

# *Research on the Expression of Narrative Thinking in Landscape Design*

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**Abstract:** In order to study the significance and application of narrative thinking expression in landscape space structure, based on the basic theory of narration, this paper analyzes the theory of landscape narration and related cases from three levels of narrative landscape thinking, and introduces the method of narrative landscape design. By analyzing the design scheme of the party construction education base in Mianyang Youxian District, this paper probes into the feasibility and effect of narrative thinking in the actual landscape design project.

## 1. Introduction

With the improvement of modern human living standard, the demand for spiritual civilization continues to increase, and contemporary landscape design is no longer confined to specific garden shape or the manifestation of plant fabric, and then turns to the narrative landscape combined with abstract emotions to stimulate the viewer in the process of appreciation more thinking and moving. This article will take the narrative landscape thinking layer progressive, from the theme selection to the clue arrangement to the detail processing to shape an effective narrative landscape design approach, to create the the narrative landscape pattern of conception -emotional-resonance. By analyzing the actual case, the research presents the special effect with narrative thinking and landscape design integration.

## 2. Conceptual Analysis

### 2.1. Narrative

Narrative's Latin etymology is "narrare" and "gnarnls", meaning "to tell" and "to know" respectively. Narrative is a means of communication, which, as its name reveals, means to tell a story. However, Matthew Potteiger believes that there is a difference between narration and storytelling: narration is both the action itself and the story content[1]. In the landscape, it needs not only to tell the story vividly and to "communicate" with the viewer, but also to become a part of the landscape.

## 2.2. Narrative Landscape

Landscape is the original or artificial surface scenery with aesthetic characteristics. The contemporary landscape, in contrast to the pursuit of "shape" as the main design concept, pays more attention to the experience and cultural connotation brought by the landscape to the viewer, in the hope that the viewer can not only rely on the intoxicated beauty but also in silence to think, to achieve the "people-oriented" thought in the infiltration of the landscape. Narrative landscape presents the characteristics of the original site by complete narrative clue, reasonable narrative structure, along with several kinds of narrative technique, which makes the landscape space free from rationality and square inch to give sensual colors[2]. The starting point of landscape narration is the metaphor of place. By creating a landscape space to carry out the metaphor of historical events[2], participants can cognize and experience the objective landscape space, and then instinctively form an intuitive picture of the intangible history with the physical environment, to take the reality to produce the situation.

## 3. Three Levels of Narrative Landscape Thinking

The narrative landscape is mainly based on the idea of conception, emotion and resonance, with the specific methods of theme refinement, clue arrangement and narrative technique embellishment, to achieve the effect of predetermined artistic conception -- transformation of material realm -- conveying artistic conception.

### 3.1. Conception

Composition, painting and other forms of art intend to express artistic conception before produce creation, landscape gardening as well. In the garden narrative landscape, the conception is to refine the theme of the site and endow it with humanistic emotion.

The theme is the soul of the story and the carrier of landscape connotation and emotion. Narrators, media and receivers are the three elements of narration[3]. In narrative landscape design, landscape space is endowed with "language" by the designer, who is the narrator, so that the recipient, namely the viewer, can read the hidden context and meaning. Therefore, the refining of the theme is the "turning point" between the site and the narrators. A good theme can have attributes related to local society, urban construction, culture, and so on, and can make the landscape become a unique presence in the city.

#### 3.1.1. Site Analysis

The site brings together the natural structure and humanistic content, and is a platform for the changes of nature and humanity[4]. Japanese architect Kisho Kurokawa said: only when you have a real understanding of the traditional invisible things, can you abstract the most characteristic part as a symbol<sup>[5]</sup>. Site analysis is to further explore site spirit rooted in the field of natural features, and extract and inject for humanistic thought and emotion it contains and may contain[3]. Such exploration is often from "ignorance" to "epiphany". Site analysis provides the possibility for landscape conception[4].

In narrative landscape, context analysis is often used for site analysis. This approach advocates matching the design language with the current situation, and compares the social and cultural values, ecological values, people's experience of driving the environment and visual art in spatial analysis<sup>[6]</sup>. That is to say, in the process of analyzing context, the value of regional humanity and nature should be integrated in order to obtain the sense of identity of the site environment and maintain the

sustainable development of the landscape.

Site analysis has two levels: internal relationship and external relationship. For example, the site has historical precipitation, not only to explore in depth, that is, to analyze the site's historical characteristics of the retention or reengineering, but also to explore the relationship between these histories and the society around the site. Some of them may have been forgotten, and some may still exist in the social culture, which plays a key role in the reproduction of historical stories in the later stage.

### 3.1.2. Sublimate Themes

The sublimation of the site theme is carried out after the theme has already had the embryonic form, which is the process of thematic artistry. The Ming Dynasty writers have the light to say: "the meaning of the topic is ordinary, but it is tasteless if the text is created in same way." It can be seen that the theme sublimation is of great importance in the article. Designing narrative landscape is exactly the same as writing article. Only when the theme is more appealing and tension, and enters into a broader and more far-reach artistic conception, can the audience applaud it.

The entrance design of Songhua lake scenic and historic interest area in Jilin province well sublimate the theme on the basis of retaining the site features, making the work have "philosophy". Designers by investigating the field properties and combining with humanistic ideas, named it "the Gap of nature", to make this gate like a border between heaven and earthliness. When visitor enter the door, they can deviate from the crowd and embrace the nature. There is only an isolated wall between "heaven" and "earthliness ", the guidance of the curved wall makes "crossing" the gap become coherent and natural. Meanwhile, the traditional concepts of "outside space" and "inside space" in the traditional sense are dispelled here[7].

### 3.2. Emotional

Narrative landscape uses the ordered arrangement of clues to convey emotions to the audience, thus exciting the affection and blending scene. Clues are the structure and direction of events that logically connect the beginning, climax and end of a story. Clear and definite clues make viewers easy to understand and enhance the direction of emotional communication.

In narrative landscape, the way to promote story clues is usually in accordance with the chronological sequence of story development. The originally disorderly scenes are constructed, and the interaction and change between time and space create a continuous landscape. This way of clue evolution can design variable landscape marks and scenes, making changes in the landscape material, color, plant configuration and so on, and to clearly outline the historical development course. For example, the Beichuan Earthquake Resistant Memorial Park in Sichuan Province, is the climax of the whole new Beichuan landscape axis, bearing various functions such as the city square and the memorial place, carrying many cultures and emotions of Beichuan. The park satisfies the needs of both "spirituality" and "practicality". It makes full use of the changes of landscape elements and divides the whole space into three parts, including a contemplation garden to express memory and missing, a hero garden to praise and commemorate, and a happy garden to symbolize happiness and rebirth. In the contemplation garden, the designer uses dark grey as the basic tone and white pebbles are laid out on the ground. The viewer passes through the Ginkgo tree array and the closed space surrounded by rough walls, playing back memories and thinking in the gloomy atmosphere. From the contemplation garden out, viewer enters into the hero Garden, there are towering Earthquake Monument in the center of broad square and the plants are tall and rich in variety, and viewer can feel the overall atmosphere is solemn. Following this invisible clue, viewer can find that happy garden is not only more flexible in landscape lines, but also locates in the

entrance square of Banacha commercial pedestrian street. The lively atmosphere confirms the beautiful life at present. This kind of clue arranges according to the certain time development sequence, making the viewer's psychological feeling and emotion to melt in the garden landscape in the story evolution process, to achieve the effect which express emotions through describing concrete objects.

### 3.3. Resonance

In landscape design, narration is the process of transforming ideas into landscape shapes and connecting all shapes in series according to a certain structure<sup>[3]</sup>. That is to say, the spiritual meaning of the site and the designer's ideological connotation need to be expressed at the material level to make the audience feel and perceive the space, and finally to resonate. Garden, like poem and should be created twists and turns and echo each other in front and behind[8]. By transforming the theme concept into specific spatial form, the narrative techniques in literature can be transplanted into landscape design to increase the artistic appeal of narrative landscape "language". Only by deeply understanding and analyzing the expression mode of landscape language, can the landscape form be properly applied.

#### 3.3.1. Metaphor

Metaphor is a rhetorical device in literature. The difference between it and simile is that simile shows what we want to express, while metaphor replaces the thing itself with itself [9], that is to say, using one concept to understand another concept[10]. Aristotle and Quintillian believe that metaphor is to increase the emotional color and expression effect of language. Jenks also said that the more metaphors, the better the play[11]. Prehistoric times, Indians had built soil hills in the Mississippi River east, and American designer Martha Schwarz, inspired by this and then designed 22 grass mound with the strewn at random terrain in her work "bouncing drumlin" landscape design. The design not only bring active atmosphere to the local federal court square, but also the metaphor of the local ice mound in glacial period evoke local people memory and thought about geological culture .Due to the different cultural backgrounds of the audience, they will have different understandings about the interpretation of metaphor. Therefore, the significance of landscape metaphor in different culture is in endless variety[12].

#### 3.3.2. Symbolic

The basis of symbolism is metaphor , metaphor is between image and meaning, and symbol is between image and concept[13]. For example, the 911 National Memorial Park in New York City is 6 meters deep and covers an area of 4000 square meters with two huge sunken pools, which is a metaphor for the twin towers that once stood there had no longer existed. Touching the names of the victims carved on the edge of the pool, the memory of the deceased is evoked. The pool is the "image" or "symbol", which focuses the viewer's attention on it, and generates the meaning behind it according to the viewer's own experience.

Through metaphor and symbol, narrative landscape integrates people's psychological feelings into the landscape entity to complete the viewer's re-understanding of the landscape and re-endowing meaning of the landscape ,which is the meaning of personalization based on the viewer's own knowledge and experience.

## 4. Case Analysis

### 4.1. Project Overview

Mianyang Youxian District Party Building Education Base is located in Mianyang Youxian Economic Development Zone (Southern District) Baoshan Road high voltage corridor, located under the 110kv high voltage line. It is an important road node at the corner of Dongshan road and Baoshan road. The green space was originally designed as an outdoor place integrating sports and leisure. On present design, party building elements is implanted. The warning meaning of high-voltage line is used to imply the majesty of strict party governance .

### 4.2. Conception Refining of Site Themes

The high-voltage corridor was originally a public place integrating sports and leisure functions. Due to its special site characteristics under the high-voltage line, and under the background of the Party Central Committee's proposal of "comprehensively strengthening party governance", designer borrows varied terrain to enrich the changing and concluding of the story. Viewer can take leisure and carry out party building activities at the same time, making the public to feel the revolutionary spirit and ideal faith of the martyrs in the natural, and strengthening their own self-cultivation.

### 4.3. Emotional-the Arrangement of Narrative Clues

In the clue arrangement process of the Party Building Education Base, the author puts forward the continuous time system of the past, present and future, taking "yesterday, today and tomorrow" as the narrative structure, and concentrating the main narrative plot on the main axis of the landscape.

The first part is the course of the revolution: viewer enters the base through the rugged steps and winding footpaths, the progress implies the arduous and tortuous course of the revolution. As the entrance space of the landscape and the beginning of the narrative, the design inherits the Chinese traditional landscape idea "the meandering terrain is better than flat". Designer creates suspense through terrain and sculpture to lead the viewer into the second part of the landscape.

The second part is the reform and opening up: Similar to the role of reform and opening up in the growth process of new China, the second part plays a role of "bearing" in the whole landscape axis. The second part is more vivid in color and richer in landscape form, symbolizing the suffering before the reform and opening up and the beauty after the reform and opening up, to gradually push the landscape into a climax.

The third part is the Chinese dream: the raised terrain is the highest point of the landscape axis, viewer can overlook from the "revolutionary history" to "Chinese dream" tortuous road, and it is also the core of Party Education Base: on the basis of Xi Jinping's speech connotation, the design shows socialist core values and the Chinese dream by anaglyph, to education viewer only when each citizen set up broad ideal and make strenuous efforts, can we realize our Chinese dream and stand among the nations of the world.

The evolutionary three parts of the landscape abstractly corresponds to the story of chronological development, forming the unity from the beginning to the climax.

### 4.4. Resonance-Narrative Techniques

Landscape metaphor and symbol are regarded as an exchange intermediary between person and the environment. At the entrance of the Party Building Education Base, tortuous road symbols the new China's hard revolutionary course. By making use of the precipitation and accumulation of history

in people's ideas and designing stone carvings, anaglyphs, sculptures and other landscape sketches symbolizing the historical events of revolution and reform and opening up ,designer try to awake people's long-forgotten memories or experiences and arouse sympathy of viewers. The overall landscape shows a gradual rise in topography, which is a metaphor for the hard development of new China and the prosperity built step by step. Metaphor and symbol make the Party Building Education Base beyond the simple beauty of landscape. In the process of viewers following the clues, they will convert to the artistic conception of the landscape and profound personalized thinking.

## 5. Conclusions

Drawing on literature narrative theory and method, this paper divides the design thinking of narrative landscape into three levels and puts forward the design strategy of narrative landscape. By analyzing the design of Party Building Education Base in YouXian district, this paper interprets the generation mechanism of narrative thinking in the actual landscape, and shows the application of narrative thinking in landscape design, which is helpful to explore the hidden cultural and spiritual connotation of the site, and also shows the application prospect of narrative landscape design. Since then, the narrative landscape should be connected with the literary narrative, and learn from its strict rules and masterly techniques to make the landscape space have more artistic appeal and attraction.

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