A Brief Analysis of the Memorial Space Design of the South China Education History Pingshi Research Base

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Abstract. Through literature and the public, this article had in-depth understanding of the historical events of South China education and followed three design principles of memorial space: respect for history, emotional resonance and sustainable development. Then this article had overall planning and landscape nodes design for the South China Educational History Research Base, realized the historical information spatialization, inherited and carried forward the spirit of patriotism, so that more people could recognize and remember this history. This article through analyzed and concluded the 4 design methods of the Research Base project as following: narrative, symbolism and metaphor, white space and public participation, which can provide a certain reference for the design of memorial space in the later stage of the project and other similar projects.

1. Introduction of the South China Education History Pingshi Research Base

1.1. A Brief introduction of History
During the Anti-Japanese War, in October 1938, Guangzhou was occupied by Japan, and in January 1939, the National Sun Yat-sen University went to Chengjiang, Yunnan. In 1940, serving as the acting president of National Sun Yat-sen University, Xu Chongqing led the school's teachers and students to move back to Guangdong from Yunnan, and stationed in Pingshi Street, Pingshi, Shaoguan, in northern Guangdong[1]. Different colleges of the National Sun Yat-sen University were located in different places of Pingshi which became an important center of education during the war[2]. National Sun Yat-sen University, Private Lingnan University’s College of Agriculture, Peilian High School and other colleges stayed there until 1945.

1.2. A Brief introduction of Project
During the war, the various schools from South China headed by the National Sun Yat-sen University insisted on running schools in the front line, stationing to Pingshi, Shaoguan in northern Guangdong, and other places in southern Hunan. With the development of the activation and utilization of the South China Historical Trail cultural routes, this precious history is gradually revealed to the world. Through continuous excavation and reading of historical documents and many field trips, more and more educational greats, historical deeds and cultural heritages which tell stories of the past have been discovered. At present, in order to prevent this period of history from dying away over time, the Guangdong government and volunteers decided to discover and promote this period of South China education history. The planning and development of the entire project has been promoted under the name of the "South China Education History Pingshi Research Base" project (here after referred to as
“the Research Base project”), which simultaneously has been challenged to achieve a breakthrough in historical information spatialization.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. About Memorial Space.

The identification of the word "memorial" in modern Chinese dictionary is "using things or actions to express remembrance to people or things". Whether people or things can also be an object which serves as a focus for the memory or the commemoration of something, usually an influential, deceased person or a historical, tragic event. Yoshinobu Abara interprets "space" as "the formation of the interrelationship between an object and people experiencing it[2].” It emphasizes the subject status of people in space, that is, space doesn't make any sense without human’s participation. Combined with the relevant statement that Aldo Rossi’s "Urban Architecture" mentioned about the theory of monuments and endurance, "Memorial is a kind of 'past' that we are still experiencing[3]". It can be seen that the durability of memorial not only reflects the history, art, and existence of the city, but also serves as an element to promote urban development reflecting energy of our memory.

2.2. Design Principles of Memorial Space

The memorial space design of this project mainly follows three principles: respect for history, emotional resonance and sustainable development.

2.2.1. Respect for History.

The design of memorial space should realize the dialogue between the past and the present, respect the authenticity of history, and try to present the historical scene as much as possible while not disturbing the normal life of local residents, so that the experiencer can return to that specific period, feeling the atmosphere and emotion of that era. In this project, the design team carried out a large number of historical literature reading and sorting in the early stage, and used real historical events as the basis for specific design of the memorial space, so that the memorial space of the research base project more appropriately reflected the specific impression of the South China education history during the war.

2.2.2. Emotional Resonance.

In the article "Societies, Ceremonies, and Memorial Landscapes", American landscape architect Wasserman believes: "a memorial space is a place with function of thinking, emotion, spirituality, and sociality, that is, a place of memorizing the past, mourning, contemplation and gatherings." The emotional resonance principle refers that memorial space should carry the spirit of people, realize dialogue and communication with people, and has a memorial significance. This project intends to build a research and learning base with various functions, including research, learning, housing, and activities, setting with complete educational space, activity place and infrastructure, increasing the communication between space and people, and thus achieving emotion resonance.

2.2.3. Sustainable Development.

The sustainable development principle includes educational sustainability and ecological sustainability. The education sustainability means that a successful memorial space design should become a bridge connecting the past, present and the future. It not only needs to reflect the true history of the past and arouse the emotional resonance of the present, but it also needs to inspire the future, educate future generations, and sustain spiritual civilization. Ecological sustainability means that the impact on the surrounding environment should be thoroughly considered when renovating the historical site. Not only the ecological civilization should be respected without constructing large civil engineering, but also it should be people-oriented, not destroying the original living needs of the locals, and strive for harmonious co-existence between people and the architectural landscape.
3. A Brief Analysis of the Memorial Space Design on the Research Base Project

In accordance with the design principles mentioned above, combined with the specific memorial space design process of the research base project, the following analyzed the memorial space design of the project from four design methods including narrative, symbolism and metaphor, white space, and public participation.

3.1. Narrative

Like other narrative works such as literature, film and television, architecture and landscape bear the function of interpreting the environment, social, cultural context, and current human behavior patterns. Therefore, just like other narrative works, the narrative method in this article refers to telling space users and viewers a "story" via its own spatial organization and construction method in order to convey the theme of the memorial space[4].

Since 1940, the headquarters of the National Sun Yat-sen University has been set up in Pingshi Street. Due to the lack of funds and supporting teaching resources during the war, local residents generously provided places for teaching work. Since 2008, the buildings on the Pingshi Street have been demolished one after another, and the land elevation has been increased through landfills, and a 6-meter-wide roadway has been opened up along the river bank which led to no longer existence of the street space in the past. Fortunately, in 2008, the Guangdong Provincial Institute of Cultural Relics and Archaeology conducted surveying and mapping of Pingshi Street, leaving precious data for this project.

3.1.1. Construction of Street Space.

The designer found the historical trend of Pingshi Street by superimposing the 2008 survey and the current satellite imagery, and found through field research that most of the Pingshi Street floor is now flat but covered by 2-meter-thick mud, and a small part of it is covered by the coastal roadway. In order to better present the atmosphere of the street space to users and viewers, the designer decided to restore the historical trend of Pingshi Street as much as possible, and used the paving material of the old street, that is, the red sandstone removed from the old street before. Merely "roads" are not enough to form street space, but it is too expensive and unnecessary to reconstruct the complete Pingshi Street. The designer decided to build wooden frames in the basic size of the original buildings between the street space, which increases the sense of enclosure that cannot be replaced by the wall foundation, making the viewer feel like walking in the old street of the past.

3.1.2. Landscape Nodes Setting.

Started from the Guangtong Guild Temple Square in the reconstruction of the street, the "story" of the Pingshi old street is mainly narrated by organizing the landscape space and reforming historical buildings abandoned. Via the lying steles and the display walls of Wind Rain Gallery set in the square, we can know the general situation of the National Sun Yat-Sen University in the past. Walking along the street to southwest, we can appreciate the characters and important deeds of the National Sun Yat-Sen University, while passing the Mr. Pingshi Garden and the Academician Garden established for the teachers and students who once taught or received education in Pingshi and then have become the National Engineering Academician or members of the Academy with outstanding academic achievements. We are able to enjoy films and drama performances supporting the war at that time in the small theater that has been reformed by the old building. After passing the Sanjie Temple site, every reforming building tells the real historical events of National Sun Yat-sen University that occurred in Pingshi that time: Zisong Fang in memory of martyr Wei Zisong, dean of the Department of Architectural Engineering, Jiangying Fang that commemorates Jiang Ying, dean of the Department of Botany, School of Agriculture, and Dingyou Library in memory of Du Dingyou, director of the National Sun Yat-sen University Library.

The landscape design of Pingshi Street connects the historical and cultural landscape along the street to form a historical gallery whose memorial theme is fully displayed in the architecture and
landscape space, as if the past teaching atmosphere awakens the collective memory of local residents and infects outside viewers.

3.2. Symbolism and Metaphor
The symbolism and metaphor method in design is to point out the spiritual connotation or inner meaning behind a common object or concept through a word or phrase, and present it with a substantially visible image, so that the architecture and landscape can reflect aesthetic value beyond practicality, the purpose of the method is expecting that the appreciator can experience and identify. The difference between the two is that symbolism emphasizes the subject more directly, while metaphor is relatively implicit based on people’s social conventions or past experience and knowledge[5].

3.2.1. Landscape configuration.
In the research base project, the main landscape configuration of the overall planning and design is azalea, because azalea has several special meanings during the war. First, azaleas are the main growing plants in Pingshi Town. There will be a magnificent scene of purple-red azaleas all over the hills in every March and April which has become the collective memory of Pingshi residents and the teachers and students during the war. Thus, the azalea bushes and belt designed have awaken the inner memory of the residents through symbolism method. What’s more, Azalea was also a famous anti-Japanese song composed by Professor Huang Youdi. In 1941, combining with the moving scene of azaleas in Pingshi, Professor Huang created this poetic and picturesque anti-Japanese romance song, making the world hear the patriotism of all Chinese people, so the azaleas in the landscape also metaphor Professor Huang’s music creation inspiring the war and the people's confidence in the victory of it (figure 1).

3.2.2. Building Materials and Landscape Sketches.
The lying steles on the Guangtong Guild Temple Square in Pingshi Street Memorial Park used white marble materials to inscribe historical figures, showing the heroic images of teachers and students who insisted on running schools on the front line during the war; combined sculptures of Mr. Pingshi Garden and group sculptures in the Memorial Site of College of Arts in Tieling as well as the Memorial Park of Peilian high school in Changweidong symbolized the brave and fearless spirit of the warriors who fought for the war at that time (figure 2).

3.3. White space
From the perspective of aesthetics, the empty scene is one of the ways using white space method, with undefined points and meaningful blanks, which need to be supplemented by the viewers to make it concrete and visualized. In white spaces, viewers need to play their subjective initiative, re-create and re-evaluate[6].
3.3.1. Landscape planning.
The Pingshi Street Memorial Park was constructed in phases during the landscape planning process. At the very beginning, some lands were reserved for development, with only azalea belts set along the street to provide more suitable planning for the future and leave room for the viewers’s imagination.

3.3.2. Architectural Protection and Reforming.
The remaining historical buildings and ruins are only listed for protection, rather than arbitrarily designed for reforming, such as, the site of Xu Chongqing's former residence. Due to the lack of protection measures, the roof and most of the walls collapsed, showing a scene of ruins. Although many design organizations have already had ideas and plans for its transformation, the designers of this project believe that the white space design is more straightforward and pure without any trace, and the "empty" scene can directly shock the viewer's attention, causing viewers’ mood swings and letting them unleash their subjective initiative to imagine that at that time, how Principal Xu managed his life, teaching and other matters, and how this building has survived in the storms and still solid through years, leaving us precious evidence for commemoration.

3.4. Public participation
Only when the users participate in the design, the design can truly serve the public. Public participation in the design of the memorial space can enable the viewers to stimulate their subjective initiative, and at the same time can more fully assimilate into the overall emotional atmosphere. Public participation can improve the integrity of memorial content, thereby enriching the memorial space.
Establishing effective communication channels with villagers is the key to timely obtaining historical information and grasping the design direction. In the preliminary field survey of the Research Base project, the designer conducted detailed communication with the local government, village committee and villagers, obtaining information that was unavailable in written records. Nowadays, there is a hill called "Observatory Hill" in Tangkou Village, Pingshi, which is overgrown with trees and weeds. The design team of this project got clues from the dictation of the name of the hill and the communication with villagers and discovered the scattered stone and bricks from the past time under weeds on the hillside via exploration. By cleaning the weeds, the remaining foundation of the building was completely revealed. Compared with the historical literature and pictures, it was determined to be the site of the National Sun Yat-sen University Observatory. Thus, we have adopted immediate measures to protect it.

4. Conclusion and reflection
By following three design principles of memorial space: respect for history, emotional resonance and sustainable development, our team made overall planning and landscape nodes design for the Research Base project, realized the historical information spatialization, inherited and carried forward the spirit of patriotism, so that more people could recognize and remember this history. This article analyzed the memorial space design process of the Research Base project in 4 design methods including narrative, symbolism and metaphor, white space and public participation, which can provide a certain reference for the design of memorial space in the later stage of the project and other similar projects.

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