



Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts
Graphic design department
Visual Communication Design

Research on the Visual Identity Design and Application of Suzhou Embroidery from the Perspective of Living Heritage: A Case Study of Suzhou Gardens

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Thesis Information

Master's Thesis Topic:

Research on the Visual Identity Design and Application of Suzhou Embroidery from the Perspective of Living Heritage: A Case Study of Suzhou Gardens

Subject of Research::

Visual Image Design and Application of Suzhou Gardens

Object of Research:

1. The distinctive artistic characteristics and core visual symbol system of the four classical gardens in Suzhou (Canglang Pavilion, Lion Forest, Qipao Garden, and Liuyuan Garden)
2. The craftsmanship features and aesthetic connotations of the intangible cultural heritage of Suzhou embroidery
3. The adaptation and integration path of such garden visual IPs with the craftsmanship of Suzhou embroidery, as well as the practical implementation of series visual designs, physical embroidery, and cultural product derivations

Territorial and Chronological Scope:

Region: Centered on the Suzhou area, it covers the four classical gardens of Canglang Pavilion, Lion Grove, Zhouyuan Garden, and Liu Garden, as well as the intangible cultural heritage of Suzhou embroidery.

Time frame: The history of garden art spans the four dynasties of the Song, Yuan, Ming, and Qing periods, reflecting the evolution of garden art.

Research practice: Focusing on the activation of intangible cultural heritage and visual innovation in the context of contemporary cultural tourism integration.



Project Background

The transformation and innovative dissemination of historical cultural heritage have become the core issue in urban cultural construction. The existing visual publicity mostly presents the overall concept of "Suzhou Gardens", but the differentiated characteristics of the four famous gardens are not well highlighted. Tourists often encounter the cognitive dilemma of "recognizing the scenery but not understanding the garden" and "travelling but not distinguishing the garden". Meanwhile, the existing cultural and creative designs mostly remain at the level of replicating landscape photos and simply combining elements, lacking in in-depth translation of the core of garden art. As the core representative of the intangible cultural heritage of the Wu region, Suzhou embroidery has a high degree of artistic characteristics that are highly compatible with garden aesthetics. However, the current cross-border practices between Suzhou embroidery and garden culture are mostly the simple superposition of themes, and have not yet formed a complete closed loop of "garden cultural core - visual symbol translation - intangible cultural heritage craftsmanship implementation". Nowadays, the "14th Five-Year Plan for Cultural Development" emphasizes the requirements for the integration of intangible cultural heritage and tourism, providing policy support and development opportunities for the innovative visual image of gardens and the cross-border integration of the activation of Suzhou embroidery intangible cultural heritage.

Research significance



Practical significance

By integrating the visual image design of the four gardens with the visual representation of the unique style and the application of the intangible cultural heritage of Suzhou embroidery (through the craftsmanship techniques), the cultural characteristics of the gardens can be promoted. This approach essentially addresses the issue of the lack of systematic integration of resources in the Wu region's culture. The practice of activating intangible cultural heritage adopts a new path through the design of Suzhou garden IP, which is different from traditional themes such as landscapes, flowers, and birds. It transforms the garden symbols into new and innovative expression themes as well.

Theoretical significance

The visual image dissemination of Suzhou gardens mainly focuses on the architectural language characteristics or image design of the gardens themselves. There is a lack of in-depth continuity between the Suzhou garden art and other cultural techniques. The inheritance of Suzhou embroidery craftsmanship skills and the integration with regional culture and Suzhou garden IP's systematic theory have not been fully perfected. Therefore, in terms of integration and renewal, it has certain theoretical significance.



Research Methodology



Case analysis method

By reviewing relevant papers, journals, lectures, books, reports and other materials, a systematic analysis of the current research status at home and abroad was conducted. Representative cases of the integration of Suzhou garden culture and Suzhou embroidery culture were sorted out, and the key points of success and the shortcomings of development were explored. Updates were made promptly.



Literature research method

Through extensive reading and research of various documents, relevant literature materials on Suzhou gardens and Suzhou embroidery culture in terms of historical development, artistic characteristics, and craftsmanship features were collected from both domestic and foreign sources. The design symbol languages of the two were extracted. Appropriate design elements were sought in terms of cultural connections and symbol extraction. A comprehensive and systematic exploration was conducted on the possibility of integrating Suzhou garden culture and Suzhou embroidery culture.



Field investigation method

Given that the current materials are mainly theoretical, conducting on-site investigation and research in Suzhou to understand the current development status of Suzhou gardens and Suzhou embroidery culture can ensure the scientificity and authenticity of the literature research.

During the research process, taking photos, recording contents, sketching component designs, or obtaining basic materials and policy guidelines provided by relevant departments, and understanding the actual thoughts of local residents through visits and questionnaires, can provide a basis for subsequent literature research and design.

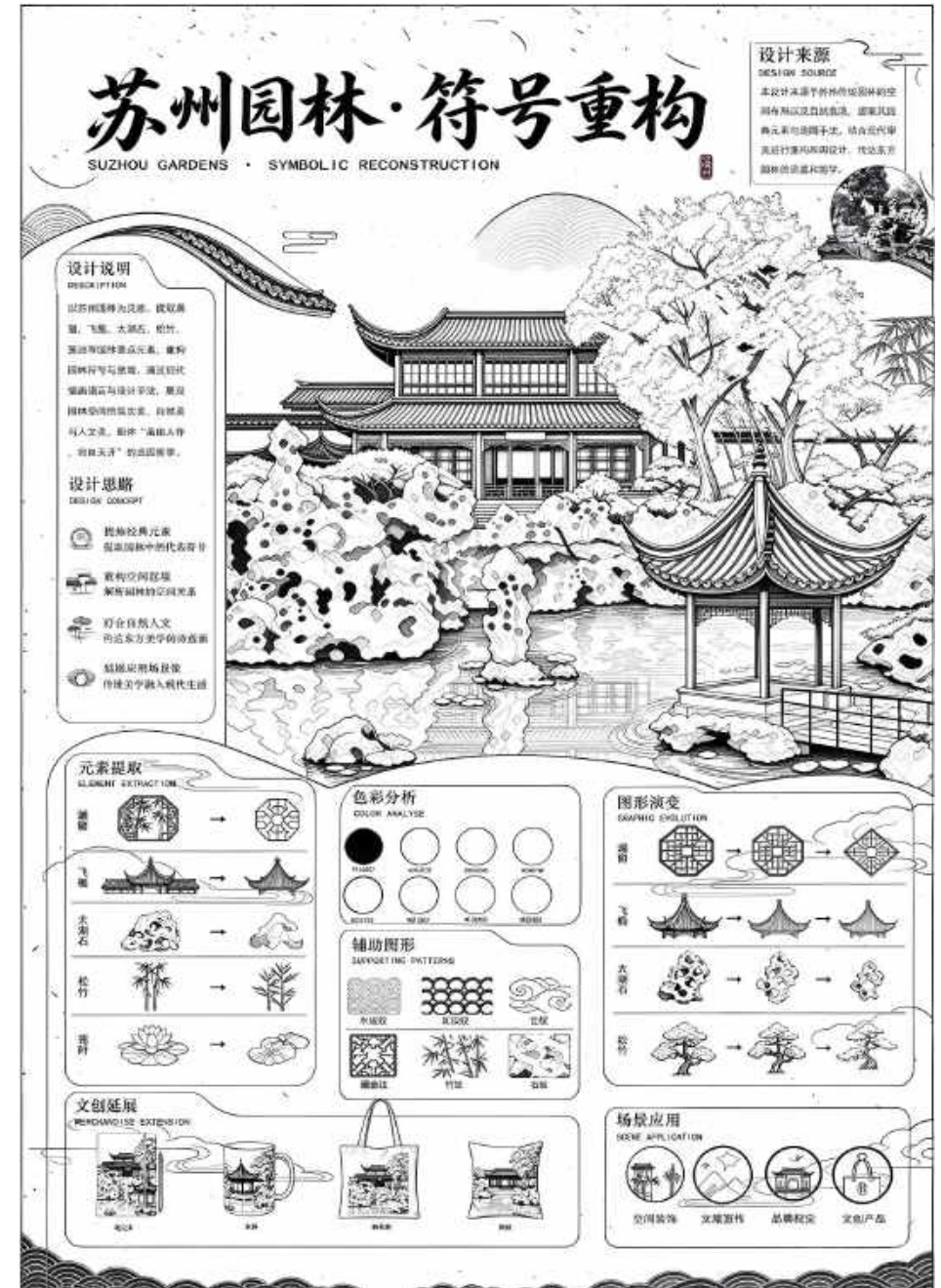
Concept sketch

Common symbols serve as the visual foundation for constructing a unified cognitive category of "Suzhou Gardens". On this base, various garden-specific symbols are refined to ultimately achieve a complete visual system that is "uniform in overall style and distinct in individual features".

Architectural language is the most recognizable visual symbol of Suzhou gardens. Black tiles and upturned eaves are the unified topographic identifiers of Jiangnan garden architecture, forming the common distinctive contour features of all gardens. Lattice windows and flower windows are the common wall language of gardens, serving functions such as lighting, borrowing views, and decoration, and are typical visual symbols for the semi-transparent and semi-segregated spaces of gardens.

Corridors and walkways connect various scenic areas, serving as the common structural language for the spatial transition and layering of the four famous gardens.

White walls as the base, paired with dark red wooden column arcades and dark tiles, form the classic color contrast pattern of the unified Jiangnan gardens.



Concept sketch

The landscape elements constitute the framework and soul of Suzhou gardens. The differences in the landscape patterns of the four famous gardens are evident.

The core gardening techniques of the four famous gardens are the combination of rock formations and water features, forming the basic spatial framework of "mountain - water - architecture". For example, the central water feature is the core link of the layout of each garden. Through the reflection on the water surface and the changes in the shoreline, it creates a spatial effect of interplay of emptiness and fullness. At the same time, by planting local Jiangnan plants such as lotus, bamboo, cypress, and osmanthus along with the rock and architectural elements, the logical thinking of "adaptation to local conditions and creating scenes in all four seasons" of the literati garden design is followed. Through doorways, blind windows, and corridor columns, natural frames are formed, which are the common spatial creation and composition techniques of the four famous gardens.



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Leaking window



Eaves



Taihu Stone



Pines and cypresses



Concept sketch

All the symbols of the four famous gardens are derived from the actual construction elements of the gardens, carrying the core of the garden culture. They retain the most distinctive visual outline, eliminate redundant details, while ensuring that the style differences of the four famous gardens are clearly distinguishable. At the same time, they are suitable for the implementation requirements of graphic design expression and Suzhou embroidery craftsmanship.

Based on this, a differentiated core symbol system has been refined:

- **Summer Garden:** hexagonal pavilions + pond water surface + willow lines

With water as the core framework, it recreates the open and expansive layout of the literati garden in the Ming Dynasty

- **Lion Forest:** Taihu stones + cave contour + ancient cypress silhouette

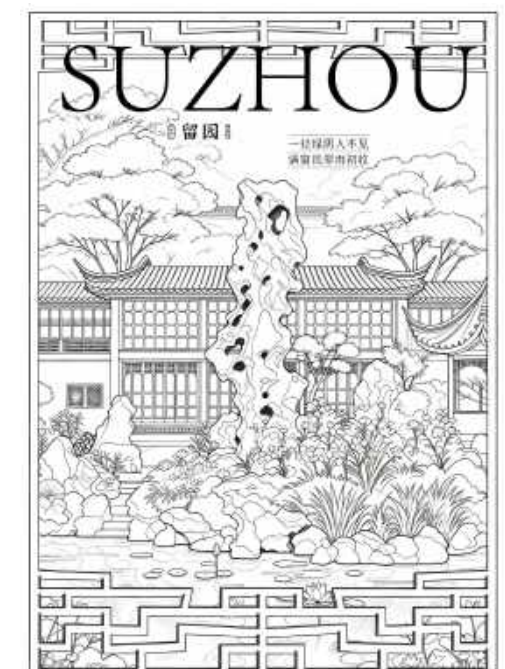
With stones as the visual main body, it conveys the Zen-like space and the strange and ethereal temperament of the "Kingdom of Rock Piles"

- **Canglang Pavilion:** square main pavilion + geometric louvers + bamboo shadow corridor

With borrowing scenery as the core technique, it restores the wild, quiet and detached cultural atmosphere of the Song Dynasty garden

- **Liuyuan:** Crown Cloud Peak stone placement + curved corridor + courtyard flowers

With the logic of space progression, it presents the layering and exquisite, step-by-step changing space rhythm of the Qing Dynasty garden

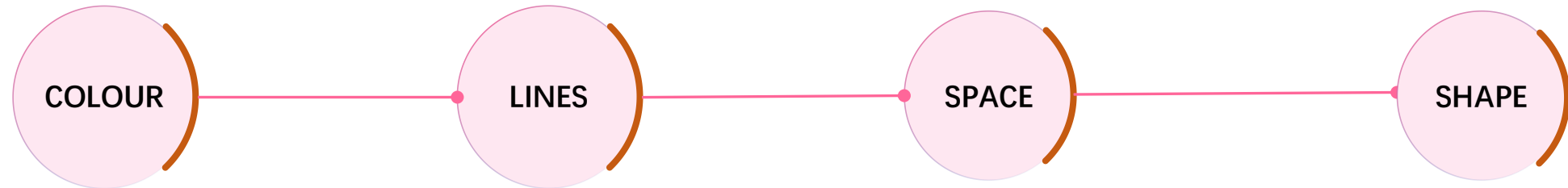


Adaptability study

The Suzhou gardens and Suzhou embroidery both belong to the core carriers of the Wuguo cultural system. During the thousand-year development of Wuguo, they mutually influenced and nourished each other, simultaneously forming a profound cultural connection characterized by shared spiritual origins, compatible forms, and similar values.

Bluish-gray: Dingcai (roof tiles) / Taihu stone /
Embroidered architecture
Beige: Wall surface / Blank space / Fabric
Dark green: Plants
Natural light distribution / Strengthening of
fabric texture sensation

Combination of reality and illusion
Real scene: pavilions, louvers, detailed needlework embroidery
Illusionary scene: blank space, framed scenery, framed illusionary
embroidery
The interplay of reality and illusion creates depth in the space by
borrowing scenery
The density of the needlework / the transparency of the fabric simulate
the illusionary layers of the garden



Straight lines: Columns/ Pavilions/ Ball bearings
Curves: Curved bridges/ Lotus leaves/ Split needles
The architecture shows rigidity, while nature shows
softness. The needle technique restores the rigidity and
softness characteristics of the garden lines.

Geometric shape: Hexagonal pavilion / Ballpoint
outline
Organic shape: Lotus flower / Taihu stone / Seed stitch
needle

Adaptability study

01

Scattered stitch embroidery

Based on traditional embroidery, it was derived from the Western brushstrokes and perspective style. At first glance, it may seem chaotic, but in fact, there are rules to follow.



02

Scrap needle

One of the most commonly used stitches in Suzhou embroidery, it features flexible line organization, delicate and harmonious embroidery surface, and strong artistic expression力。



03

Puncture the needle

By following a regular needle-picking pattern, artificial hair is woven to create various patterns. Due to the sparse arrangement of the lines, it is also commonly known as "sparse embroidery".



04

Pine needles

In a sequential and regular manner, following the grid or threading the threads, the patterns are strong, and it is usually used for depicting leaves, flower stamens, etc.



Project Components

01

Poster series

02

Spatial visual
application

03

Cultural and creative
productization
application

04

Design
materialization

05

Exhibition design

06

Packaging design

Product display

Poster series

Illustration Design for Suzhou Gardens: The Summer Garden, the Lion Forest, the Canglang Pavilion, the Lingering Garden



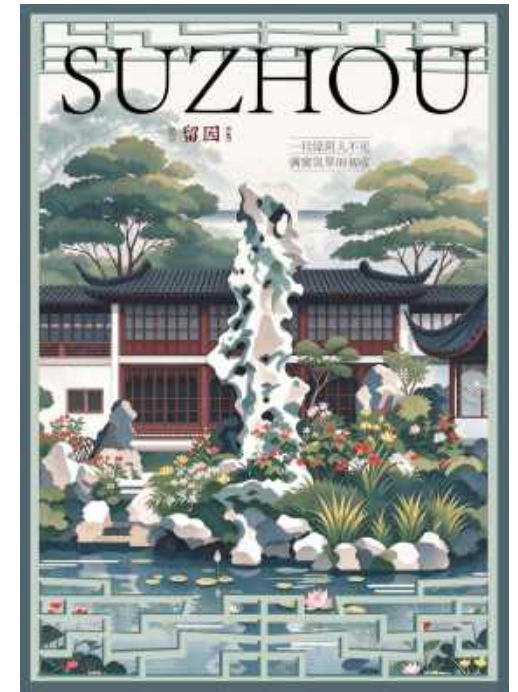
Summer Garden



Lion Forest



Canglang Pavilion



Lingering Garden

Product display

Designation of objects

Illustrated representation of Suzhou gardens in tangible form (Suzhou embroidery): The Summer Garden, the Lion Forest, the Canglang Pavilion, and the Liu Garden



Summer Garden



Lion Forest



Canglang Pavilion



Lingering Garden

Product display

Cultural and creative productization application

A series of cultural and creative products based on the illustrations of Suzhou gardens:
including but not limited to bookmarks, notebooks, etc.



Bookmarks



Notebooks

Product display

Packaging design

Packaging design for the series of illustrations of Suzhou gardens: including paper boxes and small iron commemorative gift boxes, etc.



Paper gift box



Iron gift box

Product display

Spatial visual application

Post the theme posters of Suzhou gardens beside the escalators in the subway station and on the bulletin boards in the residential areas. Use the flat posters as visual carriers and integrate them into the real public space environment to achieve the function of cultural dissemination.



Outdoor display (community)



Indoor Display (Subway)

Product display

Spatial visual application

Illustrated representation of Suzhou gardens in tangible form (Suzhou embroidery): The Summer Garden, the Lion Forest, the Canglang Pavilion, and the Liu Garden



Summer Garden



Lion Forest



Canglang Pavilion



Lingering Garden

Conclusion

By systematically reviewing this research, further in-depth studies can be conducted in the following aspects in the future:

First, expand the application scenarios of garden visual symbols, combining digital media, immersive experiences and other technological means to create more diverse forms of garden visual communication; second, deepen the integration of Suzhou embroidery with other garden cultures, explore more possible combinations of stitches, fabrics and garden elements, develop more rich Suzhou embroidery garden series works, thereby forming a large-scale cultural product system, allowing Suzhou garden culture to achieve wider and deeper dissemination and inheritance in the contemporary era.



THANKS:)