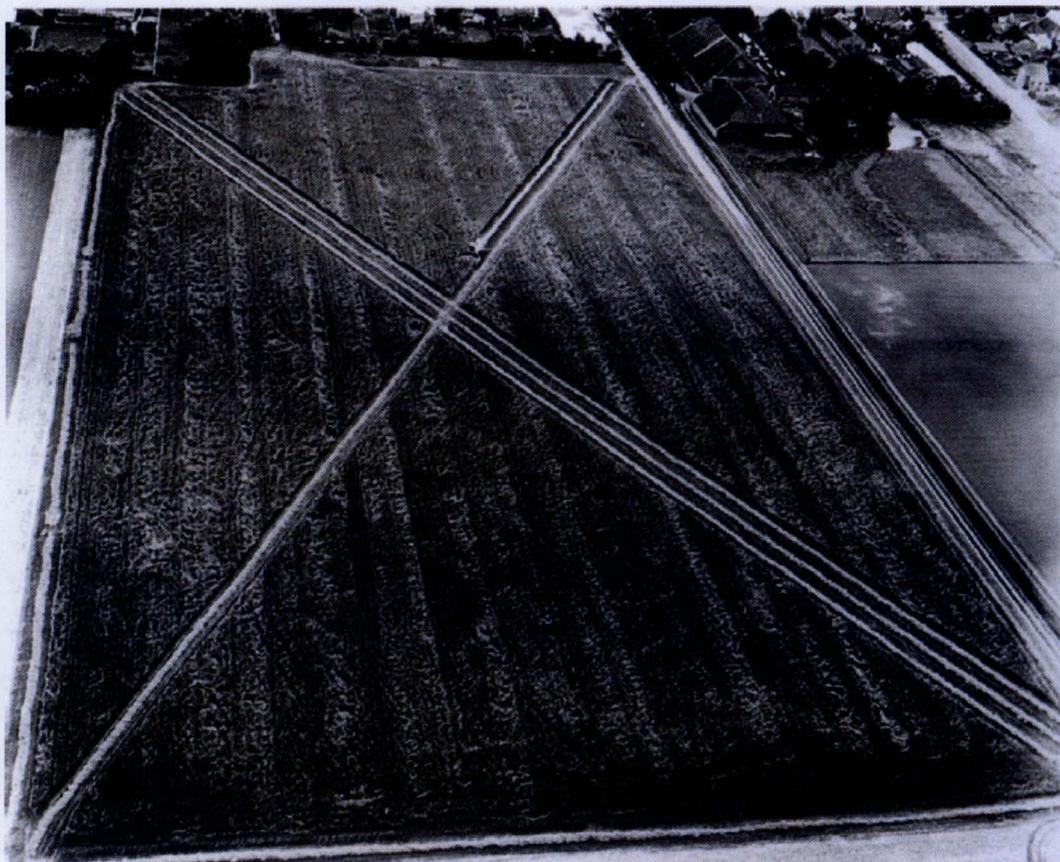


**Figure 7-16**, Dennis Oppenheim, *Cancelled Crop*, Holland, 1969

**Figure 7-17**, Michael Heizer, *Double Negative*, Nevada, 1969-70

*Las Vegas Piece*, *Desert Cross*, *Negative Board*, *Cancelled Crop* and other early Land Art artworks represent the artists' first representations of the human consumption of nature and the creation of a "second nature" (i.e., cultivated nature).[31] Land Art artists went on to develop a sense of site-specificity that resulted in more complex structures, landmarks, and gestures.

Their later works emphasised ambitious, large-scale, geometrically composed structures that were primarily united with specific sites due to their scale. These quasi-architectural structures naturally attracted comparisons with ancient and tribal monuments that offered accommodation, signified worship, or provided protection. Whether or not contemporary artists shared similar motives is ambiguous, but their pieces did share dramatic formal vocabulary, iconic appearances, and the mysteriousness of earlier prototypes—especially sacred built environments.

These pieces contained powerful suggestions of interior space. Instead of simply looking at examples of human achievement, viewers were enticed to approach and explore spaces that were indicated structurally but hidden from view. The implication and discovery of such places isolated the structures from their settings, since their spaces were largely separate from the surrounding environments. Moreover, the spectator was secluded (or perhaps protected) from the adjacent landscape.

Examples of this feature include Michael Heizer's *Complex One/City* (1972-74) (Fig. 7-18), Robert Morris's *Observatory* (1977), and Robert Smithson's *Spiral Hill and Broken Circle* (1971). These pieces extended the central premise of the previous works described as landscape gestures to become

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[31] See Chapter 6, section 6.1.

**Figure 7-18**, Michael Heizer, *Complex One/City*, Nevada, 1972-74

more mature representatives of Land Art. These pieces generally provided viewers/visitors with stronger experiences of site-specificity through more complex structures and strong senses of theatricality. They also demonstrated a closer relationship with gardens and sacred places.

## Landscape Idealisation

Another strong reference to land and the *picturesque* tradition could be found in some Land Art artists' attempts to create an idealised sense of nature. Alan Sonfist's *Time Landscape* (1965-78) (Fig. 7-19), Ian Hamilton Finlay's *Little Sparta* (1975) (Fig. 7-20), Herbert Bayer's *Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks* (1979-82) (Fig. 7-21), and Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* are representative of this concept. From a *picturesque* perspective, they demonstrate a closer relationship with gardens and sacred places, and represent the creation of a "third nature" that goes beyond the second nature of cultural landscapes.[32] These artists created contemporary versions of third nature gardens; in some cases (e.g., *Time Landscape* and *Little Sparta*), their works contained overt garden elements. *Little Sparta*, a garden designed with contemporary art features, emphasised its own ambiguous status between garden and fine art. Such works not only provide obvious links between Land Art and the *picturesque* tradition, but also remind us to reconsider the relationship between fine art and garden art.

Robert Smithson's *Spiral Jetty* represents another kind of landscape idealisation. Instead of employing a complex garden structure, Smithson used an archetypal labyrinthine pattern as his micro universe. Situated in a demarcated location, *Spiral Jetty* represented a created world between the second and third natures discussed in Chapter 6. The spiral was not only a simple landscape gesture that complemented (and was complemented by) the site, it was also a compact sacred place with an easily identified threshold, enclosure, and paths.[33]

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[32] See Chapter 6, section 6.1.

[33] See Chapter 5, section 5.2.

**Figure 7-19**, Alan Sonfist, *Time Landscape*, New York City, 1965-78



**Figure 7-20**, Ian Hamilton Finlay, *Little Sparta*, Scotland, 1975

**Figure 7-21**, Herbert Bayer, *Mill Creek Canyon Earthworks*, Washington, 1979-82

In *Time Landscape*, Alan Sonfist planted trees and shrubbery that would have been found in colonial America on a small parcel of earth on West Broadway in New York City. Similar to the efforts of the "landscape gesture" group, Sonfist presented nature in an unadulterated, unmodified state as his fundamental content. That his work was surrounded by a chain link fence and situated in the centre of SoHo reflects Smithson's concept of "nonsites," in which raw nature is presented in an art context.

Sonfist did not generalise about landscape or space, and therefore the greatest significance of his piece could be found in its qualities and aspects, which determined most—if not all—aesthetic decisions. Sonfist's veneration of nature led to a corresponding diminishment of formal concerns. Instead, the effects of nature and the site predominate, in a manner similar to an Impressionist painting. Moreover, in comparison to Smithson's purposeful choosing of degraded sites in relation to human consumption, these artists presented *picturesque* views without human presence. Reinforcing these idealistic outlooks was, to some extent, a site-specific concern that placed natural values and processes in a position of prominence.

## Landscape beyond Materiality

Land Art originally called for the radical reorganisation of our natural environment in an attempt to mitigate man's alienation from nature. While contemporary sculptors might still think in aesthetic terms, their concerns and techniques have increasingly become those of environmental managers, urban planners, architects, civil engineers, and cultural anthropologists. Art can no longer be viewed primarily as a self-sufficient entity. The iconic content of a work has largely been eliminated as art has gradually entered into a more intimate relationship with viewers and their environments. This tendency is revealed in Land Art's emphasis on materiality and attempts to go beyond materiality.

As discussed previously, another striking aspect of Land Art was the wide range and unusual nature of the materials employed—many of which were not normally associated with sculpture. Their common features included their tendency toward easy manipulation, their flexibility, and their multiple textures. Few things were "made" in the traditional sense; materials were allowed to assume their final shapes naturally. The tools employed were very basic. With a tremendous number of means at their disposal, the new sculptors manifested their pieces in an infinite variety of configurations.

A natural consequence of these features is the intimate relationship that exists between a work and its site. Of special importance here is a work's position compared to the floor or ground. New sculptures do not instinctively stand isolated on pedestals; instead they sit on or slightly in the ground. The floor or ground (and, occasionally, the surrounding walls) often form an integral part of a piece. Spectators can sometimes pass through a work as well as around it. As discussed in Chapter 6, new sculptors and Land Art artists emphasised theatricality and objecthood instead of focusing on the objects they created from new materials. They continue to be more interested in site-specificity that transcends materiality.

The idea of site-specificity transcending materiality is a part of my own studio practice.[34] However, unlike Land Art artists, I often work with existing manufactured materials. My concern with contemporary site-specificity is reflected in my choice of urban rather than natural landscapes. I use copper tubing and nylon threads to augment specific urban sites or to create ideal landscapes in white cube spaces. I also replace landscape gestures with labyrinthine patterns painted on floors, walls, and ceilings. My idealized landscapes are embodied in the enclosed spaces I create, and site-specificity is emphasised by unique environments and illusory effects created with manufactured materials.

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[34] See Part II, Retainable Documentation of Studio Practice.

## 7.3 Summary

In this chapter, I explained the influence of the *picturesque* tradition on 20th-century Land Art and site-specific artworks. Through the development of 19th-century landscape architecture, the tradition was re-invented in North America. I then argued that the landscape architecture projects created by Frederick Law Olmsted and his followers served as direct influences for Land Art artists in the 1960s and 1970s. Many aspects of Land Art are tied to the Chinese concept of *jingjie* as well as to the archetypal patterns of sacred places. I therefore used a *jingjie* perspective to demonstrate how sacred places and *picturesque* formats continue to evolve in the current efforts of Land Art and site-specific artists.

# Chapter 8

## Conclusions

### 8.1 Findings—Cross-Cultural Currents in Land Art

From the perspective of 20th-century cross-cultural exchanges, I examined the combined influences of the Chinese *jingjie* concept and the Western *picturesque* on site-specificity in Land Art. Based on descriptions of Chinese gardens, sacred places, English landscape gardens, and Land Art, certain cross-cultural features were identified in both Chinese and English landscape ideals in relation to human co-existence with nature. In addition to considerations of form, colour, and appearance, I looked at the philosophical background that drove Land Art artists to express connections to specific places and to the earth in general.

From my position as a practising artist, I began with a review of the problematic position of all Chinese/Taiwanese artists—the need to reconsider the significance of traditional Chinese art in order to relocate the current state of contemporary Chinese art. It was my desire to establish a tenable position for practising Chinese artists that transcends the monolithic "East-West" debate—that is, a position that supports hybridity in contemporary Chinese art.

The Chinese aesthetic concept of *jingjie* has long been suggested as the most important in terms of fluid spatial experiences and their multiple representations. The central perspective I followed in this research led me to view the development of Chinese gardens and their illusory characteristics in relation to *jingjie*. Accordingly, I analysed the principles used to create a sense of *jingjie* in Chinese gardens in hope that they would continue to be appropriated, reinterpreted, and transformed for use in contemporary Chinese art. Furthermore, I demonstrated the concept of sacred place in relation to Chinese garden design. By revealing the underlying structure of sacred

places—including their physical (e.g., paths, thresholds, and enclosures) and psychological patterns (e.g., spiritual journeys)—it was possible to describe an archetypal model that has been shared across many cultures over many centuries. I have suggested that these archetypal physical and psychological patterns are links between *jingjie* and the development of 20th-century Land Art.

In addition to their separate connections to sacred places, parallels between *jingjie* and the *picturesque* were also considered. As part of an earlier cross-cultural current, Chinese influences on the development of the English garden tradition later exerted a significant impact on the Western concept of site-specificity. I also argued that the *picturesque* depiction of the relationship between man and nature continued to influence 19th-century landscape architecture and 20th-century Land Art (both primarily in North America). The idea of the *picturesque* transformed the aesthetic focus of many artists from two-dimensional visual images to three-dimensional bodily experiences of landscapes. This transformation eventually helped to establish a new sense of site-specificity that evolved into an expression of a new relationship between man and nature during the last half of the 20th century. I also demonstrated that the significance of the *picturesque* not only serves as a bridge between sacred places and Land Art, but also exists in parallel to the Chinese concept of *jingjie* in terms of attitudes toward nature. The new *picturesque* tradition that was established in North America in the 1800s directly influenced the Land Art of the 1960s and 1970s.

In this thesis, I demonstrated that the Chinese concept of *jingjie* is one embodiment of the uniquely fluid spatiality found in Chinese landscape arts—especially in the organisation of Chinese gardens. *Jingjie* and Chinese gardens were the central starting-off points from which I explored archetypal sacred place patterns and their influences on the Western idea of the *picturesque*. These parallel East-West connections served as both direct and indirect influences on contemporary interest in site-specificity, and were essential to establishing a broader historical context toward a deeper understanding of cross-cultural currents and their influences on Land Art artists. The route that I took to arrive at this conclusion is presented in Figure 8-1.
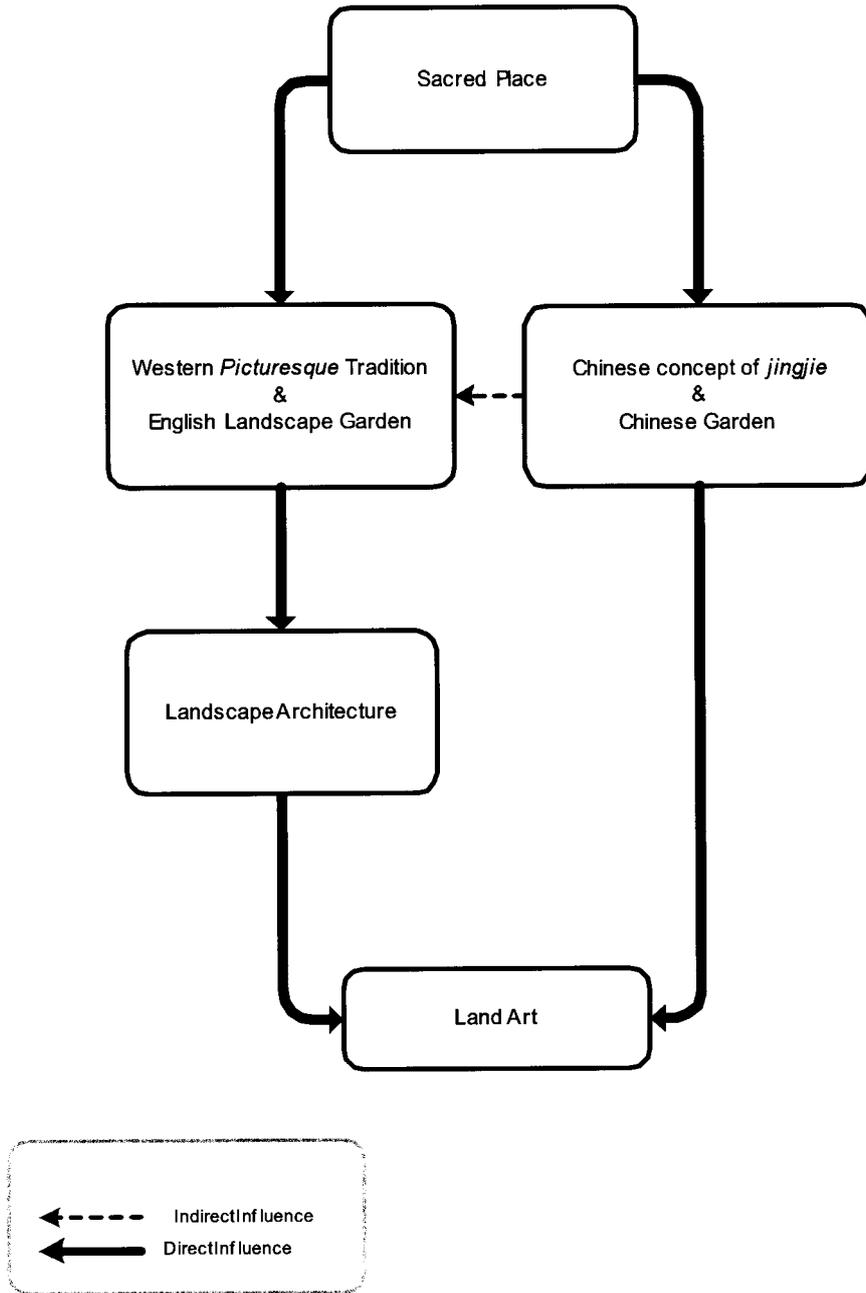
**Figure 8-1**, The Diagram of Research Outcome

## 8.2 Cross-Cultural Influences in My Work

From the beginning of this research, my goal was to gain insight into the cultural, philosophical, and aesthetic roots of traditional and contemporary Chinese art in a manner that would enrich my studio practice. Throughout the research process, my practice and theoretical analyses have informed each other. In other words, my personal experience and practice have helped me establish guidelines for my theoretical considerations; the images, forms, and structure of my work (e.g., labyrinthine patterns and the use of certain materials) became the central focus of my practice, encouraging me to search for specific references in relation to the theoretical aspects of this study. In addition, the combination of literature review and theoretical reasoning allowed me to articulate aspects of my studio practice, to challenge common tendencies in contemporary Chinese art, and to demonstrate the value of a re-invented traditional Chinese aesthetic.

How viewer/participants respond psychologically to art has been of primary interest throughout this project. Due to the centrality of the *jingjie* concept to my research, considerations of subjective consciousness and psychological interaction with art were considered essential issues. In preparation for this study, I explored such topics as Jungian psychoanalysis, art psychotherapy, transpersonal psychology, and D. W. Winnicott's theory of emotional development.[1] While I never made direct references to any of these topics in this thesis, they served as important supplemental resources during the early stages of my research. Another idea that I explored in relation to *jingjie* was the connection between Western psychoanalysis and Eastern Chan (Zen) Buddhism, which has been the focus of scholarly works by Erich Fromm and D. T. Suzuki, among others.[2] Furthermore, James Liu is one of several researchers who has studied similarities between phenomenology and *jingjie*.[3]

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[1] Winnicott proposed the idea of the "transitional object," thus establishing the psychological background for the concept of "transitional place" (e.g., churches and temples) as discussed in Chapter 5.

[2] Erich Fromm, D.T. Suzuki, and Richard De Martino, Zen Buddhism and Psychoanalysis (New York: Harper, 1970).

[3] James J. Y. Liu, Chinese Theories of Literature (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1975).

In this research, the end result consists of interactions with references that provide route maps for anyone wishing to experience research in ways that go beyond mere text or linguistic meaning. In order to study my experiences with the creative process, I recorded in detail all activities associated with this project: personal work processes, seminars, tutorials, interviews, presentations, and exhibitions. A collection of images of my studio practice and exhibitions are presented in the second part of this thesis. Unlike conventional academic projects that only produce theoretical analyses, I have tried to make my own experience as both a researcher and practising artist visually accessible.

## 8.2.1 Iconography in My Studio Practice

In the 1990s, at the beginning of my interest in this subject, contemporary Taiwanese artists and critics were embroiled in heated debate over questions of "East versus West" and "tradition versus modernity." These issues were discussed in response to the diverse Western art forms introduced by Taiwanese artists who had studied overseas in the 1980s, and who actively expanded the view and depth of Taiwanese contemporary art. At the same time, Taiwan was entering a period of social-political confusion over identity issues that exceeded the relatively small number of changes that occurred in Taiwanese contemporary art. In one way, Western art forms served as tools for Taiwanese artists to express their social-political concerns, but without adequate knowledge of an historical context. Thus, the large-scale appropriation of Western art forms ultimately led to confusion in the interpretation of contemporary Taiwanese art.

My undergraduate years coincided with this period of debate. In hindsight, my own confusion was not unique; the East-West and tradition-modernity issues were affecting contemporary Chinese artists in Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, and overseas Chinese communities. As discussed in Chapter 2, I have come to believe that the same dilemma has been encountered by most non-Western and post-colonial societies that have found themselves overwhelmed by Western influences. Fortunately, I was also educated at the beginning of a

period of cross-cultural exchanges, the likes of which had never been previously witnessed. We live in a time of acceptance of non-Western cultural influences in contemporary art, which has helped me in my personal effort to find connections between past themes and current trends.

My overseas study experience began with my admission to the Rochester Institute of Technology (RIT) in 1996. My time in the US (my first Western experience) was similar to that of an ethnographer exploring an unknown tribe. I focused on patterns of human thought and behaviour that marked the contemporary art of the foreign culture I was living in. D. M. Fetterman (1998) has described ethnographers as observers who "are noted for the ability to keep an open mind about the group or culture they are studying."[4] It is imperative that ethnographers enter any culture with an open mind (but not an empty head) and a clear idea of their needs and goals. As with all explorers, I moved to the US in search of answers to big questions; the focus of my inquiry included both Western cultural norms and the contemporary art that resulted from them.

Also similar to all past and current explorers, my experience in a new land forced me to reconsider my own cultural identity. My ability to view many social and artistic issues through the eyes of others was bolstered by the physical and cultural distance between the US and Taiwan. I was able to use my new insights into my own culture to create works that highlighted my cultural roots instead of pushing them aside. During my second year at RIT, I immersed myself in the study of art-centred psychotherapy, in which emotional disabilities and disorientations are addressed through the process of creating art. This approach to the needs of the human mind and inner self fit in well with my own Chan (Zen) practice. Through my study of art psychotherapy, I gained insight into relationships among artists, viewers, and art works, which I addressed in my master's thesis (entitled Art as a Self-healing Process). I concluded that art-making is one unique kind of self-healing process for some artists, with each individual step serving as a reorientation and reconnection between artists and a dislocated psychological centre. Art-making has been proposed as a tool that

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[4] David M. Fetterman, Ethnography: Step by Step (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1998).

reflects the psychological process behind an artist's self-awareness. At the same time, artists can create works that exert a meditative effect on viewers and/or participants.

## 8.2.2 Labyrinth and Iconography

In hindsight, I acknowledge that my installation *The Sacred Zone* (part of my April, 1998 degree show) (Fig. 8-2) was an important transitional point in my studio practice.[5] All of the installation elements were designed to create a meditative environment for viewer/participants—an extension of the Buddhist *mandala* concept. As Leidy and Thurman note in Mandala: The Architecture of Enlightenment, the act of making a mandala or experiencing a mandala pattern helps artists and viewer/participants alike to feel the associated meditative effect.[6] According to Leidy and Thurman's assumption, mandalas encourage interactions among artists, their artworks, and viewer/participants that evoke historical and philosophical references. My goal for *The Sacred Zone* was to re-interpret an ancient "mystery" in contemporary form. The project changed my view toward historical references in the presentation of contemporary art; since then, I have become increasingly inspired by ancient myths, sacred places, and religious icons.

While my original intent for *The Sacred Zone* was to create a meditative space, I eventually came to recognise certain mythological structures and patterns that were hidden in the piece. For instance, the size of the installation (14 feet tall) and its location (in the centre of a gallery) (Fig. 8-3) resulted in a path that viewer/participants had to travel along in order to reach a threshold. The installation's labyrinthine pattern (Fig. 8-4) was an obvious reference to the issues

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[5] The installation consisted of a canvas tent (twelve feet high and ten feet wide) in the form of a pentagon. Viewer/participants were allowed to enter the tent's empty interior space, which was lit with blue lights for atmospheric effect. A labyrinth was hand-painted on the canvas floor.

[6] Denise Patry Leidy, and Robert A. F. Thurman, Mandala: The Architecture of Enlightenment (Boston: Shambhala, 1998).

**Figure 8-2**, *The Sacred Zone*, RIT, 1998



**Figure 8-3**, *The Sacred Zone* and Audiences, 1998



**Figure 8-4**, The Labyrinth Pattern inside *The Sacred Zone*, 1998

discussed in this thesis. This interpretation provided me with a means for articulating the context of my own studio practice; the labyrinth icon appears repeatedly in my work, both physically and psychologically.

During the present project, I continued my exploration of these issues, both in the studio and in theory. My literature review especially helped me to recognise and address cross-cultural issues. In my practice, I have become better able to express my cross-cultural ideas and to share them with my audience. The structure of this thesis (that is, a combination of practice and theoretical review) allowed me to experiment with the idea of interaction between audience and a specific site. My exhibitions and studio efforts during the research period helped me to identify icons that express my emotions; as I mentioned in the preceding section, my discovery of the many possible patterns that form labyrinths is the most important result of this project.

The labyrinthine patterns that I used in projects between 1999 and 2002 can be analysed visually and physically; it is a reflection of traditional Chinese aesthetics, the combination encourages a sense of *jingjie*. In the form of painted graphic patterns, labyrinths function not only as paths for viewer/participants to explore, but also as metaphors for journeys. The physical labyrinthine structures echo an archetypal pattern of sacred places—a controlled environment for viewer/participants to experience.

Following the interest developed through my art practice and my initial theoretical survey, the fluid spatiality and dynamic experience (both of which are core characteristics of my own work) became the focus of this project. Accordingly, this research looks at the complex relationships among theoretical aspects of my studio practice (i.e., *jingjie*, Chinese gardens, sacred places, the *picturesque*, and Land Art) and site-specificity. In Part II of this thesis, I will discuss the three experiential stages that I went through during this project.

## 8.3 Further Research

One of several conclusions from this research is that cross-cultural currents have played an important role in art for many centuries, and should not be viewed as a 19th- and/or 20th-century phenomenon. Of course, the dominant influence of Western culture (especially American culture) is easily observed today, especially in contemporary art. However, as I discussed in Chapter 6, Asian influences can be found in 18th-century English gardens, as well as in many aspects of post-World War II art movements. Without these cross-cultural exchanges, the contexts and diversity of contemporary art would not have been as challenging and compelling as they were and continue to be. Culture is now viewed as less of a monolithic entity than as a dynamic concept.

Current landscape concerns have experienced a strong shift from natural to urban environments. The Land Art of the 1960s and 1970s is no longer suitable for today's social-ecological environment. The Land Art artists' emphasis on large works in remote areas proved to be inaccessible for most audiences; today's practitioners rely on photography, film, books, and similar formats. For the most part, they failed in their attempts to refute the commercial gallery system,[7] since their enormous projects usually required large support from private and public sources. On the other hand, as Land Art faded, site-specific projects (located in urban landscapes, galleries, and such alternative spaces as warehouses) grew in stature.

In this thesis, I tried to establish a map for readers to explore the Chinese concept of *jingjie*, the Western idea of the *picturesque*, and the universal archetype of sacred place. Looking back, I can see numerous areas that require further exploration. Potential research topics include the psychological dimensions of site-specific art in urban spaces, the function of site-specific art as part of the urban landscape, and the possibility of creating *jingjie* with digital media.

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[7] One of the original goals of Land Art was to reject the "white cube" system associated with commercial galleries. However, many (if not most) Land Artists still depended on commercial galleries and public museums to present and promote their ideas. In most cases, audiences viewed Land Art projects through photographs, films, and videos exhibited in "white cube" spaces instead of experiencing them on-site.

Departing from a unique Chinese perspective of space and place, I tried to reveal the complex contexts and philosophies that support today's site-specific art. The historical connections I suggested in this thesis spotlight the human consumption of nature.[8] From the earliest attempts at establishing connections with the land to the modification of sacred places to the creation of gardens to 20th-century Land Art, humans have demonstrated an increasing obsession with nature, land, and place. These developments are particularly evident as part of the history of Chinese gardens and English landscape gardens. Concern over human existence in relation to a specific place is an essential topic of our history; since the birth of human societies, we have emphasised this concern via myth, religion, philosophy, and art. The significance of today's site-specific art is its ability to allow audiences to directly experience it instead of relying on linguistic interpretations.

My literature survey has convinced me that much remains to be explored in terms of the link between Chinese *jingjie* and Western contemporary art.[9] Contemporary Chinese artists seldom pay attention to *jingjie*; those who do (mostly contemporary ink artists) work within the limitations of traditional media and techniques, and therefore must struggle to express *jingjie* in a three-dimensional sense. Apparently, the contemporary Chinese artworks exhibited at the Venice Biennale show that the spatial concept and bodily experience I described in this thesis have been largely overlooked by contemporary Chinese artists. Further research on contemporary interpretations of *jingjie* should help to enrich the psychological dimension of site-specific art. Through the re-invention of Chinese traditions, *jingjie* can provide an alternative interpretation to contemporary site-specific projects, and a "Third Space" for contemporary Chinese art. By emphasising the dynamic relationship between subjectivity and objectivity, the significance of an audience's psychological interaction is revealed. By focusing on the psychological level, future research

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[8] See Chapter 6, section 6.1.

[9] Through the re-invention of Chinese tradition, *jingjie* provides an alternative interpretation for contemporary site-specific works of art.

efforts may be able to reveal additional factors that influence our site-specific experiences.

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# *Part II*

## Retainable Documentation of Studio Practice

**1998-2002**

In an era of multiculturalism, I argue that contemporary art is about cultural context rather than medium, making it very important for artists to search their cultural roots. More than ever before, people in the 21st century are very much aware of "others"; the consequences of such awareness are naturally being represented and observed in contemporary art, especially in the UK today. As a practicing Chinese/Taiwanese artist, I have become increasingly aware of the fundamental philosophical differences and cross-cultural currents that marks contemporary art scenes, and I have started to question the consequences of these differences, particularly how they affect the works of contemporary Chinese artists. As an artist with non-western cultural origins, I consider my role a bridging one between contemporary art and traditional Chinese aesthetics. I seek to reshape traditional Chinese aesthetics in a contemporary sense, and express them using contemporary art forms. It is my intention to establish a tenable position for practicing Chinese artists that goes beyond monolithic "East-West" debates, with the goal in mind of enhancing the context of contemporary Chinese art.

This "retainable documentation of studio practice" demonstrates the inseparable relationship between art practice and theory by embodying the idea that "practice and theory inform each other." My studio practice provides both visual and physical elements for theoretical analysis—for example, the labyrinthine patterns and spatial illusions that together serve as the guiding focus of my work. In turn, my studio practice was enriched by a theoretical analysis and literature review of previous research on the *jingjie* concept, Chinese gardening techniques, the archetypal patterns of sacred places, and the notion of site-specificity. Furthermore, the idea of "re-inventing tradition" also plays an important role in this research, especially in my studio practice. "Tradition" here means Chinese *jingjie* and gardening, the Western *picturesque*, and the universal tradition of sacred places. One outcome of this research is that a re-invention of these traditions creates new potential for contemporary art that serves as an alternative to the monolithic East-West and modernity-tradition debates. As a Chinese/Taiwanese artist, it is essential for me to reconsider Chinese traditions and their embodiment in contemporary art forms through my studio practice.

## Model Stage

In the early stage of this research project, idea sketch and model became the tools for me to explore the concept of *jingjie* and the labyrinth pattern, in relation to my studio-practice. This project taught me a great deal about the use of scaled models to explore the various physical possibilities of labyrinths.

*Temple Piece* presents an example of an early temple model that I constructed for this research, based on a blueprint of an ancient Indian temple. The entering sequence and architectonic structure of this three-sided temple, with a pine tree standing in its midst, represents a symbolic pilgrimage. The resulting installation included wooden girders and columns that crossed each other in an unconventional manner, thus creating a sense of disorientation. Transparent screens located at different levels simultaneously differentiated and connected the spaces within the structure. The result was a three-dimensional model of a labyrinthine garden, based on the re-invention of a traditional sacred place. This sense of enclosure and specific location is also apparent in my later installations.
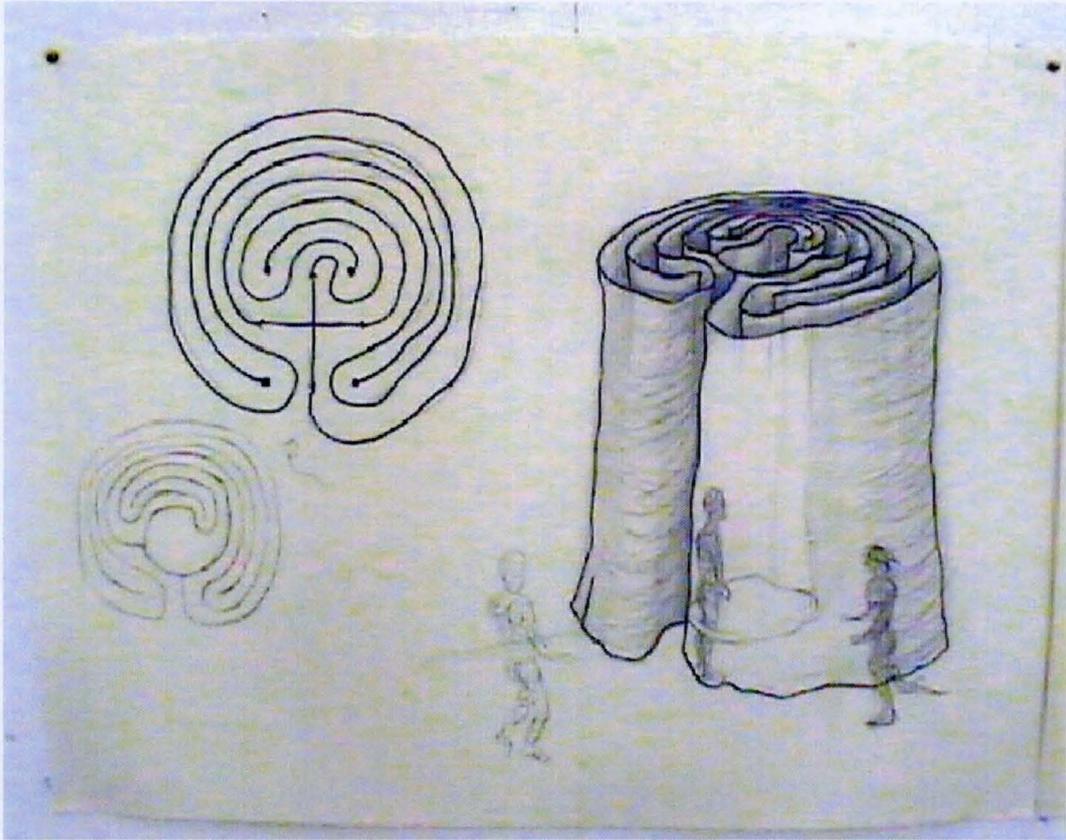
**Idea Sketch 1**, Pencil on paper, October 1998
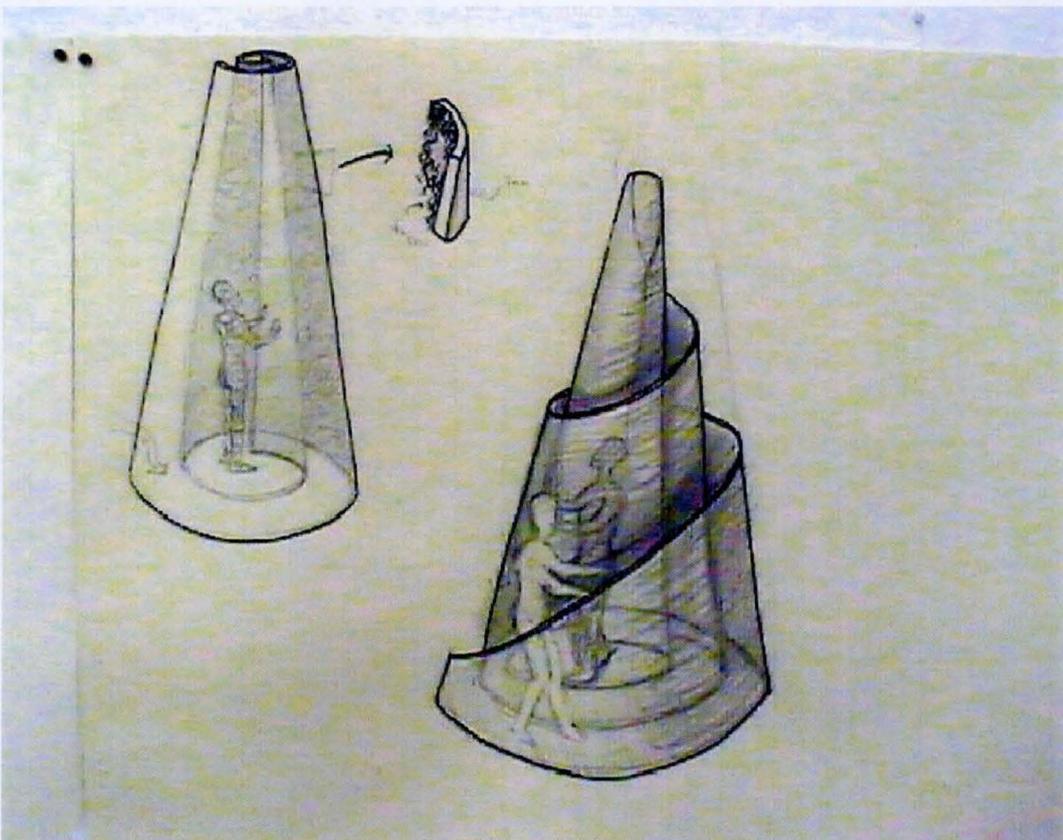


**Idea Sketch 2**, Pencil on paper, October 1998
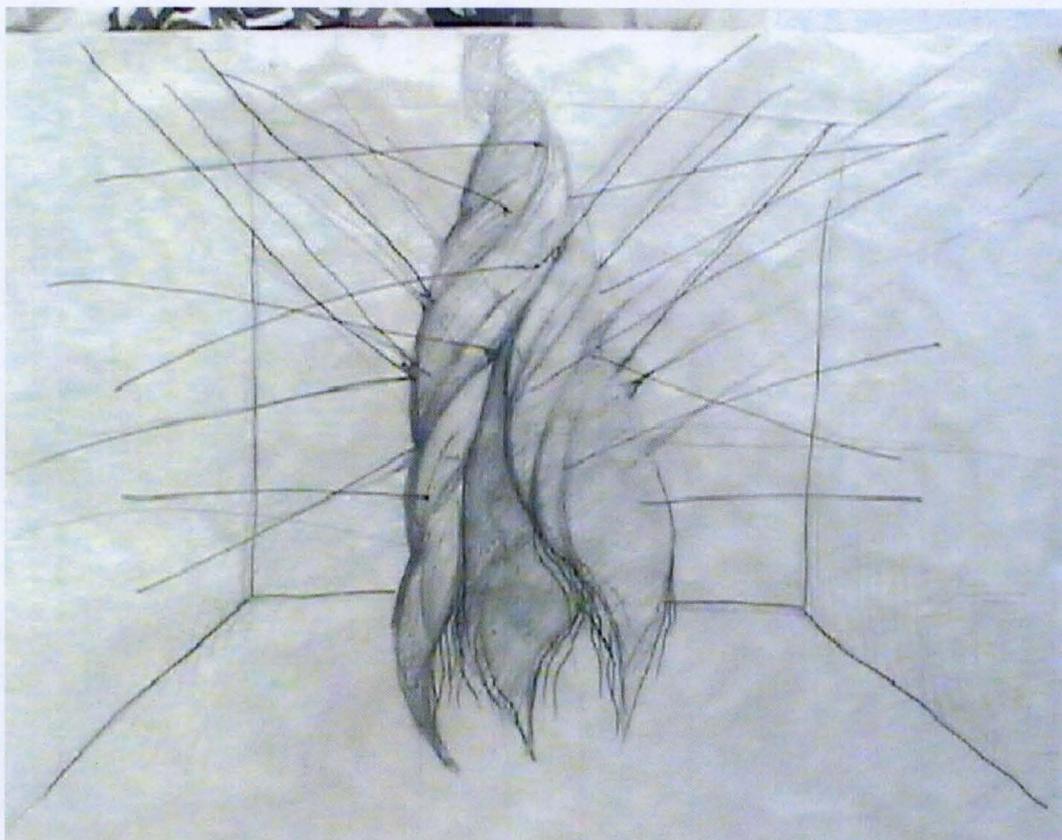
**Idea Sketch 3**, Pencil on paper, November 1998
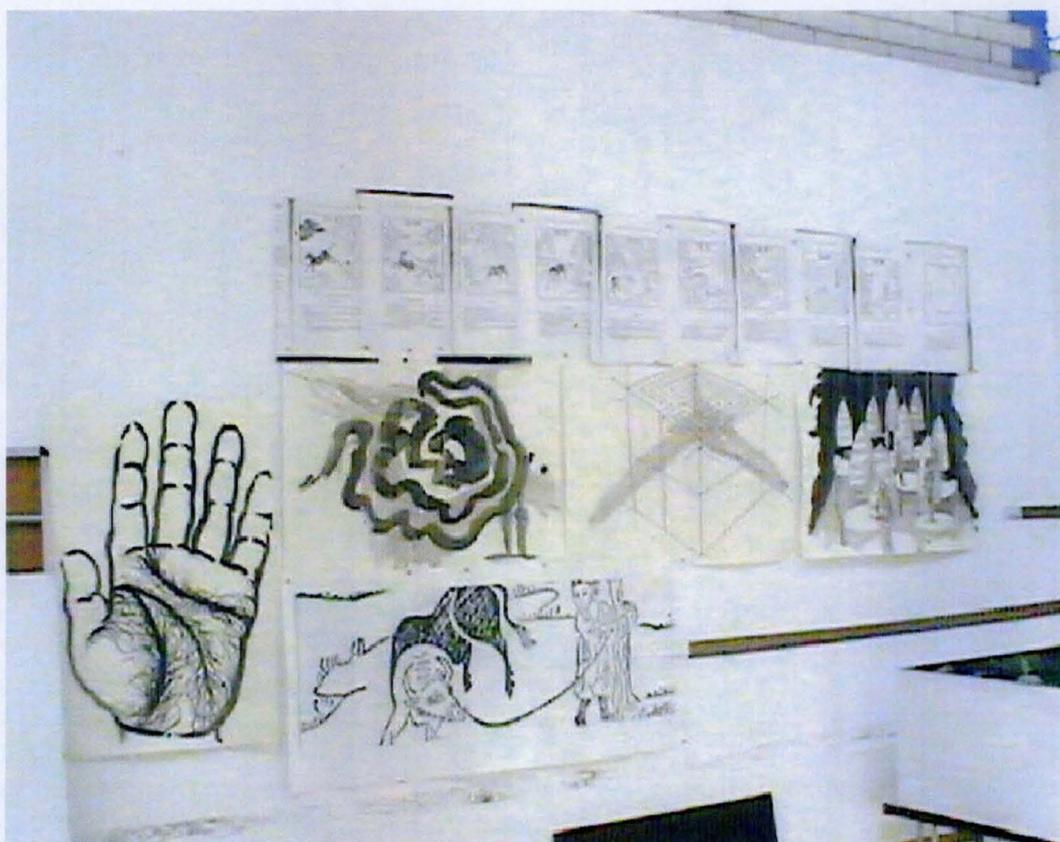


**Sketches and Drawings in Small Bath Studio**, December 1998
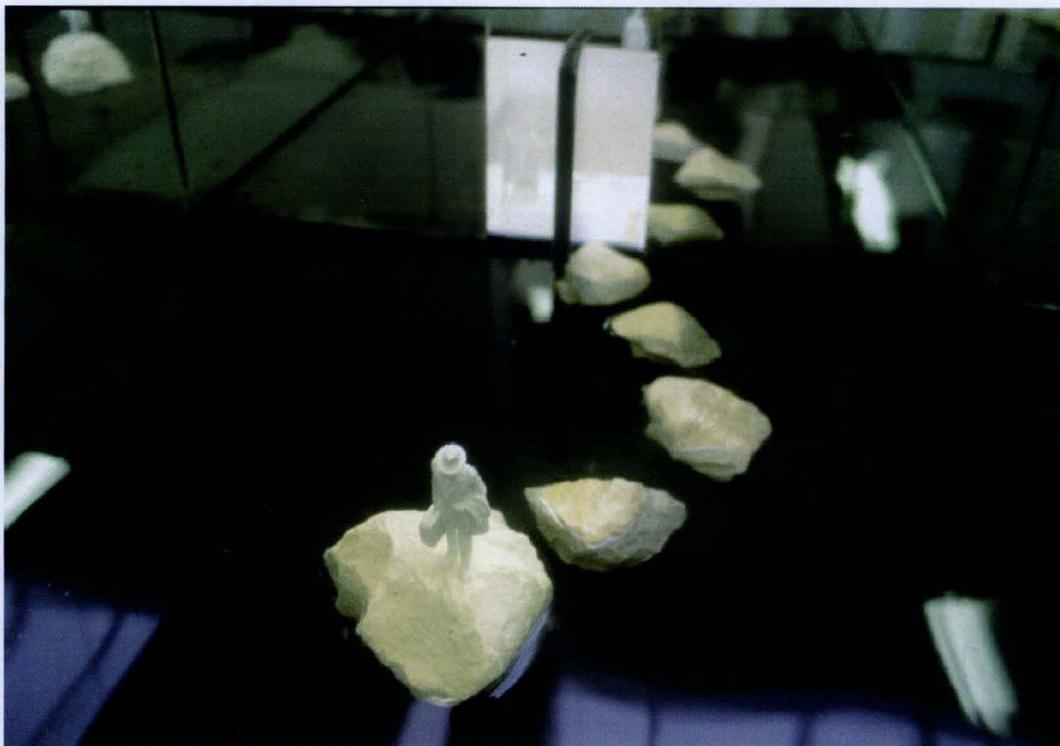
**Box Piece**, March 1999
Size:    80cm X 80cm X 75cm (L, W, H)
Materials: MDF, rocks, water, readymade figures, mirror



**Box Piece**, Detail
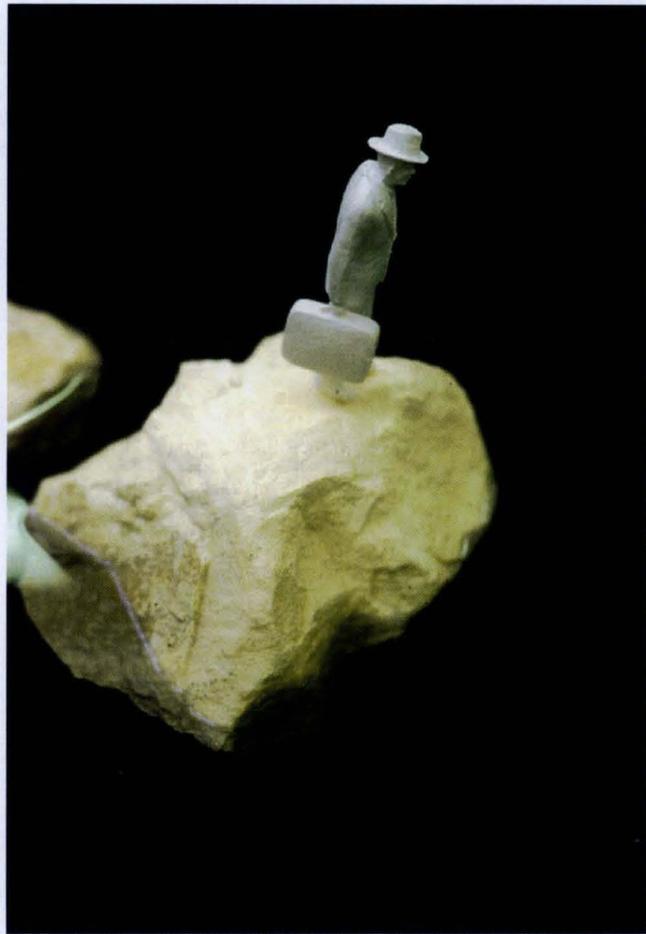
**Box Piece**, Detail
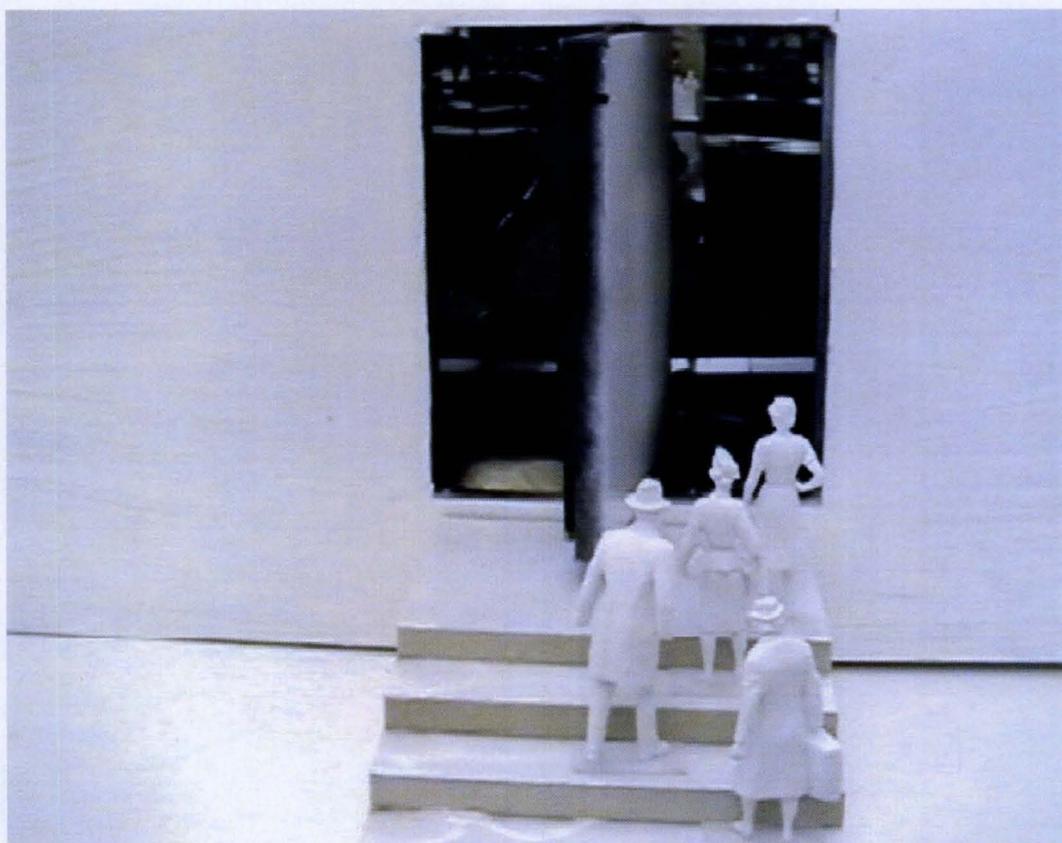


**Box Piece**, Detail
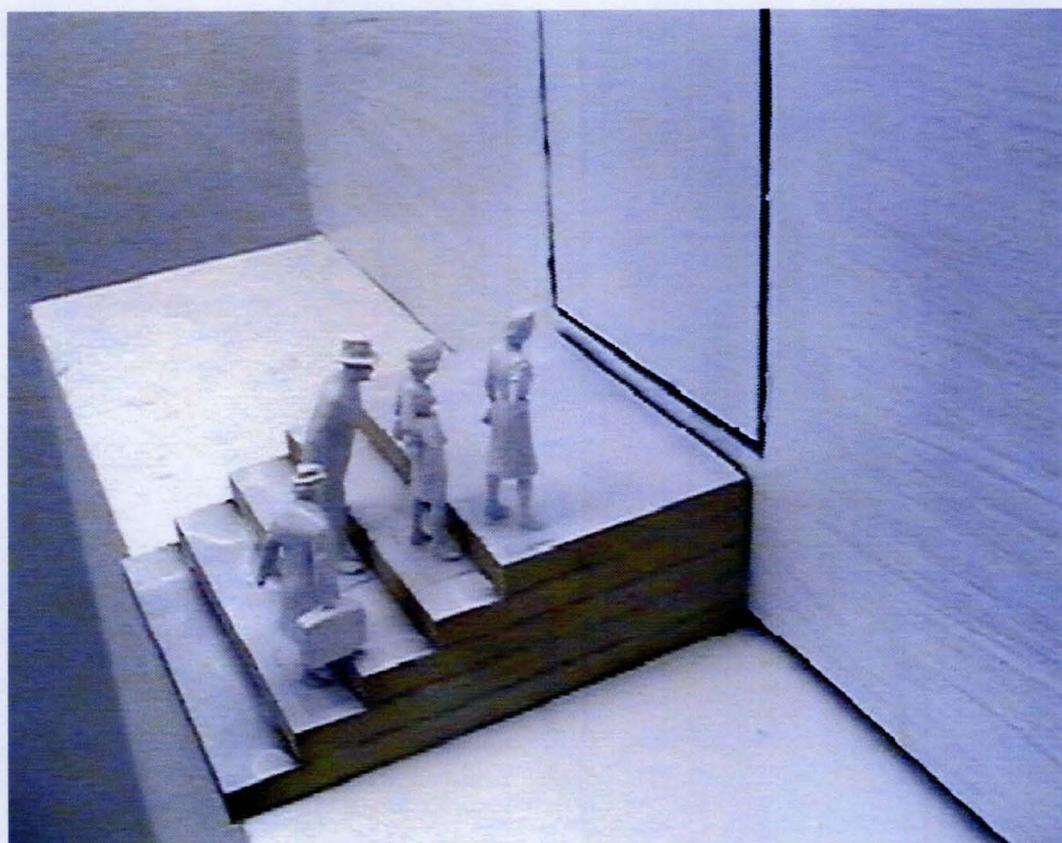
**Box Piece**, Detail



**Box Piece**, Detail

**Plant Piece**, April 1999
Size:   45cm X 25cm X 50cm (L, W, H)
Materials:  wood,  small  plant,  screen



**Plant Piece**, Detail

**Plant Piece**, Detail
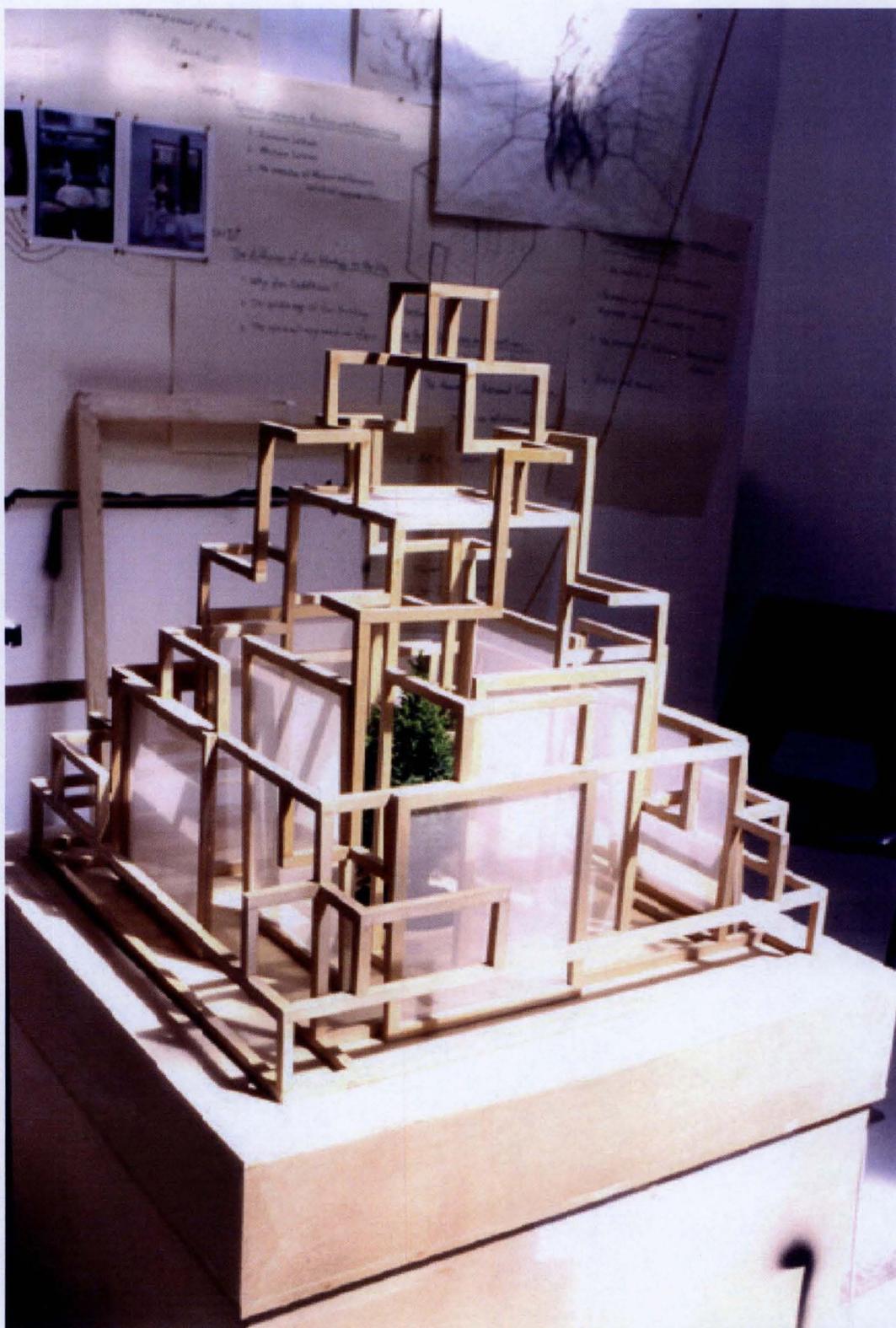


**Plant Piece**, Detail

**Temple Piece**, May 1999
Size:    80cm X 80cm X 75cm (L, W, H)
Materials: MDF, pine tree, screen

**Temple Piece**, Work in process
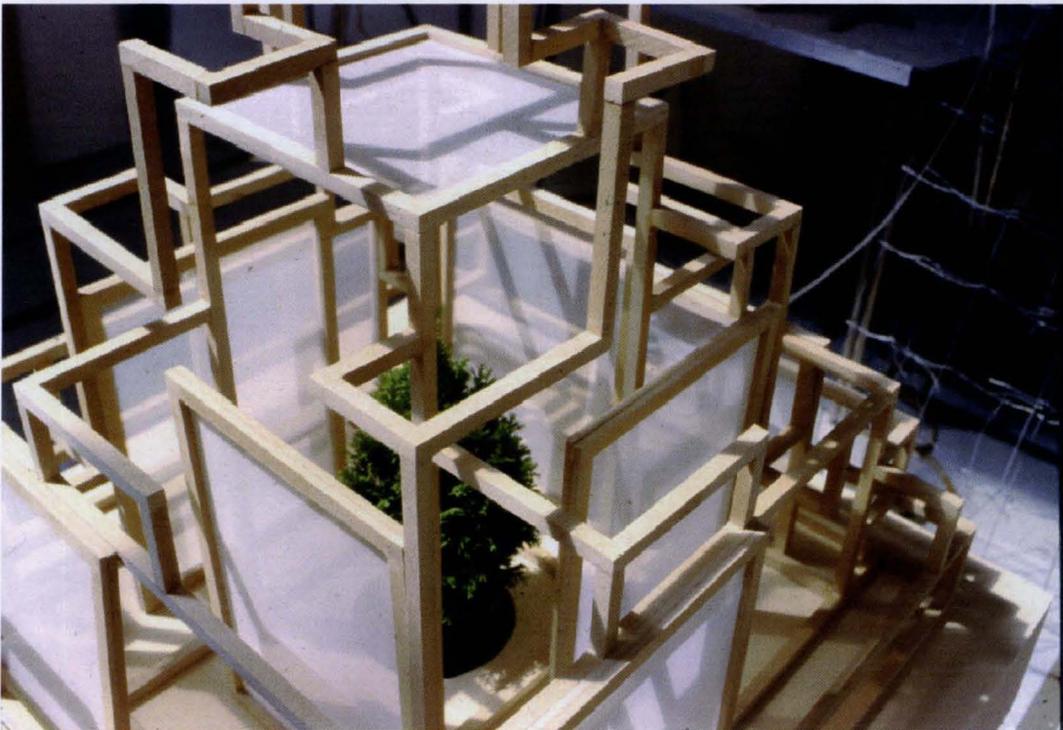


**Temple Piece**, Detail
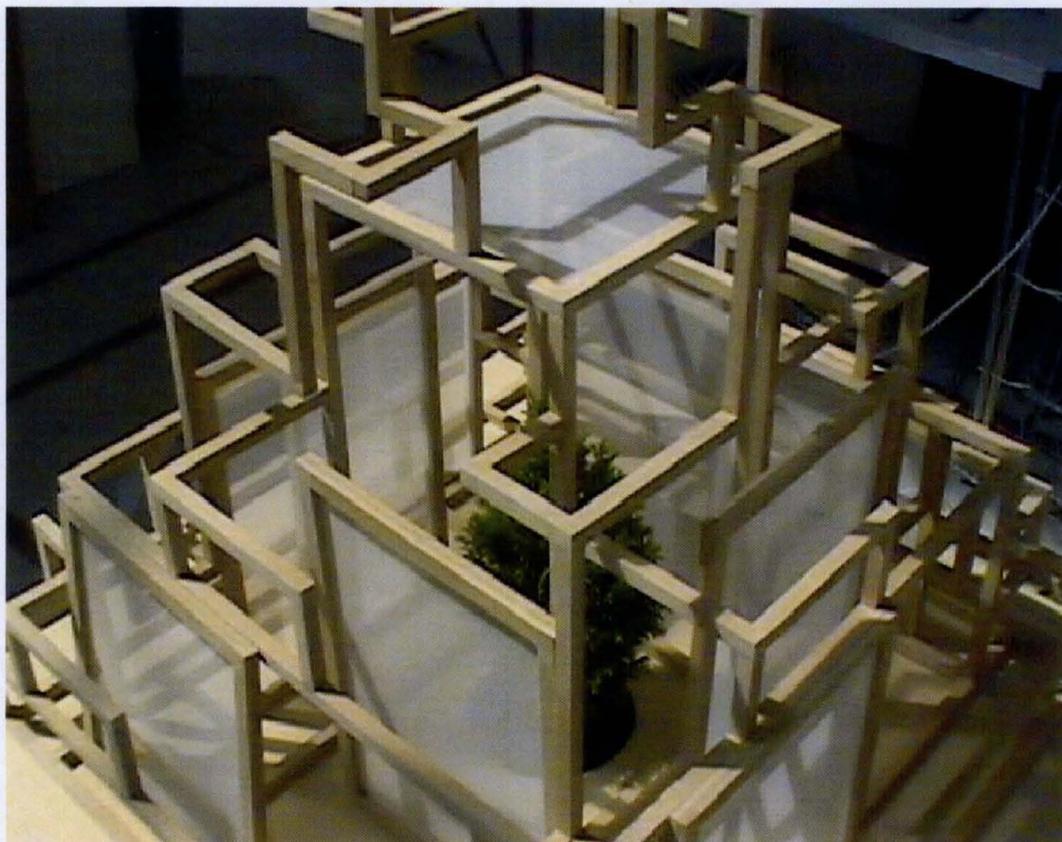
**Temple Piece**, Detail



**Temple Piece**, Detail
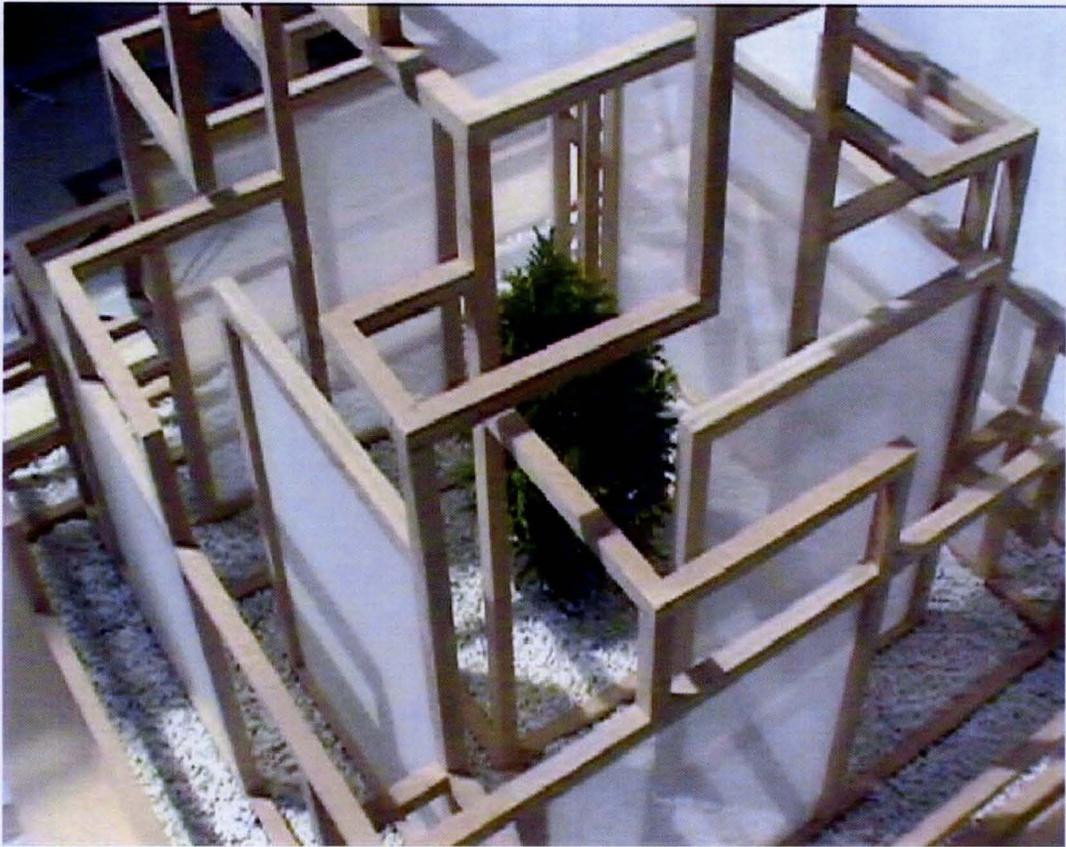
**Temple Piece**, Detail



**Temple Piece**, Detail

## White-Cube Stage

During this second stage, most of my full-size experimental works were completed in white-cube studio spaces.  I continued to experiment with models, since physical structure remained a primary focus.  However, this stage is also marked by a new element: graphic illusion.  In the *Burlap Piece*, a labyrinthine structure sits suspended within a white-cube space.  My intention was to examine the experience of a sacred place in non-religious terms using a contemporary art form.  As I explained in the Chapter 5, labyrinth patterns have long served as signifiers of sacred (religious or meditative) places in the West. Here the use of natural materials allowed viewers to use touch as an additional means of interacting with the artwork.  The need to follow a path to reach a final destination created a strong sense of a temporal-spatial experience.  It is easy to identify the path, threshold, and enclosure elements in this piece; it was my desire that viewers also gain a sense of journey from this work.[1]

During this stage, the use of graphic illusion in presenting a labyrinthine pattern became an essential new element in my work.  The *Labyrinth Piece* was created at the same time as the *Burlap Piece*, allowed me to experiment with labyrinth patterns through a different method: painting them directly onto the floor and walls of the cube.  I borrowed graphic images from a traditional Chinese gardening technique—the mutuality of positive and negative space—to create an illusion of space.[2]  I added small pine trees to the centre of the spiral shapes to give a strong implication of nature within this "microcosm."  Again, the effect was a combined real/imaginary space for viewer/participants to enter and experience.  A specially designed narrow zigzag entrance was constructed as part of the threshold and pathway to this created world.  This was my first effort at

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[1] See Part I, Chapter 5, section 5.2, Archetypal Patterns in Sacred Places.

[2] See Part 1, Chapter 4, section 4.2.1, The Mutuality of Positive and Negative Space.

using an illusory graphic image as part of my studio practice.

In the next project, which I called my *Studio Piece*, I combined structural elements with graphic illusion techniques in a single presentation. Once again I painted a labyrinthine pattern inside an enclosed white-cube space, then added black copper tubing within the space in manner that emphasised the ambiguity between the real copper lines and illusory graphic images. Real Bonsai trees were placed along the walls and on the floor as alternative focuses, adding to the disoriented perception of the space. I consider that this combination of illusory graphic pattern and physical structure resulted in a successful representation of *jingjie*.

My next piece was the *Project Room Piece* that made references to Japanese and Chinese gardens in an attempt to generate a microcosm of an ideal world. Rocks replaced Bonsai trees as symbols of nature (specifically, mountains). Some of the copper tubing was painted black (the rest remained unpainted) to generate a stronger sense of ambiguity between the materials and illusory effects. I used light control systems and shadows to enhance that effect within the enclosed space, with the intent being to evoke a sense of emptiness that is a mark of Chinese gardens. In addition, this piece expressed the idea of *jingjie* being created "beyond the form," "beyond the scene," and "beyond the image."[3]

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[3] See Part I, Chapter 4, section 4.2.2, Emphasising Emptiness.
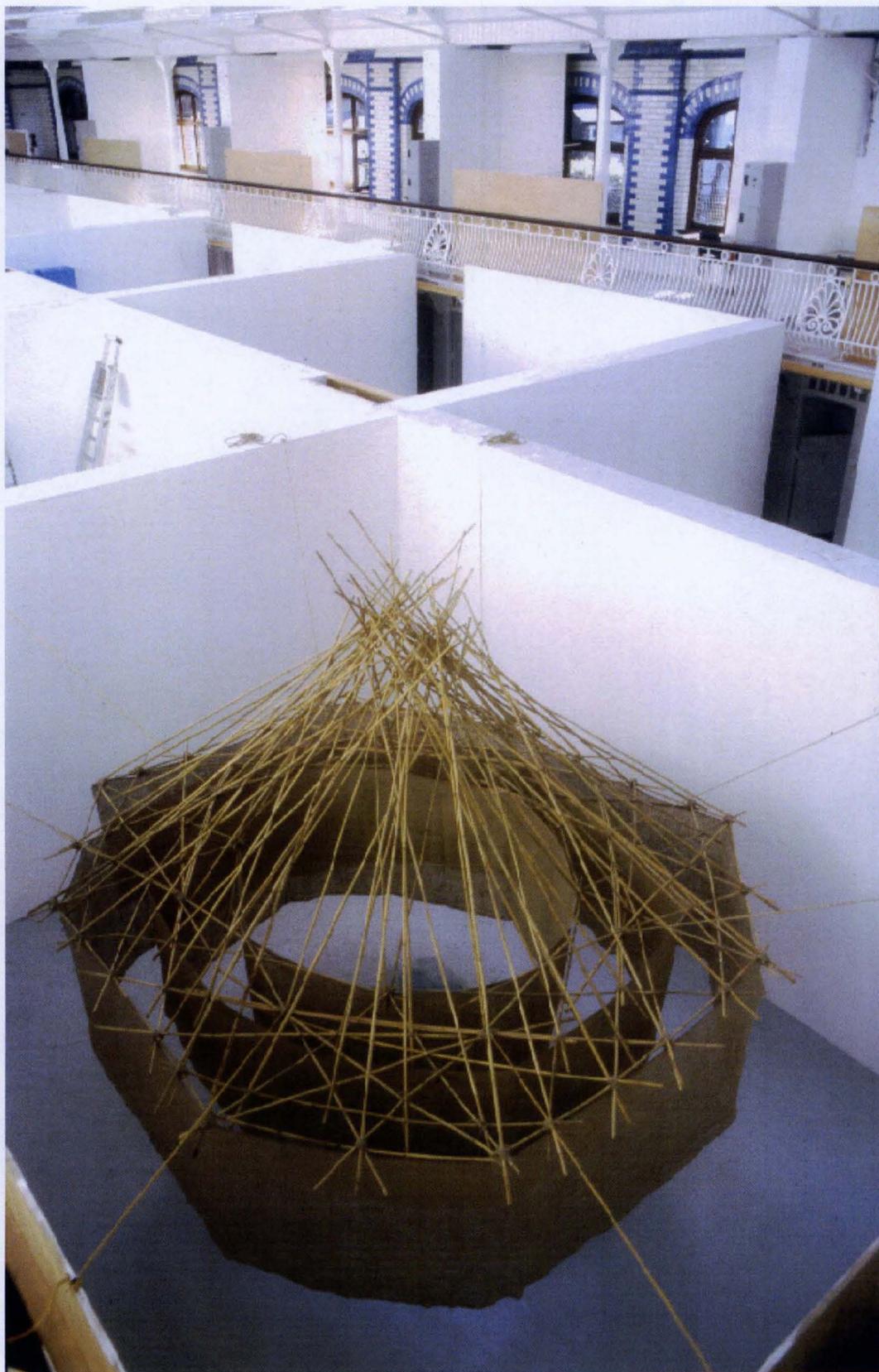
**Burlap Piece**, October 1999
Size:   6m x 5m (diameter x height)
Materials:  bamboo canes, burlap, rope

**Burlap Piece**, Detail
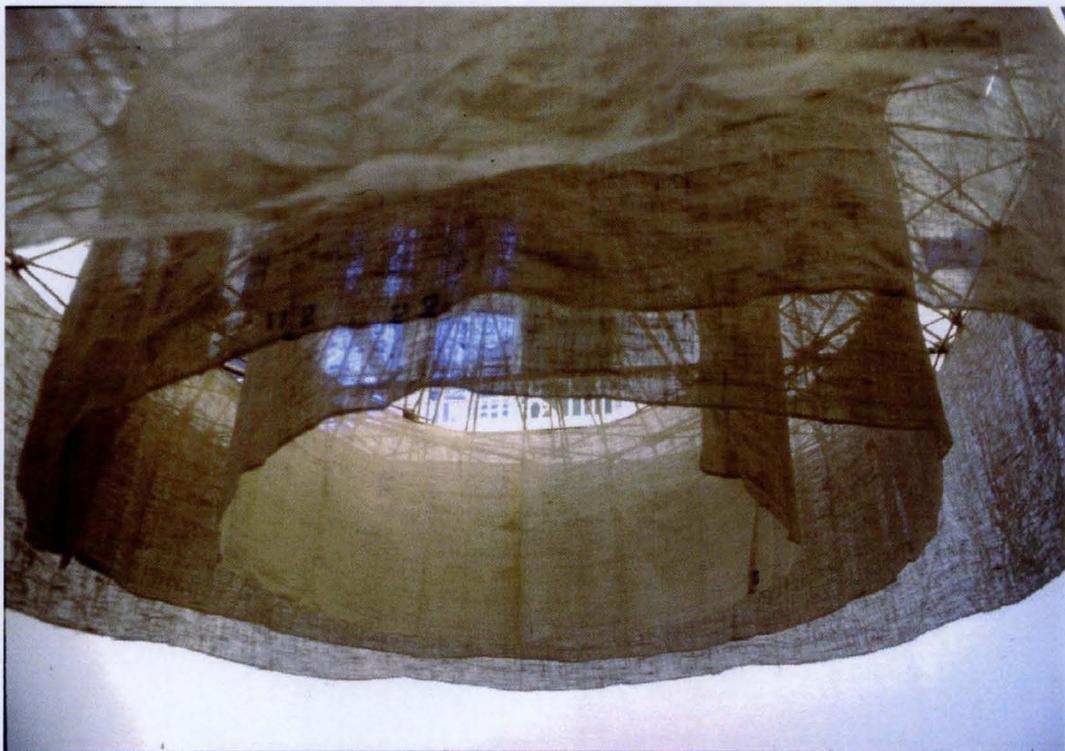


**Burlap Piece**, Detail
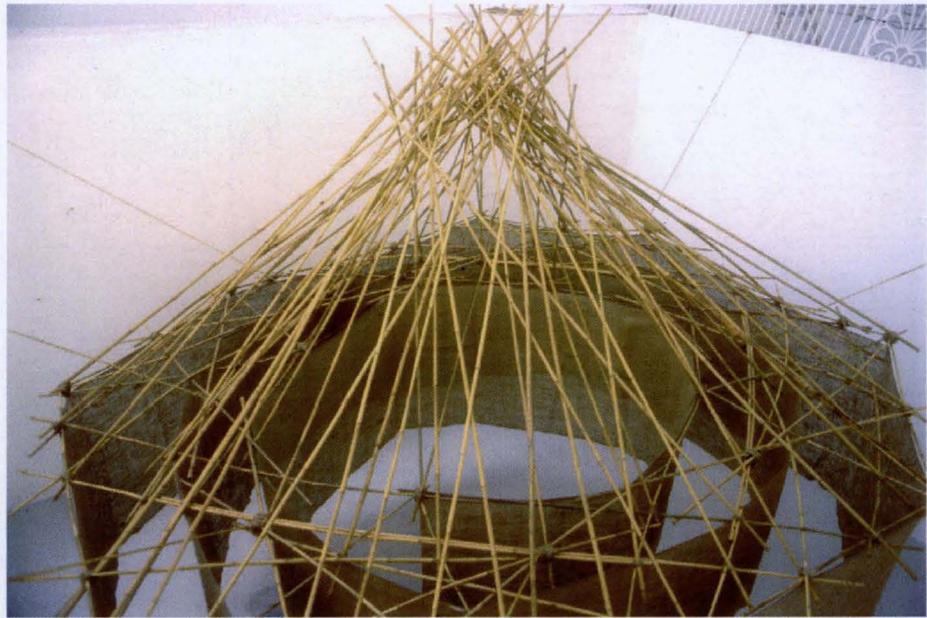
**Burlap Piece**, Detail

**Burlap Piece**, Threshold detail

**Burlap Piece**, Detail



**Burlap Piece**, Audience interaction

**Labyrinth Piece**, October 1999
Size:    8m X 10m X 4m (L, W, H)
Materials: MDF, pine trees, paint
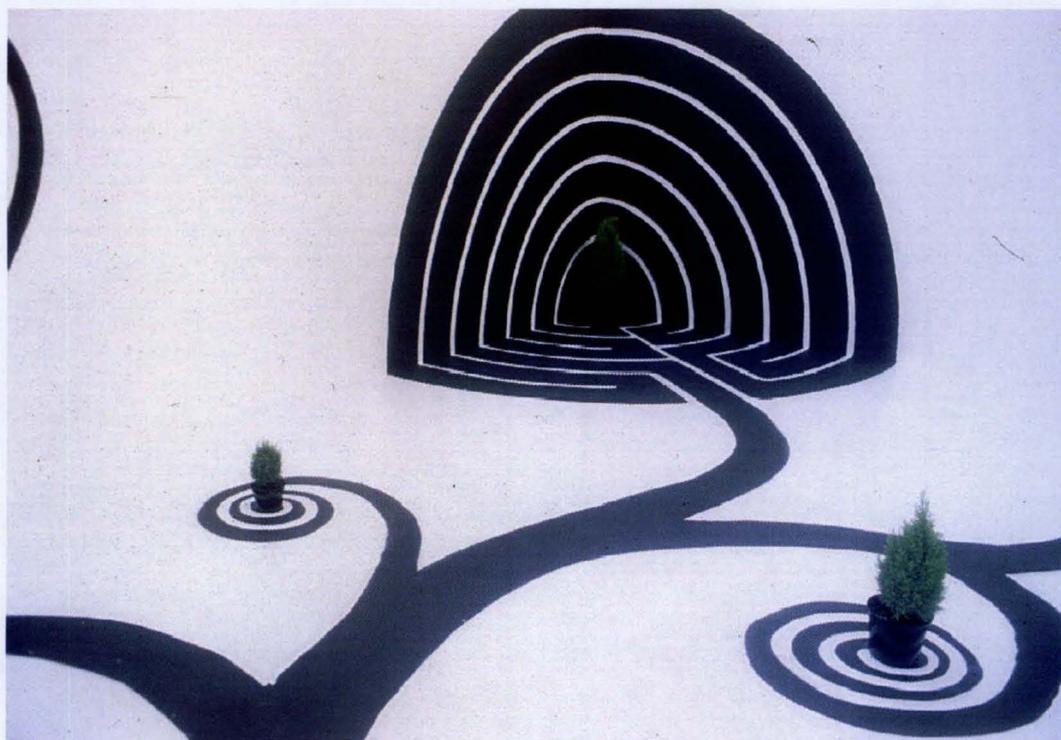


**Labyrinth Piece**, Detail
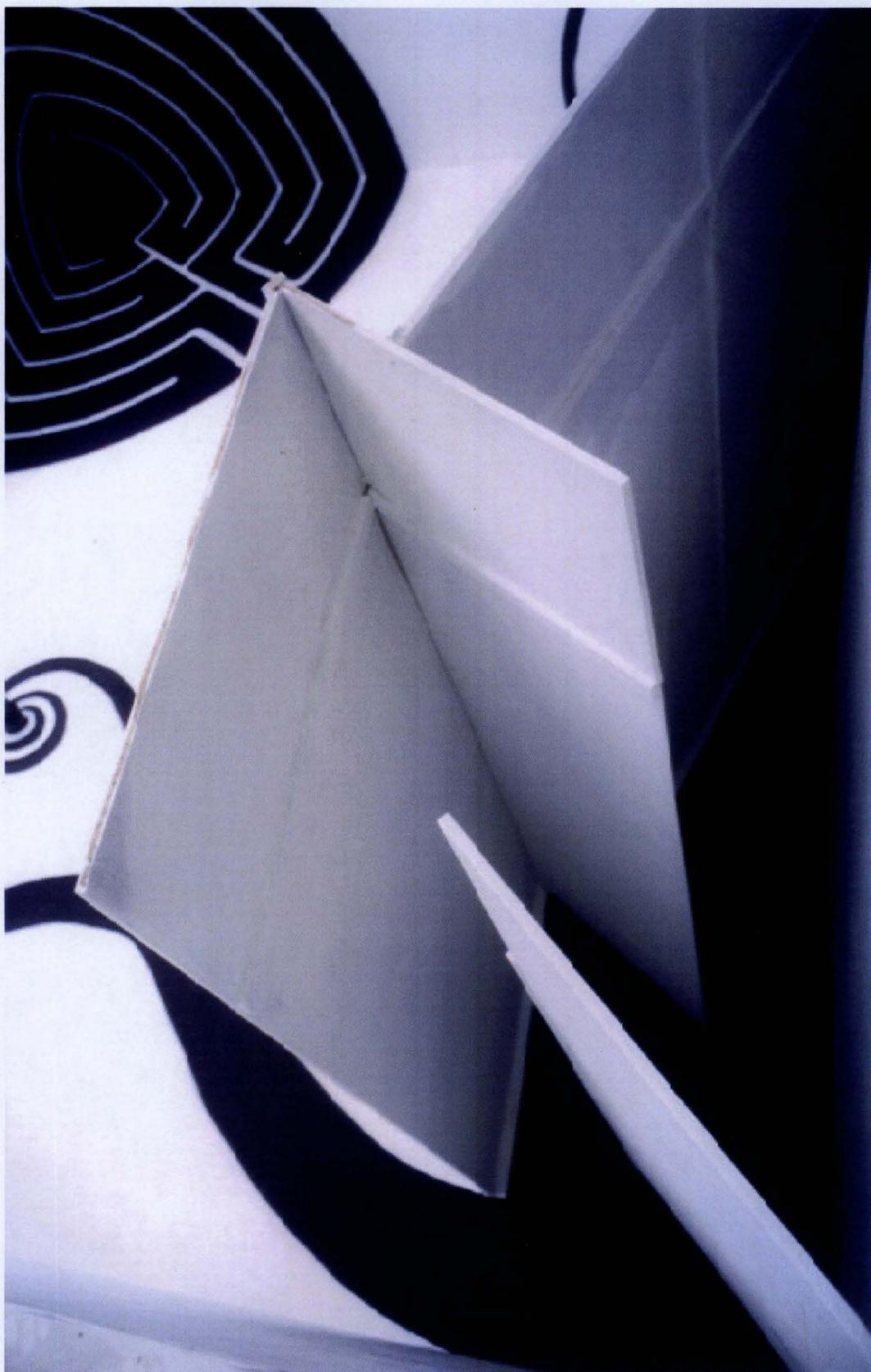
**Labyrinth Piece**, Threshold detail

**Labyrinth Piece**, Detail



**Labyrinth Piece**, Detail

**Studio Piece**, March 2000
Size:    5m X 8m X 4m (L, W, H)
Materials: copper  tubes,  paint,  bonsai  trees

**Studio Piece**, Detail



**Studio Piece**, Detail

**Studio Piece**, Detail

**Studio Piece**, Audience interaction



**Studio Piece**, Audience interaction

**Studio Piece**, Audience interaction



**Studio Piece**, Audience interaction

**Project Room Piece**, May 2000
Size:    8m X 15m X 4m (L, W, H)
Materials: copper tubes, paint, rocks, lighting system



**Project Room Piece**, Detail

**Project Room Piece**, Detail



**Project Room Piece**, Detail

## Site-Specific Stage

I was very fortunate in having several opportunities to explore some of the issues discussed in this thesis via pieces exhibited in public spaces. These opportunities presented new challenges in terms of site-specificity. The *Oriental City Piece* was created for a March 2001 exhibition entitled *Self-Spacing and Transforming*. The piece was created and shown in the main hall of a shopping centre; my intent was to create a restful place to serve as a balance to the general atmosphere of the mall, similar to the function of a public fountain and plant boxes. The piece was especially designed to encourage interactions with shoppers. Here the copper tubing served as a drawing line that also addressed the spatial dimensions of the hall. Its dynamism drew attention to the relatively unnoticed fountain within the space, thus making it a central focus. By entering this space, viewer/participants (in this case, shoppers and customers) could enjoy a moment of peace. The piece serves as a demonstration of how the simple manipulation of materials such as copper tubing can establish an emphasis of spatiality and site-specificity.

As part of an exhibition entitled *Breathing Space*, I recreated the burlap piece in London's Brockwell Park. Due to the fact that it was produced outdoors, the work (which I referred to as the *Brockwell Park Piece*), embraced issues that were more closely associated with Chinese gardening methods. The open location encouraged more viewer/participant interaction, especially by children. Its construction and reconstruction in both a white cube and outdoor space, as well as its primitive format and materials, promoted the idea of portability. In terms of this research, the piece re-established the link between site-specific work and landscape.

My *Mafuji Gallery Piece*, the main installation of my solo exhibition at the Mafuji Gallery in London, was created to emphasise the current tendency of people to live in artificial cityscapes rather than natural landscapes. A sense of co-operation between cityscapes and art has thus become equally if not more important that the co-operation between natural landscapes and art. The focus of this particular piece was on co-operation between the features of the existing site (e.g., window and columns) and the creation of *jingjie*. The gallery's interior conditions allowed me to use both artificial and natural light to create illusory effects; for this reason, the graphical patterns were less pronounced.

*Dreamscape* is a piece created for my viva examination. With a combination of all elements of my previous works, the *Dreamscape* represents my idealization of an urban landscape and an embodiment of *jingjie*. Enriched by the sound of sea waves recorded from Taiwan seaside, the blue coloured cooper tubes and graphic patterns of labyrinth, this piece demonstrates a typical creation of Chinese *jingjie* constructed by industrial materials and contemporary visual language.

**Oriental City Piece**, March 2001
Size: 5m X 4m (diameter x height)
Materials: copper tubes



**Oriental City Piece**, Detail

**Oriental City Piece**, Detail



**Oriental City Piece**, Audience interaction

**Oriental City Piece**, Detail



**Oriental City Piece**, Audience interaction

**Brockwell Park Piece**, July 2001
Size:   6m x 5m (diameter x height)
Materials: bamboo canes, burlap, rope

**Brockwell Park Piece**, July 2001



**Brockwell Park Piece**, July 2001

**Brockwell Park Piece**, July 2001



**Brockwell Park Piece**, Audience interaction

**Brockwell Park Piece**, Audience interaction



**Brockwell Park Piece**, Audience interaction

**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, September 2001
Size:  5.5m X 4m X 3m (L, W, H)
Materials: copper tubes, lighting system



**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, Audience interaction

**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, Threshold detail



**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, Threshold detail
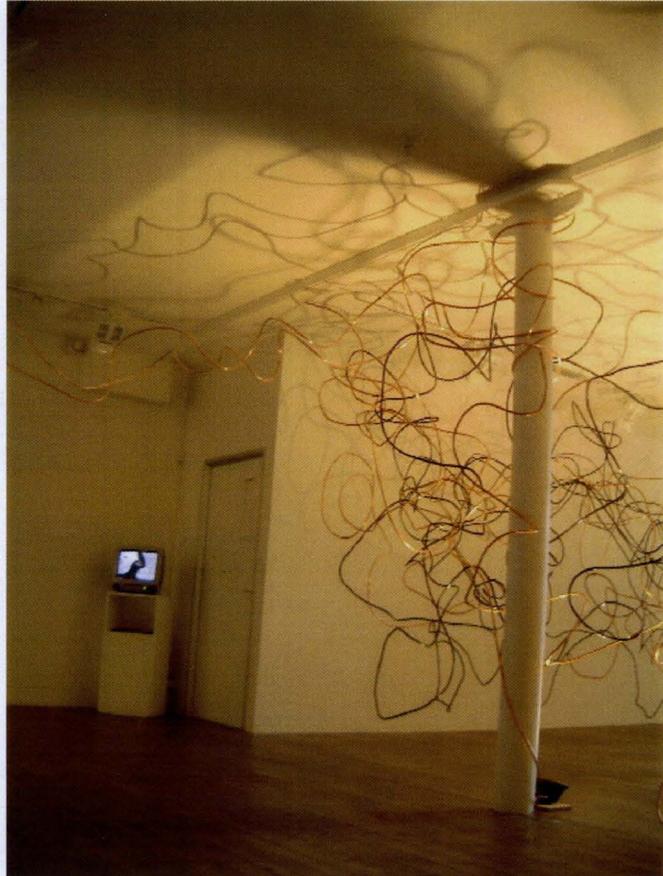
**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, Detail



**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, Detail
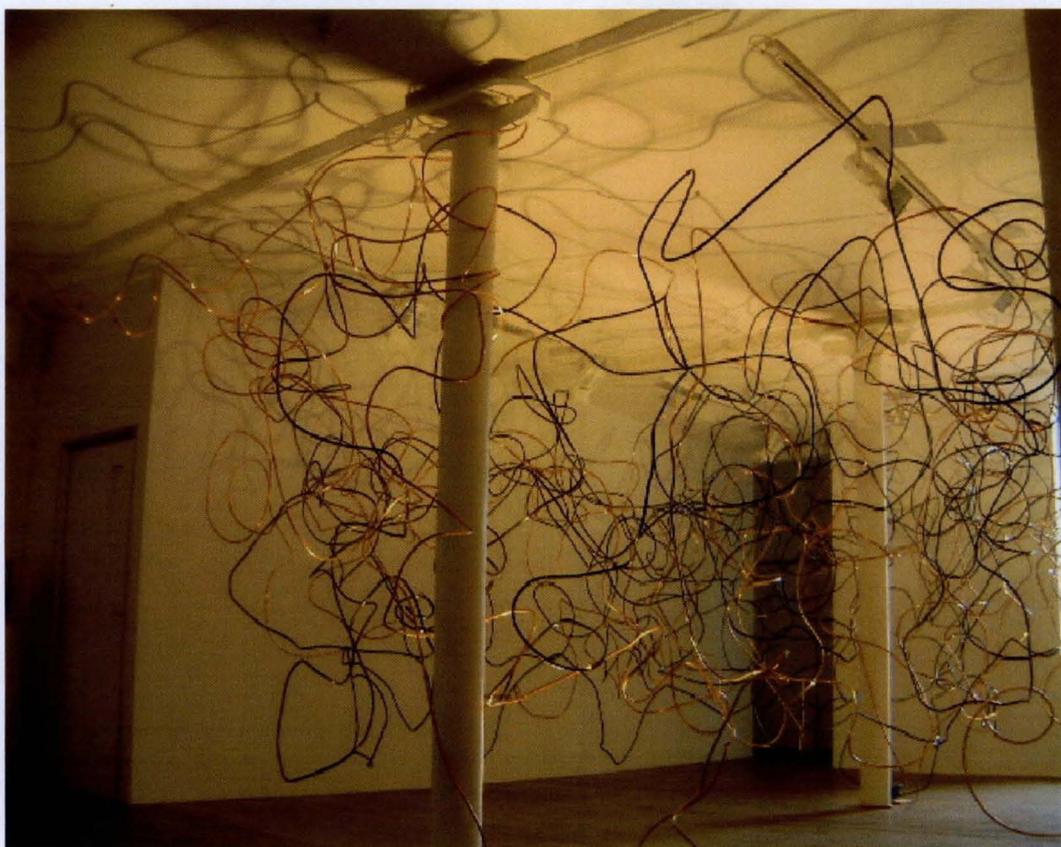
**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, Detail



**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, Detail

**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, Audience interaction



**Mafuji Gallery Piece**, Audience interaction
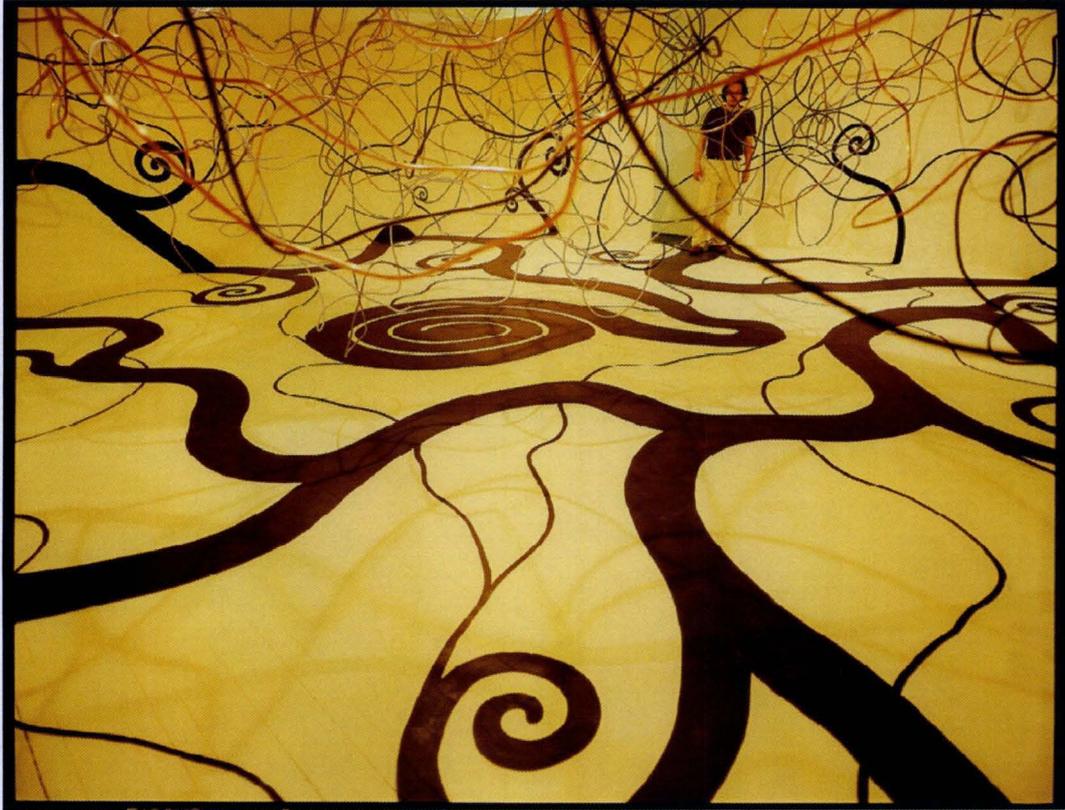
**Dreamscape**, July 2002
Size:   9.5m X 9.5m X 2.5m (L, W, H)
Materials: copper tubes, lighting system
sound system (sea waves)



**Dreamscape**, Detail

**Dreamscape**, Detail



**Dreamscape**, Audience interaction
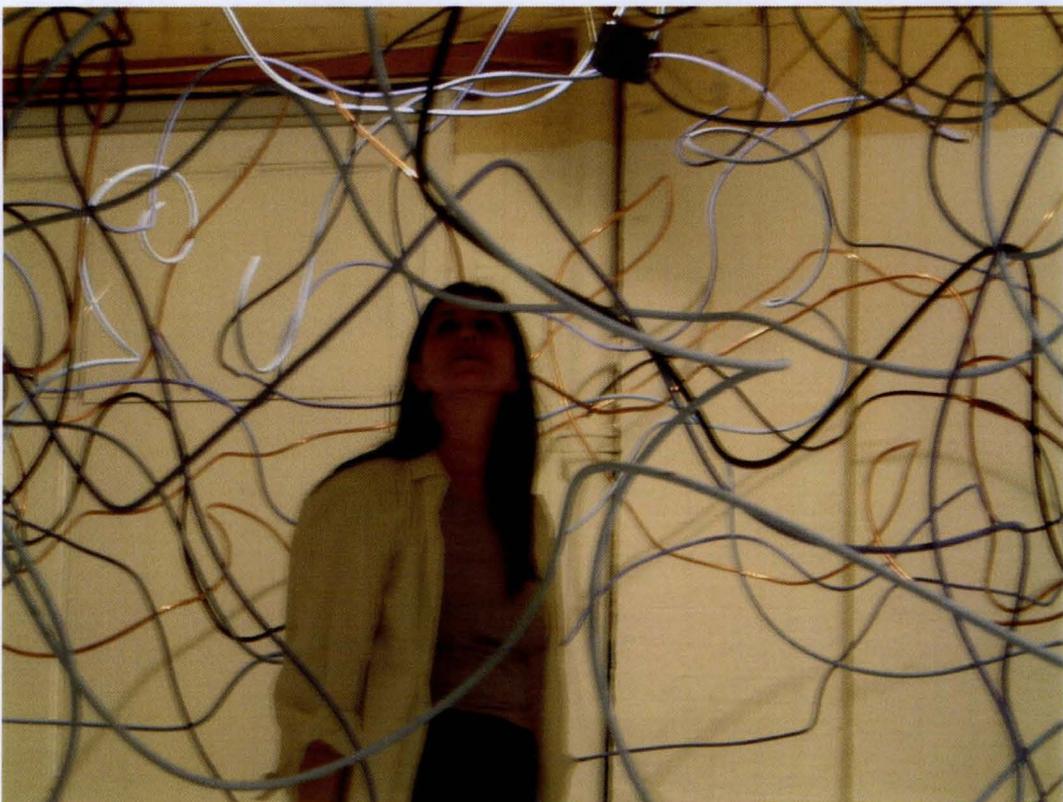
**Dreamscape**, Audience interaction



**Dreamscape**, Audience interaction

**Dreamscape**, Audience interaction



**Dreamscape**, Audience interaction

## Commissioned Works Stage

Following the Mafuji gallery exhibition, a new piece was commissioned by firstsite @ the minories art gallery, Colchester. My exploration of site-specificity, entitled *The Ballroom Garden*, interacted with the Georgian architecture and features of the display room—e.g., the fireplace and window—and the adjacent stairwell. Here I used another traditional Chinese gardening technique: borrowing a scene. The large central window allowed the organic shapes of the artwork to interact with the outside garden, creating a sense of continuity beyond the room. The extension of the piece toward the stairwell takes advantage of the theatrical curves of the interior architecture, inviting visitors into the room and following them out. Both copper piping and graphics are used to create a 3D version of "a line on paper," and to enhance the spaces created in between. The graphics serve to pull the work together and to extend the perspective—features inspired by Chinese gardens.

Another commissioned project *New Sawaradgi*, for Chinese Art Centre, Manchester, is considered as a re-interpretation and re-invention of traditional Chinese aesthetics on the specific site. This piece was intended to explore the role of CAC gallery space as a "transitional agent" in the local community space. By introducing Chinese fluid spatial concepts through contemporary art forms, this piece stimulates the interaction between existing space and participating audiences. Furthermore, the CAC gallery space and specific location provided a good opportunity for my work to exceed the traditional "white cube" limitation. Consequently, this piece served as a transitional space not only between traditional Chinese aesthetics and contemporary art, but also between contemporary art and the local communities. The construction inside the gallery space was composing mainly by illusive graphic patterns that painted on the surface of gallery space (ceiling, wall, window and floor) and bent copper tubes that floating in-between the empty gallery space. By the composition of these two major elements, this installation generated a fluid spatiality and optical

illusions that originated from a traditional Chinese landscape painting and the Chinese aesthetics of *jingjie*. Furthermore, following the paths that lead by the physical construction and graphic illusion, the audience is allow to go through experiencing this created multi-dimensional world.

The CAC exhibition *New Sawaradgi* was not the only commission project that specifically emphasis on the tradition of Chinese culture. Another commissioned project *The Foyer Garden* was also exhibited at Angel Row Gallery, Nottingham, September 2002. Through these site-specific projects, I am able to transform the tradition of Chinese aesthetics, especially the essence of fluid spatiality. These gallery spaces at Chinese Arts Centre and Angel Row Gallery became transitional spaces between concept of "Chinese culture" and local communities. The intention of these works is not only to re-invent the Chinese concept of *jingjie* to reflect contemporary needs but also offer a re-consideration of the continuing relevance of the Western site-specific art. By this means I hope to achieve an alternative approach to art practice that engages with cross-cultural currents at a deeper level.

**The Ballroom Garden**, December 2001
Size:   5.5m X 4m X 3m (L, W, H)
Materials: copper tubes, paint, charcoal, lighting system



**The Ballroom Garden**, Audience interaction
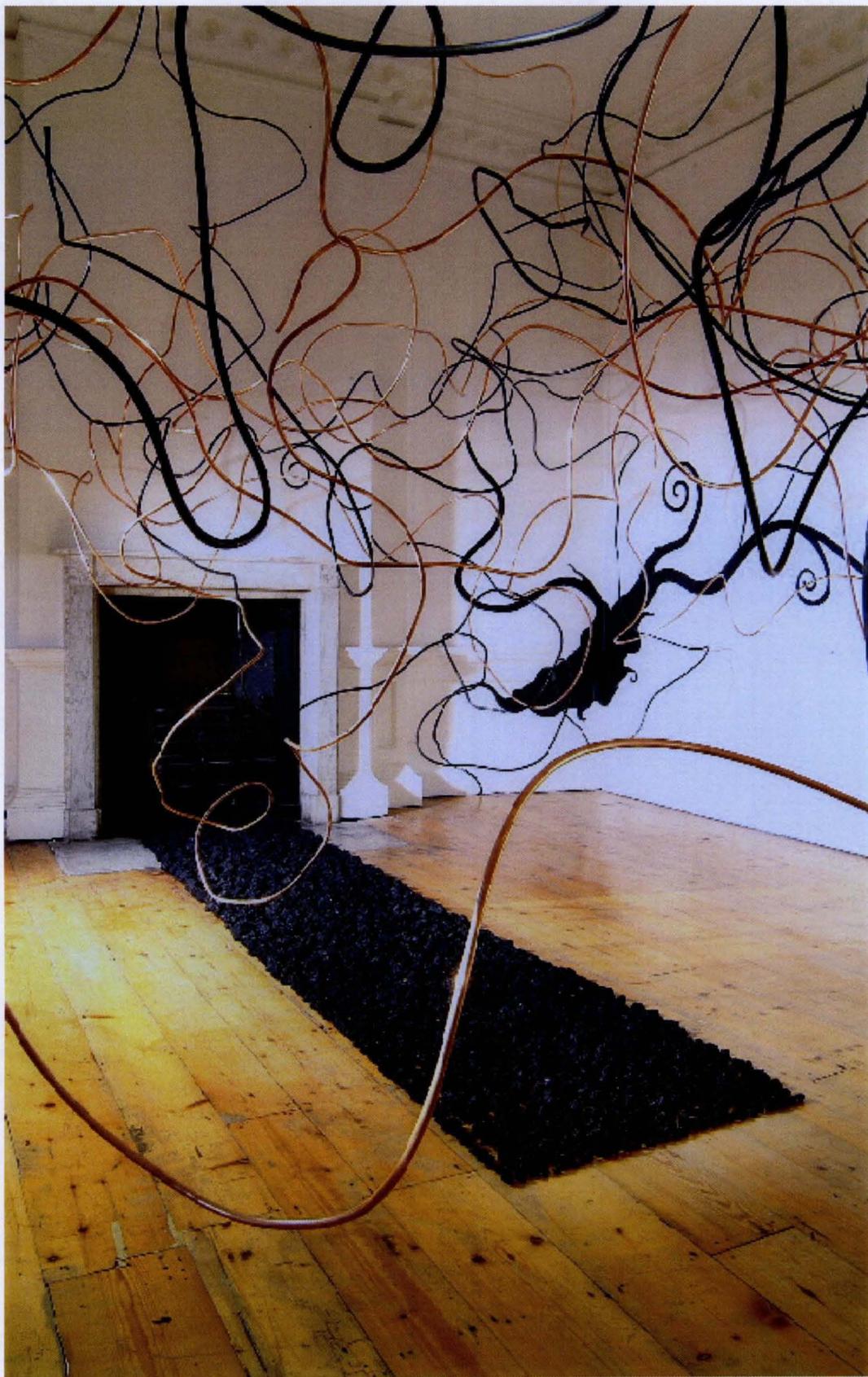
**The Ballroom Garden,** Detail

**The Ballroom Garden**, Extension to the stairwell
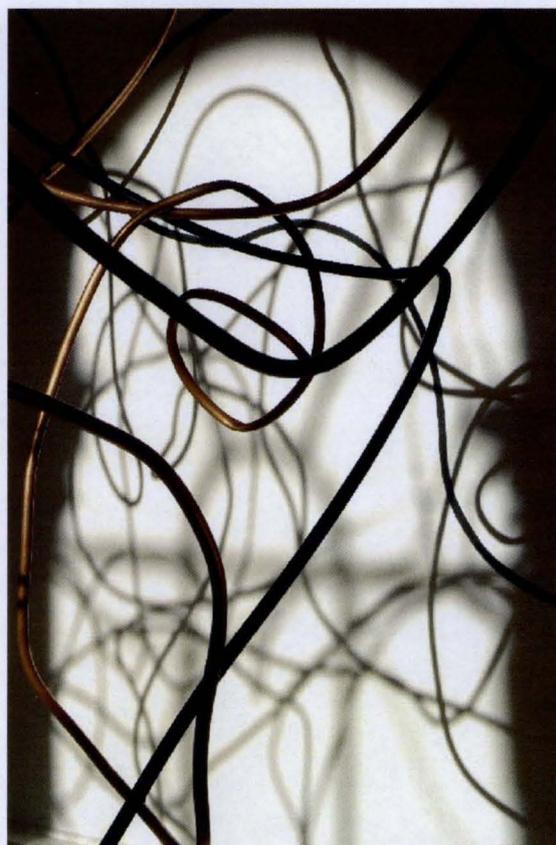
**The Ballroom Garden**, Detail



**The Ballroom Garden**, Detail
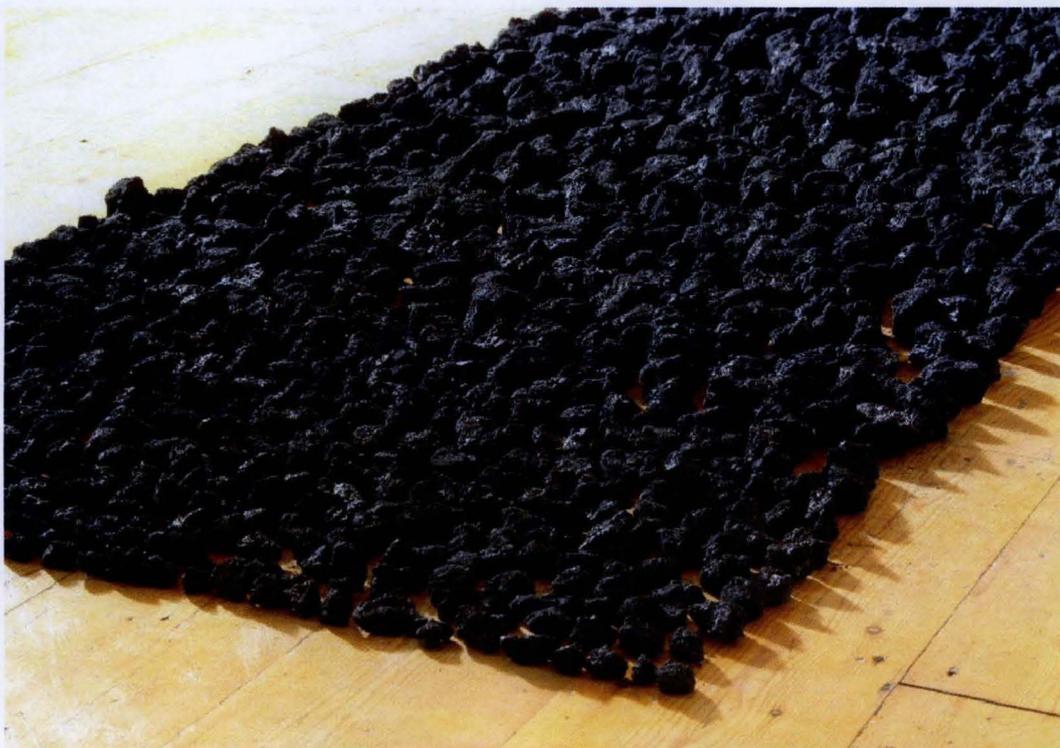
**The Ballroom Garden**, Charcoal detail
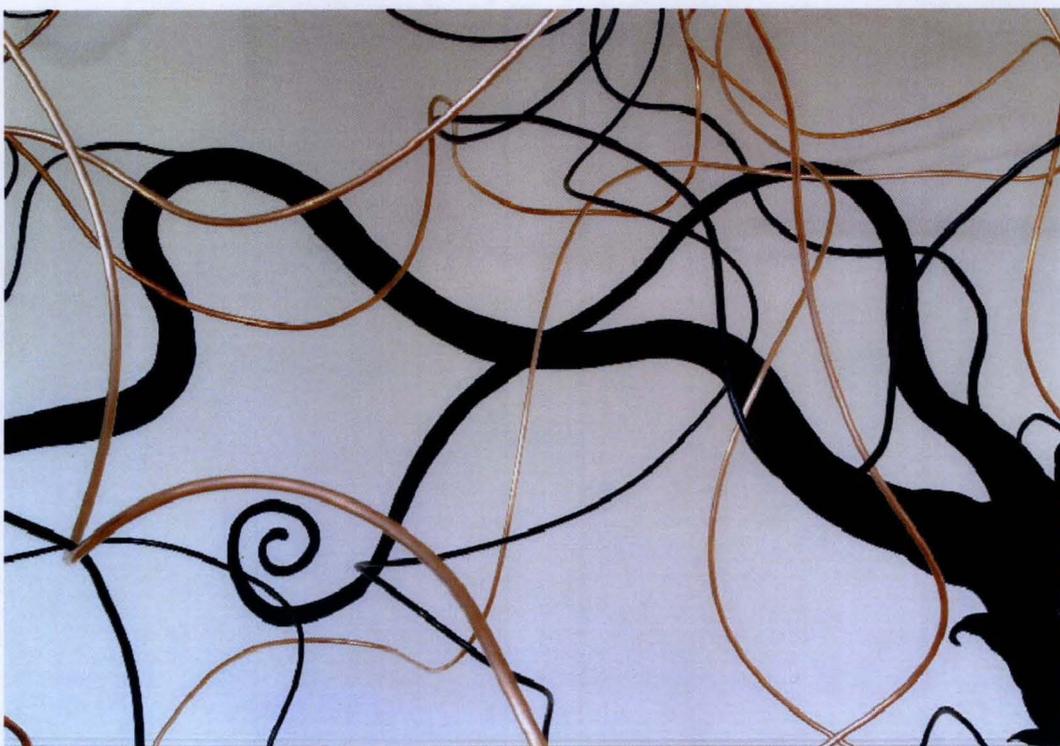


**The Ballroom Garden**, Painting on the wall
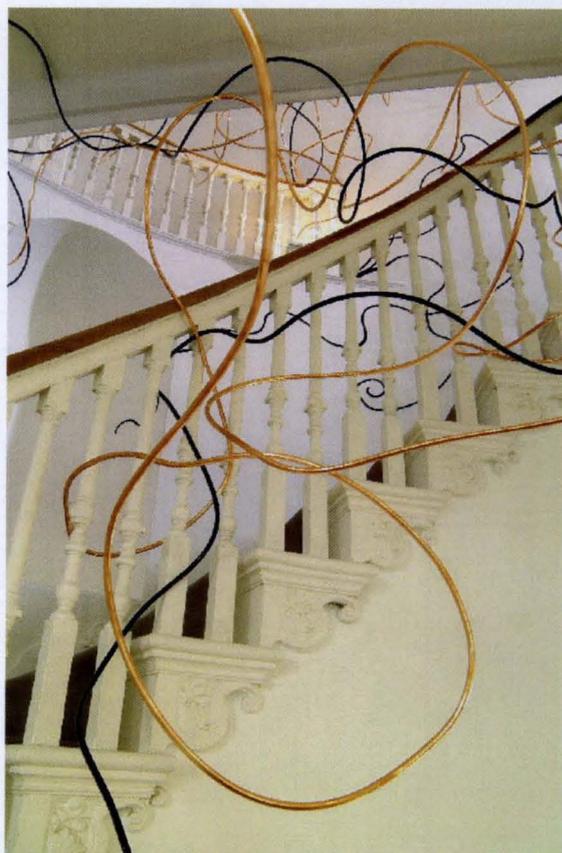
**The Ballroom Garden**, Painting on the wall



**The Ballroom Garden**, Extension to the stairwell

**The Ballroom Garden**, Interaction with children



**The Ballroom Garden**, Interaction with children

**New Sawaradgi**, July 2002
Size:    8m X 4m X 2.5m (L, W, H)
Materials: copper tubes, paint, lighting system



**New  Sawaradgi**,  Detail

**New Sawaradgi**, Detail



**New Sawaradgi**, Detail

**New Sawaradgi**, Audience interaction
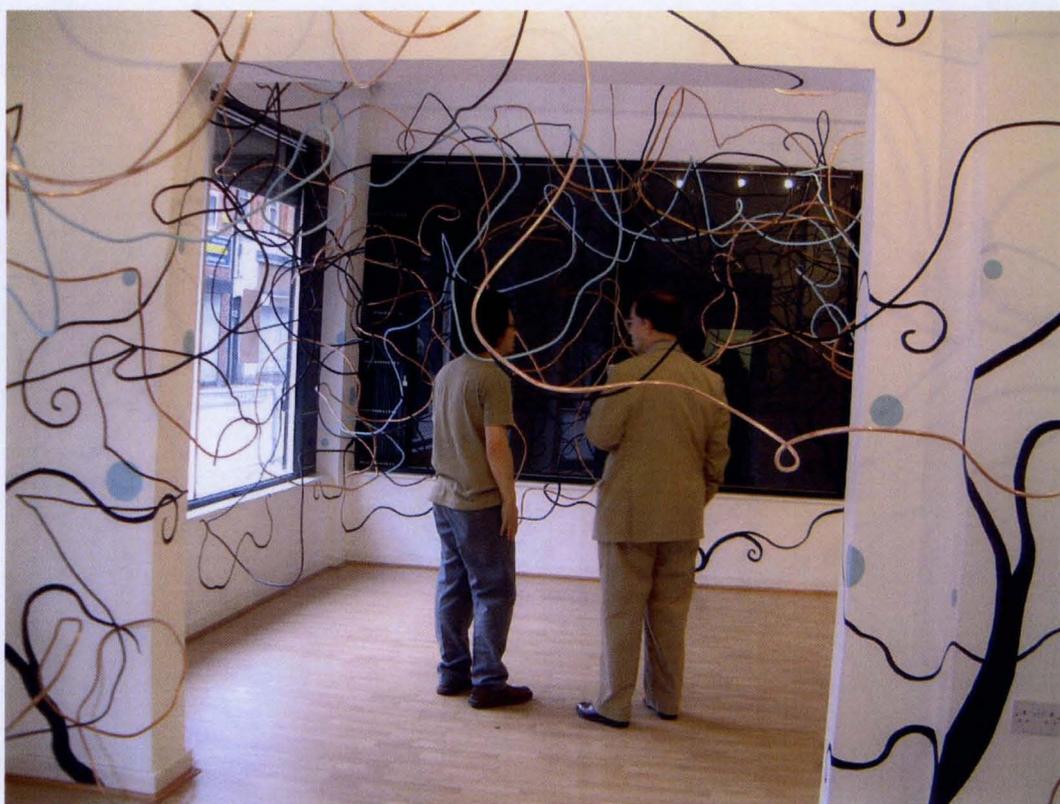


**New Sawaradgi**, Audience interaction

**The Foyer Garden**, September 2002
Size:   3m X 3m X 8m (L, W, H)
Materials: copper tubes, paint, lighting system



**The Foyer Garden**, Audience interaction

**The Foyer Garden**, Detail



**The Foyer Garden**, Detail

**The Foyer Garden**, Audience interaction



**The Foyer Garden**, Audience interaction

**The Foyer Garden**, Detail



**The Foyer Garden**, Detail