The Interior-Exterior Unification in Chinese Literati Residences:

A Tool for Upholding the Literati Identity

Liu, Songnian. *Landscape of the Four Seaons*. 12th century. Ink and colors on silk. Palace Museum, Beijing.

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Introduction

Imbued with rich philosophical ideals and cultural references, the Chinese literati residences have always been a hotspot of architectural and cultural studies. They originated in the Han Dynasty (206 BC – 220 AD), flourished in the Song Dynasty (960 – 1279 AD) and sustained their prosperity until near the end of Chinese feudal society (late Qing Dynasty at the beginning of 20th century).[1] Composed of two major elements, the traditional timber-framed buildings and man-made landscape, these residences have long since established their status as the characteristic housing type for the ancient Chinese scholar-official class.[2] The architecture history discussions of these residences often show a conscious dichotomy between the buildings and the gardens, in terms of their underlying spatial principles as well as social and spiritual significance. In some of these discussions, the buildings and the gardens are seen as separate spaces that are partitioned off from each other.[3] The buildings represent the mundane by creating a set of axial and hierarchical spaces that serve to maintain proper human relationships and social structure, while the gardens represent the unworldly by emulating nature in order to set the spirit free from various social bounds.[4] Another argument sees the two elements as inherently connected, yet displays a confusion of whether the buildings are a setting for the gardens or vice versa.[5] This paper seeks to offer a different opinion regarding the relationship between the buildings and gardens of the Chinese literati residences by examining examples from various historical sites and first-hand evidence from ancient

[1] Yao-yu Wu, *The Literati Tradition in Chinese Thought*, trans. Laurence G. Thompson (Los Angeles: Ethnographics Press, 1995), 34.
[2] Ronald G. Knapp, *Chinese Houses: the Architectural Heritage of A Nation* (Singapore: Tuttle Publishing, 2005), 144.
[3] Toshirō Inaji, *The Garden as Architecture: Form and Spirit in the Gardens of Japan, China, and Korea*, trans. Pamela Virgilio (Tokyo: Kodansha International, 1998), 106-108.
[4] Ibid.,127.
[5] Andrew Boyd, *Chinese Architecture and Town Planning* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1962), 113.

paintings, poems and literature. This evidence reveals a unity between the building's interior space and the garden's external scenery. These two elements are not only inherently connected, but also merge with each other and essentially become one piece. I will further argue that the unification of these two spaces creates a deeply cultivated spiritual setting that is accessible to the residence's owner on a daily basis. This setting is the key to Chinese literati residence design in its role in upholding the literati identity to the self and to society.

As a guideline, there are going to be three major sections in this paper. First, as background information, I am going to introduce the term literati in the context of Chinese political and cultural history. I am going to put forward the common threads in the beliefs and aesthetics of the literati class as well as a few social and political identifications. Second, I am going to delve into and argue for the unity between the buildings and gardens in literati residences. I will mainly analyze the compositional techniques that unify the interior and exterior, using the following topics: the open plan and structure of the residences, the use of architecture elements as framing, and borrowed scenery and intersecting views. Examples will be pulled from several historical sites and ancient paintings, poems and literature that best reflect the form and psychology of these residences. [6] Last, I am going to discuss how this unified space serves as a tool for confirming and asserting the literati identity. In this discussion, I will consider both the individual experience and group activities carried out within the space.

Background

[6] Joseph Cho Wang, *The Chinese Garden* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 21. According to Wang, most Chinese gardens were inspired by natural landscapes and designed in the same manner as landscape paintings were created. The gardens often embody subtle, intangible artistic and personal ideals that are more commonly conveyed in poetry and paintings.

The Chinese literati residences, tellingly also known as the scholar gardens,[7] are a significant type of Chinese architecture closely tied to the literati class of ancient China. The word *literati* in Chinese means scholar-official, a group of civil servants selected by the court to perform governmental duties in a highly centralized political system. In China's greatly hierarchical feudal society, the literati occupied the highest social class below the emperor. They were considered to be well-educated in Confucian classics, exemplary in virtue, skillful in multiple areas such as literature, poetry, painting, calligraphy and music, and have great political power and honor.[8] It was their tradition to show deep concern for moral cultivation and profound appreciation for spirituality, for morality and wisdom were essential to a noble man in ancient Chinese society.[9] As one Confucian saying goes: 'The wise find pleasure in water, the virtuous find pleasure in hills.' [10] Thus such concern and appreciation were transformed into a conscious admiration for nature in the name of elevating one's inner character.

The other significant literati tradition lies in its relentless search for spiritual freedom. Such freedom was important for the literati to survive in a mentally oppressive, high-stress-level political environment. They found such freedom in nature, which to ancient Chinese thinking was an ordered system full of aesthetic pleasure that embodied the ultimate reality of the universe.[11] The literati aspired to raise their spiritual selves

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[7] Maggie Keswick, *The Chinese Garden: History, Art and Architecture* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 6.
[8] Frederick Hok-ming Chung and Lai, Ming-chiu, *Politics and Religion in Ancient and Medieval Europe and China* (Hong Kong: Chinese University Press, 1996), 30
[9] Katherin Dahlsgaarde, Christopher Peterson, and Martin E. P. Seligman, "Shared Virtue: The Convergence of Valued Human Strengths Across Culture and History," *Review of General Psychology* 9.3 (2005): 203. http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/1089-2680.9.3.203.
[10] Confucius and his disciples 孔子及其弟子, *Yong Ye* 雍也篇 in *Lun Yu* 论语 [Analects of Confucius] trans. Simon Leyes (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1997), 130.
[11] Tianchen Li, "Confucian Ethic and the Environment," *The Centre for East-West Cultural and Economic Studies, The School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Bond University, Queensland, Australia* 6.1 (2003): 1. http://www.international-relations.com/wbcm6-1/WbLi.htm.

above social and political constraints by experiencing nature and, eventually, achieving harmonious existence with it.[12] Such existence was a state of being where one could lose all consciousness of his physical surroundings, and could spiritually wander in pure nature.[13]

Both the traditions of inner cultivation and spiritual freedom were incorporated into the lives of Chinese literati, and nature therefore became the bread of their lives. They created poems, essays, and landscape paintings that were inspired by nature. With enough wealth and refined aesthetics, they also constructed their living space, the Chinese literati residences, to support their intimate relationship with nature and actualize the nature that was already present in their minds.

The Unity between Building and Garden Spaces in Literati Residences

The interior-exterior unity is one of the most distinct features of Chinese literati residences. Physically, the interior and exterior spaces touch and penetrate each other until no boundary is too significant to draw them apart. Psychologically, they aim to create the same sentiment and visual effect that brings the spirit into close contact with nature. Despite their long history of nearly two thousand years and construction at several different locations in eastern China, the Chinese literati residences have remained perfectly consistent in their construction methods, structures, forms and functions, thanks to the spread of building manuals that regularized architectural technology.[14] Such

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[12] Frances Ya-sing Tsu, *Landscape Design in Chinese Gardens* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1987), 19. According to Tsu, Taoism, the other equally influencing philosophy in the literati circle as Confucianism, stressed the absolute liberty of the spirit and sought to unify the subjective world with the objective world by embracing the vastness of nature.

[13] Zhuang Zhou 庄周, *Xiao Yao You* 逍遥游 in *Zhuang Zi* 庄子 [Zhuang Zi: Basic Writings] trans. Burton Watson (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996), 36.

[14] Jiren Feng, *Chinese Architecture and Metaphor: Song Culture in the Yingzao Fashi Building Manual* (Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 2012), 99.

consistency also beautifully aligns with that of Chinese literati culture.[15] Therefore examples from several different times and cities would all be effective to support the main argument of this paper.

The Open Plan and Structure

One of the principles of the design of Chinese literati residences is that priority is given to the positioning of buildings in the artificial landscape of the garden.[16] The living space of the buildings would be remarkably open to that of the garden, because of the way the buildings are distributed and their thin-shell structure.[17]

The buildings are positioned to form and encounter the large open space of the garden. In the plan of 11th century Joy Garden of Zhu Changwen in the northwestern section of Suzhou (fig.1), the main buildings are surrounded by the garden landscape while containing the space for that landscape. The Hall of Three Bays aligns with the Hall of Limitless Classics on a north-south axis, and is also paired with two side rooms that are symmetrical about that axis. By alignment and symmetry, these four buildings form an open space in the middle that would be occupied by a deliberate program of landscape that emulates wild nature.[18] The other similar open space is formed by the Hall of Limitless Classics, the Rice Garner, the Innocence Studio and the Crane House. These buildings are broadly spaced to allow "wild nature" to flow through and surround them. Thus the building space is in turn enveloped by the artificial landscape of the garden. Therefore the buildings and the garden are mutually defining spaces and there is no significant hierarchy between the two.

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[15] Boyd, 5.
[16] Inaji, 110.
[17] Qijun Wang, *Chinese Architecture* (New York: Better Link Press, 2011), 15.
[18] Ji Cheng 计成, *Yuan Ye* 园冶 [The Craft of Gardens: The Classic Chinese Text on Garden Design] trans. Alison Hardie (Shanghai: Shanghai Press, 2012), 37.

Reinforcing the connection to nature, the timber-framed buildings are thin shelled. Only the load-bearing wooden columns are quite impenetrable, while the rest of the structure is thin, light and permeable like a membrane. In the early 16th century painting *Garden of the Inept Administrator* by Wen Zhengming (fig.2), he depicts eight scenes in his private residence in Suzhou. One of the scenes shows the literati sitting in his studio-pavilion facing the outside. The pavilion, sitting on a short platform, is extremely simple and austere in its form. The structure of the pavilion is essentialized to the columns on four sides and the thatched roof, and there is minimum rendering to the walls. One side of the pavilion is only furnished with a collapsible screen and in the painting it is completely pushed to the side to allow maximum exposure to the outside. From Wen's point of view, he would gaze out the opening of the pavilion and observe the verdant garden. He would see the broad leaves of the plant appearing under the edge of the roof and the rockery half-appearing behind the plant. These carefully designed natural elements act like a front porch that guides the breeze and sunlight into the pavilion. Interestingly enough, the painting registers the presence of the plants behind the pavilion as if Wen was able to see them through the thin walls. It paints the coexistence of man and nature by suggesting that while sitting indoors, Wen is perfectly aware of the nature happening around him and connected with his object of contemplation. The walls of the pavilion are stripped down to the thinnest to work with the spirit that travels through them. The thin shell of the buildings not only allows the space to flow. It promotes and is resultant of the mind's connection to and intimacy with nature, and it therefore also implies the flow of spirit from the interior to the exterior.

Architecture Elements as Framing

Aside from the plan and building structure, architecture elements of Chinese literati residences, such as gates, windows, pillars and corridors are also used to provide physical and spiritual connection between the interior and exterior space. These elements do so by acting as painting frames that flatten the space from one side and transform it into objects of great scenic appreciation for the other side.[19]

Moon gates are round shaped openings usually connecting open gardens with relatively enclosed courtyards. One of the moon gates in the 11th century Great Wave Pavilion (fig.3) transforms the ordinary view of a garden path into a round album leaf whose spirit resembles a 13th century painting by literati painter Ma Yuan. Seen from one side, the round frame of the moon gate holds the slender figure of a tree against a white wall in the middle of the composition. A few cropped figures of other plants accompany the tree on both sides, which balance the composition while suggesting a larger space outside the frame. The composition is at once simple and suggestive of something more profound. In Ma Yuan's painting *Bare Willow and Distant Mountains* (fig.4), a similar aura is captured through the detailed depiction of two dancing willows against a vast, faint background of undulating mountains. With its two-dimensional quality, the framed space presents itself as a painting to the garden strollers walking from the other side. It brings itself forward to encounter the strollers. Meanwhile, the whitewashed wall in the back cuts short of the space behind the moon gate and adds a sense of mystery to the view. Such sense invites the strollers to walk down the path into the "painting" to further

[19] Christina Han, "The aesthetics of wandering in the Chinese literati garden," *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 32.4 (2012): 298. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09668136.2012.721995.

explore. [20] This moment of picturesque encounter harmoniously blends the inner and outer part of the residence into one space that contains profound psychological impact.

Latticed windows are another powerful tool for framing the scenery and bringing it indoors. In the 12th century Master of the Nets Garden, the latticed windows of one of the main halls frame the luxuriant grove and fantastic rocks outside to make it look like a series of hanging painting scrolls (fig.5). In this way the grove and rocks become an interior ornament for display and appreciation. Moreover, by looking out the window and partition walls, one loses consciousness of the boundary between the interior space and the vista of nature.[21] Such pleasant experience is recorded in a large number of literati poems. The 8th century literati Cen Shen once wrote, 'The colors of the mountain are framed by the columns of the porch; The sounds of the shoals are held between the pillow and the mat.'[22] Or in his contemporary, Yuan Jie's, poem, 'The windows of the studio frame the serenity of the rocks and waters.'[23] The complete merging of the interior space and the exterior vista is exquisitely captured in the 11th century literati Qin Guan's poem, 'Ascending the small pavilion in the light chill mist… While pearl curtains hang idle on silver hooks.'[24] Here the view of the crisp crescent moon touching the curtain is transformed into a heavenly vista of curtains hanging on silver hooks in the sky. The curtain, as a double of the window frame, becomes both the subject and frame of this composition that unites the spaces and renders a detached, surreal mood.

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[20] Ruthanne Lum McCunn, *Chinese Proverbs* (San Francisco: Chronicle Books, 2002), 27. There is a saying that describes the value of a painting that invites its viewers into its scene, "as if he was in there personally."
[21] Han, 298.
[22] Cen Shen 岑参, *Zouma Chuanxing Song Fengdafu Chushi Xizheng* 走马川行奉送封大夫出师西征[A Song of Running Horse River in Farewell to General Feng of the Western Expedition] in *An Anthology of Chinese Literature: Beginnings to 1911* trans. ed. Stephen Owen (New Tork: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 466.
[23] Han, 297.
[24] Qin Guan 秦观, *Huan Xisha* 浣溪沙 [Huan Xisha] in *Poetry and Prose of the Tang and Song* trans. Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Panda Books, 1984), 212.

The myriad of evidence in painting and poetry demonstrates the deep spiritual significance of the merging physical space. The spirit would travel boundlessly in and out of the building, and so would the space accordingly in order to create the setting.[25] The framing technique reinforces this relationship between the physical and the spiritual and shows that they are simultaneously maintaining each other's integrity as one free piece.

Borrowed Scenery[26]

Most architecture elements in Chinese literati residences frame the scenery in the gardens and thereby unite the spaces within the residences. Borrowed scenery is a design technique that expands the potential of architecture elements as framing.[27] In addition to bringing the garden's external scenery indoors as interior display and appreciation, the residences also borrow scenery from the deep landscape.[28] Borrowed scenery is not simply a variation of framing the outdoors but it draws a connection to the far distance. It is essentially a way of connecting the dwellers' mind to the vast landscape where the spirit meets the truth of the universe.

The moon gate that looks out to Mountain Lu brings the distant scenery into the enclosed space of the residence (fig.6). The characters above the gate read 'Saint's Cave' (仙人洞). Instead of leading to a physical cave, the gate opens to the remote landscape that rises boundlessly above and drops infinitely below. By looking out the round opening of the gate, one would be captured by the scene of the majestic mountain covered with lush green, standing against the boundless sky. The craggy texture of the

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[25] Sally Augustin, *Place Advantage: Applied Psychology for Interior Architecture* (Hoboken: John Wiley & Sons, 2009), 136.
[26] Tsu, 166. Borrowed scenery represents the serious concern of Chinese literati residence makers to investigate and incorporate natural landscape resources into garden scenes.
[27] Ji, 40.
[28] Shi Yan-hong Lu Hu-ling. "Analysis of artistic crafts of building gardens in Chinese classic gardens [J]." *Shanxi Architecture* 7 (2007): 219. http://en.cnki.com.cn/Article_en/CJFDTOTAL-JZSX200707219.htm.

stone wall echoes that of the distant mountain. This weakens one's sense of being protected by a constructed, inward space. Instead, it creates the feeling of being in a natural, opening space that is carved out of the mountainous landscape. Indeed, the 'Saint's Cave' seems to contradict the physical sense of a cave. However, it is especially articulated in its statement about the space for a refined spirit. A saint, in Chinese culture, is not a religious god, but someone who is enlightened in his understanding of the world and achieves moral and spiritual superiority.[29] His cave as his space for meditation is therefore not confined by any material objects and becomes purely the universe in its entirety. Thus, the title 'Saint's Cave' suggests a spiritual interior that the gate looks into. This indicates a flipped layer of the interior-exterior relationship and thereby makes the assignment of internal and external space quite ambiguous. The design of such a moon gate creates a successful blending of the space within and beyond, and is meant to set the consciousness free from its physical vessel.

Examples from poems also demonstrate the role of borrowed scenery in Chinese literati residences. The 8th century statesman and poet Wang Wei wrote in his poem about a solitary stay at his mountain residence, 'Within the window the lands of Chu are exhausted'.[30] From the window of his private residence, he was able to observe not only his exclusive garden scenery, but also the scenery borrowed from the wild nature. The open window that frames the sweeping landscape brought the scenery into his chamber and inspired his imagination beyond what is readily observable.[31] The visual and

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[29] Shan Chun. *Major Aspects of Chinese Religion and Philosophy: Dao of Inner Saint and Outer King* (New York: Springler Verlag Books, 2012), 4.
[30] Wei Wang 王维, *Shan Ju* 山居 [Living in the Hills] in *Poetry and Prose of the Tang and Song* trans. Xianyi Yang and Gladys Yang (Beijing: Foreign Languages Press, 1984), 11.
[31] Congzhou Chen, *On Chinese Gardens*, trans. Zengtong Xu (New York: Better Link Press, 2007), 13. "To see the large through the small" as a Chinese idiom and principle of learning and artistic creation.

psychological experience disclosed in this poem is not confined by indoor space, because the space is already transformed into an extension of the landscape.

Intersecting Views

The previous three techniques allow the spaces to merge in position by creating physical openings and visual and psychological effects. The compositional technique of intersecting views enables dwellers to observe the merged space in motion.[32] [33] The central concepts of intersecting views are variation and reciprocity.[34] The changing positions create changing perspectives that are equally important. No significant hierarchy is drawn between the interior and the exterior, because what gazes out is also being gazed upon.[35] Therefore, the buildings and garden are constructed with equal spatial status, and thus hold spaces of the same order.

Two schematic diagrams showing the layout of architecture in Chinese literati residences demonstrate how changing and intersecting views are achieved. The first schematic of a section of the 16th century Garden of the Inept Administrator (fig.7) shows the layout of buildings and covered walkways in the garden landscape. The walkways, while tracing the contour of the buildings, have extra turnings that seem inefficient for circulation. However, each of these turnings guides the dwellers to walk in a different direction that enables them to encounter a different view. These views are not only of the garden's natural scenery, but also of architecture and even the walkways themselves. For example, if the strollers take the walkway from building 1 to building 2, they would encounter, sequentially, the view of the gardens on both sides, the façade of building 4

[32] Inaji, 111.
[33] Chen,1. In-motion viewing, or moving observation from changing angles, is an important aspect of Chinese literati residence design.
[34] Ji, 45.
[35] Tsu, 73. Tsu elaborates on this point by introducing the dual criteria that guides the disposition and design of garden architecture, which states that architecture functions both as a viewing-point and as part of the garden scene.

and the exquisitely painted walkway itself. These views would come together to accomplish a united yet diverse visual experience. The second schematic (fig.8) offers a conceptual description of the views in different locations. The black arrows describe the visual relationship among buildings, and the intersecting ellipses indicate the garden spaces that fully engage in this visual exchange. For instance, as one moves from the southern building to the space between the central and western building, he moves from one scene into another. His view changes dramatically without removing himself from the single environment formed by the interior and exterior spaces.

In the early 19th century literati residence Ge Yuan, the building and garden spaces transform each other into sources of great aesthetic pleasure by engaging the idea of intersecting views. On one hand, the view of the fantastically shaped rocks is framed in the window of Ge Yuan's *simianting* (tetrahedral pavilion), and brought inside as an interior décor and poetic inspiration that evokes the image of mountains (fig.9). On the other hand, the intricate latticework façade becomes a beautiful graphic as seen from the garden (fig.10). The pattern of the façade is rhythmic, delicate and creates a lot of transparency.[36] In this way the façade is no longer an enclosed surface that partitions the interior off from the exterior. Instead, it becomes the subject of appreciation in the mid-ground of the scenery, connecting the garden space in front with that of the room in the back. It is also brought into the garden before the viewers' eyes because of its breathtaking delicacy.

The technique of intersecting views is a composite usage of the open plan and architectural elements as framing. It adds richness to the way in which the building's interior space and the garden's external scenery become united, by creating movement

[36] Ji, 79.

and interaction. It strategizes the way in which the dwellers would move through the residences to encounter different sceneries. Ultimately, it brings the interior and exterior spaces into each other by alternating the viewpoint-scenery (figure-ground) relationship between the two, thereby achieving interior-exterior unity.

Unified Space as a Tool for Upholding the Literati Identity

The traditions of inner cultivation and spiritual freedom were essential to the literati identity.[37] Nature established and reenacted these traditions, and it was therefore full of spiritual significance and ritual. It was considered to be aesthetically pleasing and spiritually inspiring.[38] Most importantly, the constant spiritual communication with nature was thought to be instrumental in forming and maintaining a gentleman's character. The best way to keep such communication consistent was to live with nature, from physical interaction to spiritual integration.[39] The unification of the interior living space and the external garden enabled the symbiosis of man and nature. It was an expression of the literati's need for and belief in nature as their spiritual livelihood, as well as a reflection of the lifestyle and personal code shared by the literati community.

Asserting the Identity to the Self

The central action to realize spiritual freedom through nature is known as *you*, commonly translated as 'travelling' or 'wandering'.[40] It describes a concept that signifies 'more a state of mind than a state of physical being,'[41] and was self-consciously pursued by the literati. This state of mind requires genuine appreciation of the natural beauty

[37] Ronnie Littlejohn, *Daoism: An Introduction* (London: I.B.Tauris, 2009), 97.
[38] Wangheng Chen, *Chinese Environmental Aesthetics*, trans. Feng Su (New York: Routledge, 2015), 141.
[39] Osvald Siren, *Gardens of China* (New York: The Ronald Press Company, 1949), 71.
[40] Ming-Dao Deng*, The Wandering Taoist* (San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1983), 143.
[41] Victor H. Mair, "Wandering in and through the Chuang-tzu," *Journal of Chinese Religions*, 11 (1983), 109. http://dx.doi.org/10.1179/073776983805308312.

before one's eyes and, above all, the ability to imagine beyond the immediate reality.[42] Comfortably reclining in a chair and gazing at the outdoor scenery, one would end up wandering in his mind, in a version of the landscape thousand times more profound than the residence itself was able to present.[43] This experience is described as *wo you* (reclined wandering). The ability to gain such experience indicated creativity and richness of mind for the literati. This experience is explored in literati paintings where their humble existence is deeply grounded in the infinite natural landscape, and large areas of white space on paper encourages the appreciators to fill in the blanks with what is in their minds (fig.11).[44]

The unified space responds to *wo you* by erasing the boundary between the interior and the exterior. It maintains and represents the mind's synthesis of these two spaces, by engaging design techniques that transform the limited physical space into the limitless spiritual space. Residing indoors on a chilly autumn night, one would watch 'the moon… flooding the West Chamber' and experience a universe that is forever in motion, where 'water glides on' and 'flowers drift away'.[45] Leaning against the balustrade of a pavilion that sits over a pond, one would observe 'oars in lilies [and] a painted barge moving without haste' and envision 'a band of sprites, [with the] light reflected in the ripples [and] the high wind [that] carries music over the broad water'.[46] In his poem 'Sleeping in the Porch of Tao Yuanming', 11th century poet Huang Tingjian pictures Tao,

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[42] Han, 298.
[43] Ji, 46.
[44] Sherman E. Lee, *Chinese Landscape Painting* (Cleveland: Cleveland Museum of Art, 1962), 82.
[45] Jiaosheng Wang, "The Complete Ci-poems of Li Qingzhao: A New English Translation." *Sino-Platonic Papers, Department of East Asian Languages and Civilizations, University of Pennsylvania* 13 (1989): 7. http://sino-platonic.org/complete/spp013_li_qingzhao.pdf.
[46] Xiu Ouyang 欧阳修, Cai Sangzi 采桑子 [Picking Mulberries] in *Prose and Poems by Ouyang Xiu* trans. Zaozhuang Ceng (Chengdu: Chengdu Guji Chubanshe, 1996), 20.

one of the most notable literati known for his refined spirit, "recline[ing] his white head, [with] the entire cosmos framed in his northern window.'[47] Because *wo you* is primarily a solitary activity, the vision and sentiment it embodies mattered the most to the literati himself. The relentless travelling of the spirit carried personal values and is constantly self-satisfactory. Only those who were wealthy and learned would be able to pursue and enjoy such spiritual luxury on a daily basis. Therefore by performing *wo you* that was staged by the unified space in his residence, one would be able to explore and live his literati identity, in which he might take much pride.

Upholding the Identity to society

Although they performed *wo you* solitarily, the literati would not let the fact of themselves performing it go unnoticed. The psychology of achieving spiritual pureness and satisfying the need for status and vanity were intertwined as part of human nature. The literati class was an intimate group in which its members bond over shared aesthetics and a mutual understanding of moral standards and inner cultivation.[48] The conscious effort in refining the spiritual world was also one of the social identifiers that set the literati apart from common people and gives them a noble reputation. The Chinese saying 'A garden is like his person' indicates that the literati residences were an externalization of the owners' character and ideals. The literati would handle official business, conduct social activities and host guests in their private residences. Thereby the united space became a place for displaying the owners' internal connection with nature, which confirmed their literati identity to people in and out of the circle.

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[47] Yi Wang, "Interior display and its relation to external spaces in traditional Chinese gardens, " *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes* 18.3 (2012): 235. http://dx.doi.org/199. 10.1080/14601176.1998.10435548.
[48] Anna M Shields, *One Who Knows Me: Friendship and Literary Culture in Mid-Tang China* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2015), 241.

These ideas can be found in more recent times as well. In an illustration that visualizes a scene in the 18th century novel *A Dream of the Red Mansion*, a group of guests are being welcomed into the inner courtyard of the Jia family residence (fig.12). There are a bamboo screen with the iconic moon gate, a wandering corridor with latticed balustrade and a hall with open structure. They appear to be objects that are attached to the land and suggest various continuous, hierarchical property boundaries, but they do not intervene with the free flow of space. As guests enter through the moon gate and proceed towards the hall, they would encounter the carefully composed views of the plants and buildings from different angles. These views of willows lining along the white wall, walkways winding through verdant greens, and rockery against banana leaves and an open porch reflect the owner's aesthetics. They imply his ability to appreciate and connect with these views and his need to experience them daily, and thus they become diagrams of his cultivated inner world. Furthermore, in the 4th century essay *Preface to the Collected Poems from the Orchid Pavilion* by literati-calligrapher Wang Xizhi, he describes the occasion where his literati friends gathered at his private residence to compose poems, play music and enjoy wine. He wrote:

> Here were lofty mountains and towering hills, thick groves and tall bamboo. And, there was a clear, rapid stream reflecting everything around that had been diverted to play the game of floating wine-cups along a winding course…Upward we gazed to contemplate the immensity of the universe; downwards we peered to scrutinize the abundance of living things. In this way we let our eyes roam and our emotions become aroused so that we enjoyed to the fullest these sights and sounds. This was

> happiness, indeed…The bond between people, will quickly span a life time.[49]

Noticeably, Wang did not distinguish the space that houses the group, the garden and the landscape beyond. He absorbed it as a cohesive whole that opens up his mind. The poetic site of the gathering reflected Wang's refined taste. Moreover, because of the group's collective experience at the site and mutual appreciation of the environment, the residence also created a shared mental space for members of the literati circle to acknowledge each other's literati identity and thereby brought them closer together. The unity of space in Chinese literati residences allowed the literati to strive for individual spiritual superiority and to strengthen their bond over such superiority.

Conclusion

Understanding nature's significance in the lives of Chinese literati is crucial for grasping the spatial unification in the literati residences. Much different from the western perception of nature that emphasizes human being's distinction from and supremacy over nature, the Chinese literati viewed nature as their life companion and spiritual mentor.

The interior-exterior unification of Chinese literati residences is rooted in the literati pursuit of free spirit and a refined soul. Inherent to such spatial unification there are three pairs of collaborating concepts. i) Human and Nature. The intimacy between human and nature is externalized as the merging of the human and nature space. ii) Physicality and Spirituality. While the physical unification is constructed to reflect spiritual oneness, it also reinforces the spirit's integration with nature and solidifies the

[49] Xizhi Wang 王羲之, *Lantingji Xu* 兰亭集序 [Preface to the Poems Collected from the Orchid Pavilion] in *The Short Columbia Anthology of Traditional Chinese Literature* trans. Richard Strassbeg (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 350.

owner's internal literati identity. iii) The personal and the social. The unique aesthetic experience of Chinese literati residences is meant for the individual to cultivate his mind and for the community to acknowledge his literati identity.

FEATURED IMAGES

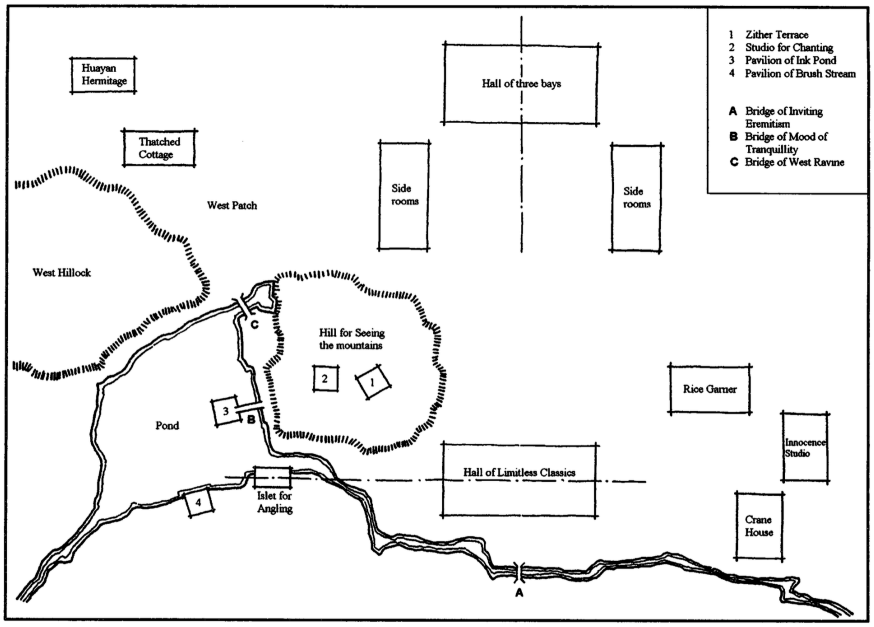

fig.1 Plan of Joy Garden of Zhu Changwen, Su Zhou, Jiangsu Province, China[50]

fig.2[51]

[50] Stephen West, *Zhu Changwen and His Garden of Joy*, 5, Fig. 1.3.
[51] Zhengming Wen, *Garden of the Inept Administrator*, 16th century, The Metropolitan Museum of Art, from ARTstor, www. artstor.org.

fig.3[52]

fig.4[53]

fig.5[54]

[52] *Moon Gate at Great Wave Pavilion at Suzhou, Jiangsu Province, China*, http://www.tour-beijing.com/blog/wp-content/uploads/The-moon-gate-borrows-the-view-outside.jpg (accessed Dec. 2015)
[53] Yuan Ma, *Bare Willow and Distant Mountain*, 13th century, Museum of Fine Arts, from ARTstor, www. artstor.org.

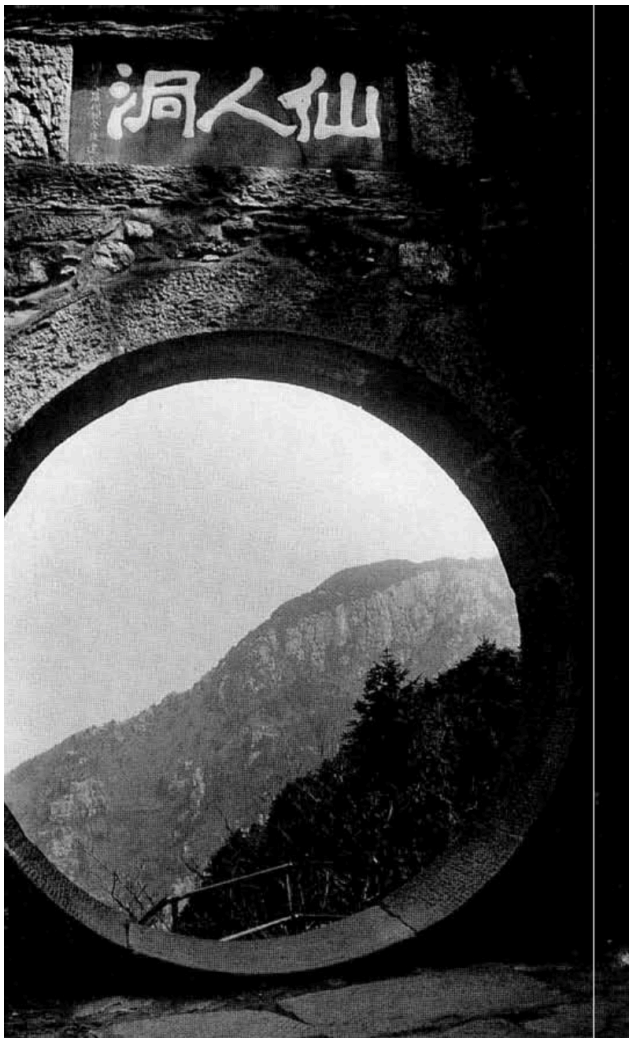

fig.6[55]

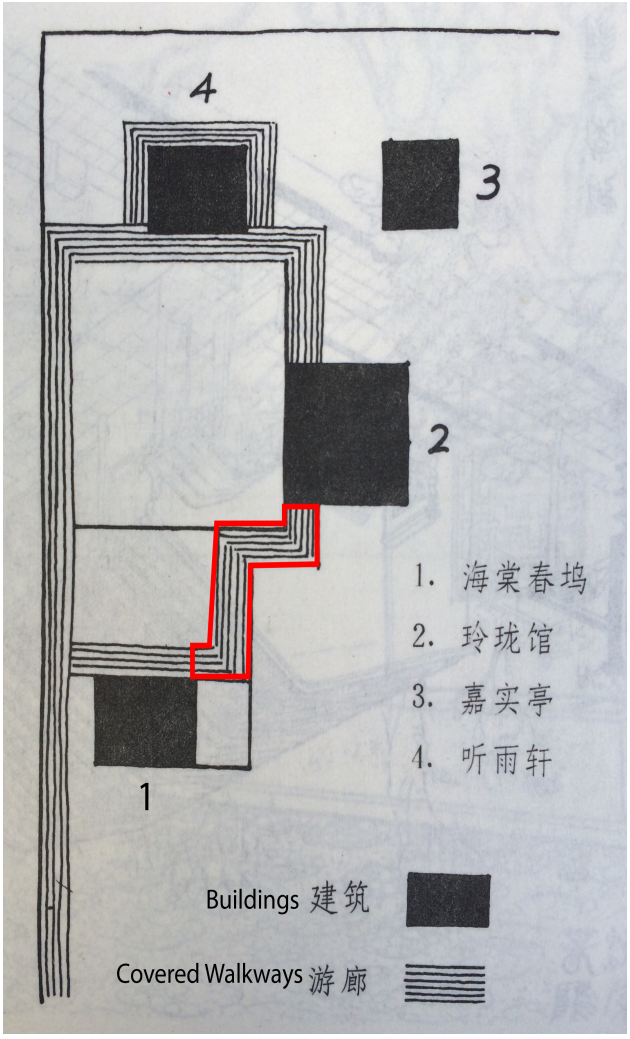

fig.7[56]

[54] *Latticed Window at the Master of the Nets Garden at Suzhou, Jiangsu Provice, China,* https://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/home/3liuwin2.jpg (accessed Dec. 2015)
[55] Inaji, 118, fig.77.1, Image of a moon gate of a literati residence on Mt. Lu, Jiangxi Province, China.
[56] Ji, 10. Schematic of a section of the 16th century Garden of the Inept Administrator.

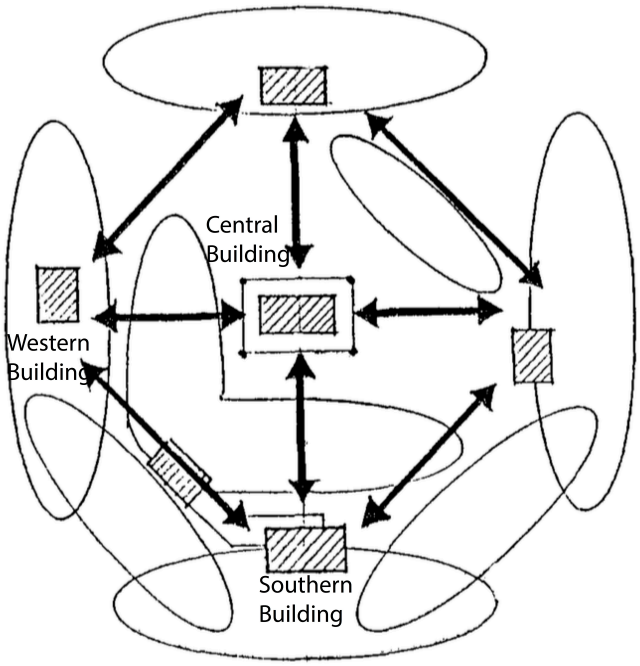

fig.8[57]

fig.9[58]

[57] Inaji, 112, fig.71, Schematic showing a conceptual description of views in different locations.
[58] Opened window looking out to the fantastically shaped rocks at Ge Yuan at Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, China, https://depts.washington.edu/chinaciv/home/3ylywnd2.jpg (accessed Dec. 2015).

fig.10[59]

[59] Inaji, 113, fig.72.1, Intericate latticework façade at Ge Yuan at Yangzhou, Jiangsu Province, China.

fig.11[60]

[60] Ying Lan, *Qiu Jing Shan Shui Tu* 秋景山水图 (reproduction), 16th -17th century, C.V.Starr East Asian Library, Berkeley.

fig.12[61]

[61] Peter Blundell Jones and Jan Woudstra, "Social Order Versus 'Natural' Disorder in the Chinese Garden", *Studies in the History of Gardens & Designed Landscapes: An International Quarterly*, 34.2 (2014), 170, fig.27(a). Illustration of *A Dream of the Red Mansion, 18th century.*

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