

## Classical Chinese Gardens in Twenty-first Century America: Cultivating the Past<sup>1</sup>

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**Abstract:** This paper presents a brief examination of three tracts of American real estate that have been transformed into Chinese-style gardens. Each re-presentation serves a specific function at its particular site and also creates and perpetuates symbolic meaning that goes beyond the individual site to connect to other sites past and present. In each case, the re-presentation demonstrates adaptations and continuations in function and meaning. The three sites used to illustrate the range of adaptations were chosen for their diversity in several areas: the defining and re-inventing of authenticity, their sizes and locations, the type of installation, their origin story and funding, the reflexivity of the institution about the changes made, and programs to produce meaning for the viewers. In their commitment to preserve, recreate, and sustain the past, these institutions have transformed the physical form of the garden. Hybridization is unavoidable when transferring a cultural icon, especially one so layered in meaning as the garden in China.

**Keywords:** Chinese gardens, Chinese art, US garden, Pursuing Harmony Garden, Lan Su Classical Chinese Garden, Liu Fang Yua

“How can I bear this feeling of past and present?” lamented the artist, Wen Zhengming (1470-1559), “. . . As the present looks upon the past, so will the future look upon the present.”<sup>2</sup> Wen Zhengming brushed this poignant thought while contemplating a painting that he had done after one by his master, Shen Zhou (1427-1509), while Shen Zhou was still alive. Shen Zhou had in turn created his painting after viewing a scroll by Wu Zhen (1280-1354). By the time he made this notation, Wen Zhengming alone remained. Yet he does not seem wholly alone, gazing upon a painting that is embedded with the spirit of his master and his master’s master. Time was not linear in that moment; both past and present simultaneously existed in his memory and in the painting. In their book, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*, Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton propose that it is precisely this connection to memory/emotion that imbues an ordinary object with meaning.<sup>3</sup>

This accretion of memory and meaning through repetition is like a pearl forming; once sufficient layers have accumulated, a bit of sand is transformed into a pearl. In imperial China, gardens were often designed by and for viewers with a very specific education in the Chinese classics and in the history of Chinese art. Multiple layers of allusion were understood by these viewers. Can these strata of allusion be transmitted across time and space? Hybridization is unavoidable when transferring a cultural icon,<sup>4</sup> especially one so layered in

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meaning as the garden in China.

Elements of Chinese gardens have been migrating west for hundreds of years in various forms: the writings of Matteo Ricci, the designs of William Chambers, the Chinese fence at Monticello, the plethora of Willow Ware patterns, for example. More recently, a number of actual gardens have been cultivated in the United States. Most of these gardens have received little critical attention, although a few recent constructions have received attention in the press. To my knowledge, there is no organized history of this practice of building “Chinese” gardens in the United States. This essay, which is the start of a larger project focusing only on extant gardens, is intended to begin to fill that gap.

This paper presents a brief examination of three tracts of American real estate that have been transformed into Chinese-style gardens. Each re-presentation serves a specific function at its particular site and also creates and perpetuates symbolic meaning that goes beyond the individual site to connect to other sites past and present.<sup>5</sup> In each case, the re-presentation demonstrates adaptations and continuations in function and meaning. Producing meaning is crucial since the majority of the viewers of these new gardens will not share the cultural memory<sup>6</sup> upon which the older gardens were built.

The three sites used to illustrate the range of adaptations were chosen for their diversity in several areas: the defining and re-inventing of authenticity, their sizes and locations, the type of installation, their origin story and funding, the reflexivity of the institution about the changes made, and programs to produce meaning for the viewers. In their commitment to preserve, recreate, and sustain the past, these institutions have transformed the physical form of the garden.

The creators of today’s Chinese gardens in the United States use and shape history, memory, and imagination in the construction of new “Classical Chinese” gardens. The term “Classical Chinese garden” is used in this essay because that is how the sponsoring institutions identify these gardens. It is not clear precisely what they mean by this term although it seems to indicate that the gardens are based on designs from southeastern China during the Ming-Qing periods (rather than imperial gardens from northern China or gardens from the Song dynasty or Sichuan-style gardens). Based on their designs, they are most likely referring to the gardens of the style promoted in the *Yuan Ye*, the first garden manual produced in China (around 1631).<sup>7</sup>

Many of the gardens also have somewhere in their promotional literature a claim like this: City X “. . . is the proud home of the most authentic Chinese garden outside of China.”<sup>8</sup> It is quite common in this literature to equate “authentic” and “Chinese.” Evidence for this “authenticity” consists of noting how many Chinese artisans came to build it, which (if not all) of the materials were purchased and/or constructed in China, whether or not a traditional Chinese design was consulted, and if there are plants native to China. Yet as Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims state in *Exhibiting Cultures: the Poetics and Politics of Display*:

Authenticity is not about factuality or reality. It is about authority. Objects have no authority; people do . . . . Authenticity—authority—enforces the social contract between the audience and the museum, a socially agreed-upon reality that exists only as long as confidence in the voice of the exhibition holds.<sup>9</sup>

In another essay in this volume, Susan Vogel provides an example of this authority. In the exhibition *Art/artifact*, which examined the museum experience, she invoked her authority as a curator of by creating a section that

... contained an unedited and untranslated videotape showing the installation of a Mijikenda memorial post, accompanied by a label stating that only the original audience could have the original experience—that all other settings were inauthentic and arbitrary to a greater or lesser degree.<sup>10</sup>

Vogel's then-experimental exhibition displayed objects in a variety of ways, using both art museum and anthropological museum practices in an effort to draw the attention of the viewer to how objects in museums are mediated. In contrast, the presentation of these gardens does not seem to be aware of the current debates in exhibition practice (which itself is based in part on shifts in anthropology and ethnography in the past few decades).<sup>11</sup>

Generally not discussed are those elements that are not related to this limited notion of authenticity. These unmentioned elements are what craft these gardens into authentic American creations, or perhaps more accurately, Chinese-American creations since they are often clearly collaborations between the two countries with the goal of strengthening the bonds of friendship and understanding.<sup>12</sup> There are around 25 of these gardens today. (See a table with a growing list of current Chinese-style gardens in the United States in Figure 1 and see Figure 2 for a partial list of some that are at various stages in the process from fundraising to construction).

CHINESE GARDENS CURRENTLY OPEN IN THE UNITED STATES

c.1863	Chinese Temple (1863) and Chinese Garden, Oroville, California
1953	International Peace Garden Plum Pavilion, Salt Lake City, Utah
1971	Chinese Cultural Garden, Overfelt Park, San Jose, California
1980	Astor Court in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York, New York
1982	China Pavilion, EPCOT, Orlando, Florida
1985?	Cathay in the West, Bel Air, California
1985	Chinese Cultural Garden, Cleveland, Ohio
1996	Pursuing Harmony Garden at the Minneapolis Institute of Art, Minneapolis, Minnesota
1996	The Margaret Grigg Nanjing Friendship Chinese Garden, St. Louis, Missouri
1996	Chinese Cup Garden, Schnormeier Gardens, Gambier, Ohio
1998	The Gardens, Chinese Cultural Center, Phoenix, Arizona
1999	New York Chinese Scholar's Garden, Staten Island, New York
2000	Lan Su Chinese Garden in Portland, Oregon
2006	Seattle Chinese Garden in Seattle, Washington
2006	The Chinese Garden in the Riverside International Friendship Gardens, Lacrosse, Wisconsin
2008	Liu Fang Yuan, the Garden of Flowing Fragrance at The Huntington, San Marino, California
2010	Tacoma Chinese Garden and Reconciliation Park, Tacoma, Washington

Figure 1. Table showing Chinese gardens currently open in the United States

PROPOSED CHINESE GARDENS IN THE UNITED STATES

Georgia-Suzhou Friendship Chinese Garden in Asian Village, Atlanta, Georgia
Riverfront Gardens, Des Moines, Iowa
Kansas City Chinese Garden, Kansas City, Kansas
The Garden of Northern Brightness (Bei Ming Yuan), Minneapolis, Minnesota
Garden of Surging Waves (Cang Lang Yuan), Astoria, Oregon
Chinese Garden, Dream Gardens, Grapevine, Texas
China Garden (Zhongguo Yuan) A Classical Chinese Garden at the U.S. National Arboretum, Washington, DC
Chinese Gazebo and Garden, Evanston, Wyoming

Figure 2. Table of proposed Chinese gardens in the United States

In the three examples below, history is layered differently. Each garden arose to fulfill a different need for a different type of institution, and yet each is called a “Chinese garden.” There is a set of objects and ideas that are present in each site that link them to the claim of “Chinese garden:” rocks, plants, views, architecture, and connections to other arts. There are in some cases other overlapping concerns that are not related to being a Chinese garden, but rather to adaptations made due to being located in the United States in the twenty-first century: accessibility, safety requirements, or education of a diverse public. All three institutions have incorporated some form(s) of didactics to increase the accessibility of their sites to a broad audience. All have useful pedagogical applications, depending on the level of the learner. If these tools are successful in creating memory and emotional connection in the viewers, they may give the site meaning to new communities of viewers.

### **PURSUING HARMONY GARDEN**

The *Pursuing Harmony Garden* at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, Minneapolis, Minnesota, is a reconstructed Qing dynasty garden that is attached to a study that was taken apart and then rebuilt inside the museum (see Figure 3). It is owned and operated by the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, although the project of finding, moving, and reconstructing

Figure 3. Tai hu rock, Pursuing Harmony Garden, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2011. (Photo by author.)



it was backed by Bruce Dayton, a frequent donor to the museum.<sup>13</sup> The studio/library to which the small courtyard garden is attached is called the “Studio for Gratifying Discourse” (see Figure 4). This studio/library was part of a house near Lake Tai in the town Dangli.<sup>14</sup> When curator Robert Jacobson located it, he noted that a plaque in the garden wall dated it to 1797. Most of the original stones of the garden were missing when the studio/library was purchased in 1996, but similar rocks from other Jiangnan gardens were purchased and used.<sup>15</sup> Jacobson was specifically looking for a library and a reception hall to showcase the furniture Dayton donated to the museum and was delighted to find a library with a courtyard garden attached.<sup>16</sup> Chinese artisans disassembled the site and accompanied the pieces to Minneapolis to help with the reconstruction of the studio and the construction of the



Figure 4. Studio of Gratifying Discourse, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2011. (Photo by author.)

garden.

This site is the only one of the three examples located indoors, actually inside a museum. Dayton wanted the collection of Chinese furniture that he donated to have “context,”<sup>17</sup> which led to the purchase of this garden. This type of installation is what Barbara Kirschenblatt-Gimblett calls exhibiting *in situ*, “. . . the object is a part that stands in a contiguous relation to an absent whole that may or may not be recreated.”<sup>18</sup> Dayton’s collection of objects is displayed in the studio/library and in display cases in the surrounding galleries. The garden is part of the setting and in combination with the studio/library allows the viewer to see the objects in relation to one another and to a space. The installation is part reconstruction and part new creation, but it also recalls the larger whole – the residence – from which it was excised.

Visitors can walk through the courtyard garden. The doors on one side of the studio are opened and a sheet of clear glass covers the bottom, preventing visitors from entering. Although the studio cannot be entered, it is possible to see the garden through the studio, creating a view and making the garden seem bigger than it actually is (see Figure 4). A viewer could imagine herself sitting in the chair and rearranging the brushes and paraphernalia in preparation for painting. Noticing how each of the windows frames a particular view increases the sense of space while also making a connection to paintings for the knowledgeable viewer. There are bamboo paintings hung in an adjacent gallery; a perceptive viewer can make a connection between the vertical hanging scroll format and the framed view through the window.

The mosaic on the ground of the garden and the rocks are actual rocks. The plants however, are plastic, fabric, and wire (see Figure 5), making this more installation than garden. In its original context, the small courtyard would have connected to other courtyards and additional views would have been available through the other windows in the library and through the entries into the courtyard. With only a museum wall beyond the lattice windows in the garden wall, there is no borrowed view. There are no crickets or cicada,

no sound of rain on leaves, no changing shadows on the walls, no smell of damp earth or flowers. Visitors cannot remove their shoes and walk on the stone mosaic for an acupuncture massage of their feet. The form of the garden has been preserved, but not its life. By

Figure 5. Rocks and silk plants, Pursuing Harmony, Minneapolis Institute of Arts, 2011. (Photo by author.)



removing the garden from its outdoor context and putting it into a museum, it becomes an artifact (or as Kirshenblatt-Gimblett puts it, “a tomb with a view.”)<sup>19</sup>

Some of the galleries near the garden are filled with scholar’s objects or furniture, each with wall text to lead the interested viewer further into that world. Some of the objects have audio materials via headsets. The Minneapolis Institute of Art has a website, “Arts of Asia,” which features a section on the library and rock garden.<sup>20</sup> There are docent-led tours that include the library and rock garden. In contrast to the in situ presentation of the garden, Kirshenblatt-Gimblett describes this mode of presentation as “in context:”

The notion of in context, which poses the interpretive problem of theoretical frame of reference, entails particular techniques of arrangement and explanation to convey ideas . . . . In-context approaches to installation establish a theoretical frame of reference for the viewer, offer explanations, provide historical background, make comparisons, pose questions . . . .<sup>21</sup>

She concludes that these strategies give the viewer a reason for looking at the object. Dayton wanted the garden to function as context for the objects, but it becomes another artifact that becomes subject to interpretative strategies.

The *Pursuing Harmony Garden* is history that can be seen in the present. Even though parts of the site date to the eighteenth century, it is not that eighteenth-century garden. Like Wen Zhengming in the opening quote, visitors can perhaps be swept into the past by this re-presentation of a garden. It may recall past, but it is an adaptation of the present.

**LAN SU CHINESE GARDEN (ALSO KNOWN AS THE GARDEN OF AWAKENING ORCHIDS AND PREVIOUSLY KNOWN AS THE PORTLAND-SUZHOU CHINESE GARDEN)<sup>23</sup>**

In addition to preserving the past, Portland's representation of a Chinese garden has the added function of revitalizing another downtown neighborhood.<sup>23</sup> It is a new construction using traditional techniques, materials, and plants (see Figure 6). It is owned by the City of



Figure 6. Knowing the Fish Pavilion, Lan Su Classical Chinese Garden, 2006. (Photo by author.)

Portland and is operated by a nonprofit company. The *Lan Su Chinese Garden* also underscores the relationship between Portland and her sister city in China, Suzhou. In contrast to the modest *Pursuing Harmony Garden*, the Portland garden is essentially a city park and takes up an entire one-acre block of downtown Portland. Like *Pursuing Harmony Garden*, it was funded largely by donors but the land is owned by the City of Portland through the Board of Parks and Recreation.

Although “[g]arden designers and artisans from Suzhou built this Garden (sic),”<sup>24</sup> there were also architects, engineers, and contractors from Portland involved in the construction of the garden. These are not mentioned in the promotional material, but were necessary to be sure that the garden meets state and federal accessibility and safety requirements; there is a wheelchair-accessible route through the garden. However, there are many places where more traditional Chinese aesthetics were not altered to fit American building codes—there are still steps up into some buildings and some thresholds remain intact (for instance, one must step over the threshold of the Crabapple Blossom Gate).<sup>25</sup> A traditional Chinese garden has many liminal moments of slowing down and being more conscious of movement, stillness, and change; some of this is lost in the American descendants.

Most of the building materials and the rocks were brought from China.<sup>26</sup> The plants are those found in Chinese gardens, but were all grown in the United States. The design is not an exact replica of an extant garden, but is an original design based on gardens in the Suzhou area of China more generally. It utilizes the shape of the site and incorporates the

surrounding neighborhood through leak windows and borrowed views (see the “borrowed view” of high rises in Figure 7).

In the garden’s organizational profile, “garden as museum” is listed as one of the intended goals.<sup>27</sup> It is essentially reversing the approach of the Minneapolis Institute of Arts: it is collecting artifacts to provide context to the garden rather than adding a garden to provide context to artifacts. This suggests that the garden is conceived of as a site where culture is

Figure 7. Hall of Brocade Clouds, Lan Su Chinese Garden. (Photo by author.)



interpreted and produced. If this shift includes visible reflexivity about the installation and interpretation, it could be a powerful tool for engaging and challenging the viewers (see the discussion of Vogel’s installation strategy above).

The organizational profile of the *Lan Su Chinese Garden* also notes that previous programming was focused too tightly on audiences that had significant knowledge of plants or Chinese art and culture.<sup>28</sup> More recent programming reflects attempts to reach a broader audience: *feng shui* classes or having a favorite poem done in Chinese calligraphy, for example. Such programming not only informs a greater audience, it also gets them to enter the garden multiple times. This repetition is essential to understanding Chinese garden aesthetics (and art of any kind, really).

In addition to its comprehensive website, programming, and tours, the *Lan Su Chinese Garden* has a printed guide that includes a cutout to help the visitor frame views at specific “vistas” noted and described on the guide.<sup>29</sup> This in effect teaches the viewer one mode of interaction with the garden—it teaches them where and how to look. As Robert Pogue Harrison notes in the opening to his chapter called “The Lost Art of Seeing” in *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*:

Where appearances recede into the depths of space and time even as they come forward to stake their claim in the phenomenal realm, they make special demands on our powers of observation. That is bad news for gardens, for nothing is less cultivated these days in Western societies than the art of seeing. It is fair to say that there exists in our era a tragic discrepancy between the staggering richness of the visible world and the extreme poverty of our capacity to perceive it.<sup>30</sup>



The sort of intervention described is not mimicking the behavior of an imagined, long ago, far away Chinese gentleman in his garden. It is an adaptation that acknowledges that being able to see is an important skill, but one that is often underdeveloped in the here and now.

Unfortunately, the descriptions to the cultural references made in the design of the view are so general that it would be hard for a more ambitious learner to pursue more information. For example, in one of these constructed and guided views (see Figure 7), the story of a Chinese philosopher pondering the happiness of fishes is shared, but if a visitor wished to learn the whole story or who wrote it, it would be hard to research since the philosopher's name (Zhuangzi) is not mentioned. To remedy this, interested learners could also read *Listening to the Garden* by Reed College Professor Emeritus David Wu. Here he writes about the process of naming and providing the calligraphy for the various sites in the *Lan Su Chinese Garden*. He provides clear and thorough translations and explains how the translations work. He also provides a sense of the resonances created by the names chosen and names the references clearly.

Like the *Pursuing Harmony Garden*, the *Lan Su Garden* claims a Chinese genealogy, but it is also more of a hybrid. Since the initial goal (urban revitalization) and location (city block) are so different from the installation at the Minneapolis Institute of Arts, it is not surprising that the resulting adaptations are also distinctive. The challenges of interpretation and installation remain.

#### **LIU FANG YUAN (GARDEN OF FLOWING FRAGRANCE) – HUNTINGTON LIBRARY**

The third site is *Liu Fang Yuan*, the *Garden of Flowing Fragrance* at The Huntington, San Marino, California, which is an ongoing construction that is one section of a larger botanical garden in an institution that also has a world-class library and art collection (see Figure 8). It is set against the backdrop of the San Gabriel Mountains.

Since the Huntington is library and archive and botanical garden, the *Liu Fang Yuan* is part of a larger complex of gardens, architecture, and culture of learning. The first phase is 3.5 acres, but there are plans to eventually expand to 12 acres. This is one of the most ambitious plans for a Chinese garden in the United States. Since the mission of the Huntington is in part to “. . . encourage research and promote education in the arts, humanities, and botanical sciences . . .”<sup>31</sup> the addition of a Chinese garden is logical—it provides ample opportunities for each of these goals.

In a recently published record of the garden, a short essay addresses materials in the Huntington collections that document the history of the early Chinese-American community of California.<sup>32</sup> The essay also indicates a continued commitment to preserving the history of this growing community and closes by highlighting the programs associated with the *Liu Fang Yuan*, which function to “further enhance the understanding of the richness



Figure 8. View with a distant pavilion, Liu Fang Yuan, Huntington Garden, 2009. (Photo by author.)

and distinctiveness of Chinese art, literature, and history.”<sup>33</sup> Although it is not located on a site particularly associated with the Chinese-American community, the Huntington recognizes a connection to and a responsibility to include this community. This function of community building appears frequently in many other sites as well.

Like *Lan Su Chinese Garden*, *Liu Fang Yuan*’s construction was based on traditional designs. Both American architects and contractors and Chinese designers and artisans created the garden, using as much material from China as possible.<sup>34</sup> In this case, the institution is very forthcoming about where compromises were made to keep the traditional form in line with contemporary building and accessibility codes.<sup>35</sup> For example, it has included removable thresholds on some buildings (see Figure 9 for an example with the threshold in

Figure 9. Detail of removable threshold, Freshwater Pavilion, Liu Fang Yuan. From Laurie Sowd, “The Making of Liu Fang Yuan,” in *Another World Lies Beyond*, ed. June T. Li (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2008), 34.



place). California has additional requirements due to the frequency of earthquakes in the area. For instance, the *tai hu* rocks must have proper supports to prevent them toppling should any seismic activity occur in the area. These practical alterations have mostly been cleverly disguised to blend with the original design (see Figure 10 for an example of colored concrete under smaller stones used to disguise a support).

Although many of the design principles are similar in the *Lan Su Chinese Garden* and *Liu Fang Yuan*, the scale is quite different. Both utilize the shape and features of their sites to advantage. Both use leak windows and borrowed views with quite different effects. The *Lan Su Chinese Garden* is downtown and the borrowed views to the contemporary urban world are a stark contrast to the traditional and quiet world inside; a reminder of the separateness of the garden and how the visitor is “escaping” to nature. *Liu Fang Yuan* is near the mountains and the borrowed views unify the garden with the larger natural world and expand its scope; the visitor feels small in the universe. Both gardens use architecture, plants, rocks, and water features to create many series of views and layered views that can be enjoyed from stationary points along a path or while moving along a number of paths.

Just as it was in the Chinese models, a key element in the design of these views in the American gardens is naming the views and the architecture. The names reference the history of art and literature and are usually also layered in their meanings. This aspect of the Chinese garden has presented a particular challenge to today’s garden builders. For much of the history of imperial China, educated men studied a series of texts in order to take the civil service examinations. There was a community of people all absorbing the same visual

and textual references and then using them in their own writings, paintings, and gardens. The visitors to today's gardens are much more diverse in their education and in their knowledge of traditional Chinese art and culture. Many of the references are lost on contemporary viewers (no matter their background).

The *Liu Fang Yuan* has also adopted both broad and focused programming to reach a variety of visitors and to encourage repeated visits. It has organized international conferences, sponsored productions of Chinese opera, held regular talks on a variety of topics related to the Chinese garden, and has ongoing programming for specialists and non-



Figure 10. Detail, Taihu rock, Liu Fang Yuan (Garden of Flowing Fragrance) at the Huntington, 2011. (Photo by author.)

specialists.

Besides the garden itself, Liu Fang's most significant contribution to the history of Chinese gardens is the aforementioned volume edited by the curator of the garden, T. June Li, *Another World Lies Beyond: Creating Liu Fang Yuan, the Huntington's Chinese Garden*. Li refers to the volume as a "*Liu Fang Yuan ji*"—a "ji" is a "record." This is a particular form of Chinese prose; this form is one of the primary sources on traditional Chinese gardens for scholars today. This contemporary record produced by the Huntington is much more documentary than its Chinese predecessors. One frustration of contemporary researchers is that there is very little documentation of how Chinese gardens were laid out, how they were designed, how they "really" looked. The authors of premodern and early modern garden records were interested in evoking certain images and continuing to layer artistic, literary, and cultural allusions. Instead of maps and overviews and plan drawings done to scale, there is a long history of annotating the garden in China and these annotations are in some cases all that remains of a garden. These annotations come in the forms of poems, records, and paintings. From the act of naming, and from records of these names, there emerge patterns of certain images and themes, such as bamboo or rocks or the Peach Blossom Spring or Orchid Pavilion. Over time, landscapes and eventually gardens become associated with the idea of a righteous (and often reclusive) gentleman.<sup>36</sup> In some cases, the painted repre-

sentations purport to be re-creations of physical gardens and others are more of a symbolic portrait of the owner's virtue.<sup>37</sup> These images are a record of what was evocative of and meaningful in the garden.

Contemporary American notions of documentation would be quite different. The Huntington volume attempts both types, but does more of the contemporary form. It includes detailed discussions of the building process, of the naming process, of the plants, of the calligraphy, a detailed map of Phase 1; it essentially covers the mission statement of the institution. It is free of jargon and is accessible to a casual reader, but has enough depth to provide a more ambitious reader a solid basis for further study.

Like the previous two examples, the *Liu Fang Yuan* is one interpretation of a cultural icon. Not only has it adapted the site of the garden, but also the way in which the garden is documented.

### CONCLUSION

In these three examples, the authenticating details emphasize a Chinese genealogy for the garden. Yet the alterations to the form, the diverse functions, and the necessity for community building illuminate a much more complicated identity struggling to integrate other memories and histories and resulting in distinctive adaptations. There is a growing body of sites that with some careful critical analysis could be useful as both a way of understanding the past and of understanding the evolution of the present. The writing and layering of history and memory in these gardens is even more complex. Although many layers of allusion and meaning are lost, these gardens keep the past present and also rearticulate it for the future.

Today's garden designers face the challenge of making these gardens physically, visually, and intellectually accessible to viewers who are not trained in the Chinese classics nor in the history of Chinese art. In meeting this challenge, they have continued the growth of Chinese gardens—or more accurately, Chinese-style gardens—and continue to annotate the garden archive in new ways. These new annotations aid contemporary viewers in building layers of meaning and memory that may—one day—result in a pearl.

Note: The author would like to thank the anonymous reviewers who made many helpful suggestions for revision and for additional methods for approaching these sites.

### NOTES

1. This article is taken from a section of my forthcoming dissertation, *Keeping the Past Present: Representations of the Garden during the Ming Dynasty*.
2. This is my translation based on the transcription of the colophon on a landscape handscroll by Wen Zhengming in the British Museum (Registration number: 1955, 1210, 0.1). A slightly different translation may be found in Oswald Siren, *Chinese Painting: Masters and Principles*, v. 4 (New York, NY: Hacker Art Books, Inc., 1973), 176.
3. Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi and Eugene Rochberg-Halton, *The Meaning of Things: Domestic Symbols and the Self*, New York, NY: Cambridge University Press, 1981.
4. Thank you to the anonymous reviewer whose comments helped me to clarify this idea by suggesting the term "cultural icon."
5. I will refer to the gardens in the US as "re-presentations" since they present the form on which they are based again, but in a new way and in a new context. The paintings of gardens to which I refer in other parts of the article are "representations" in the more usual sense and so I use the hyphen to distinguish between these two uses.
6. I use this term as described by Jan Assmann in "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity," *New German Critique* 65 (1995): 125-133, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/488538>.
7. For an English translation of this work, see Ji Cheng, *Yuan Ye*, translated by Alison Hardie (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press), 1988.
8. Lan Su Chinese Garden, *Lan Su Chinese Garden*, "History and Culture," [http://www.lansugarden.org/garden/history\\_culture](http://www.lansugarden.org/garden/history_culture).
9. Spencer R. Crew and James E. Sims, "Locating Authenticity: Fragments of a Dialogue," in *Exhibiting Culture*:

- Poetics and Politics of Museum Display*, Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1991, 163.
10. Susan Vogel, "Always True to the Object, In our Fashion," in *Exhibiting Culture: Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1991), 196-97.
  11. See, for example, Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes Its Object* (New York, NY: Columbia University Press, 1983) and Clifford Geertz and George Marcus, *Writing Culture: The Poetics and Politics of Ethnography* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press 1986).
  12. These gardens are tangible evidence that a shift in the power dynamic of this relationship is evolving—China is leaving its mark on the American landscape. This is worth further exploration, but is not the focus of this piece.
  13. Rita Reif, "Arts and Artifacts: Far from China, but Completely at Home," *New York Times*, September 20, 1998, <http://www.lexisnexis.com/>.
  14. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, "Arts of Asia: Architecture: Scholar's Library and Study," <http://www.artsmia.org/art-of-asia/architecture/chinese-scholars-study.cfm>.
  15. Minneapolis Institute of Arts, "Arts of Asia: Architecture: Scholar's Library and Study—Garden Rocks," <http://www.artsmia.org/art-of-asia/architecture/chinese-scholars-study-garden-rocks.cfm>. Note that the Minneapolis Institute of Arts (MIA) uses the Wade-Giles romanization system, but I use Pinyin, so "Jiangnan" is "Chiang-nan" in the MIA text.
  16. Reif, "Arts and Artifacts," <http://www.lexisnexis.com/>.
  17. Ibid.
  18. Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography," in *Exhibiting Culture: Poetics and Politics of Museum Display* (Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institute, 1991), 388.
  19. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography," 416.
  20. MIA, "Scholar's Library and Study," <http://www.artsmia.org/art-of-asia/architecture/chinese-scholars-study.cfm>.
  21. Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, "Objects of Ethnography," 390.
  22. The Lan Su Chinese Garden was originally called "The Portland Classical Chinese Garden."
  23. Mark Hinshaw, "Secret Garden in the City: A Classical Chinese Garden Uplifts Portland's Chinatown," *Landscape Architecture* 93, no. 1 (2003): 92.
  24. Cynthia Johnson Haruyama, "Portland Chinese Garden Organizational Profile (PDF)," Lan Su Chinese Garden, "About the Garden," 9, [http://www.lansugarden.org/garden/about\\_the\\_garden](http://www.lansugarden.org/garden/about_the_garden).
  25. A threshold is a key component of Chinese architecture: it forces the viewer to consciously raise her foot and acknowledge the movement of her body over a boundary into a new space. A threshold also provides a "foot" to a building and completes it aesthetically.
  26. A more detailed account can be found in the "Organizational Profile," which is in PDF form and can be accessed through the website: [http://www.lansugarden.org/garden/about\\_the\\_garden](http://www.lansugarden.org/garden/about_the_garden).
  27. Haruyama, "Portland Chinese Garden," 15.
  28. Haruyama, "Portland Chinese Garden," 19.
  29. This guide is available on the website in a PDF: [http://www.lansugarden.org/learning/view\\_the\\_garden](http://www.lansugarden.org/learning/view_the_garden).
  30. Robert Pogue Harrison, *Gardens: An Essay on the Human Condition*, Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press, 2008, 114.
  31. "Mission Statement" at *The Huntington*, <http://www.huntington.org/mission.aspx>.
  32. Peter J. Blodgett and Robert C. Ritchie, "The Huntington Collections and the Chinese Community," in a volume edited by T. June Li, *Another World Lies Beyond: Creating Liu Fang Yuan, the Huntington's Chinese Garden* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library, 2009), 11-12.
  33. Ibid., 12.
  34. Even the terms used reflect the interest in both safety and authenticity—"architects" and "contractors" are job titles that have licensing and training associated with them; "designers" and "artisans" are titles that indicate a focus on aesthetics and a different type of training. For instance, "artisan" once meant "craftsperson" but is now used to indicate someone trained in traditional methods.
  35. This is discussed in the most detail in Laurie Sowd "The Making of Liu Fang Yuan: A Brief History," in a volume edited by T. June Li, *Another World Lies Beyond: Creating Liu Fang Yuan, the Huntington's Chinese Garden* (San Marino, CA: Huntington Library 2009), 29-39.
  36. For examples of some early connections between landscapes and identity, see Ellen Johnston Laings, "Neo-Taoism and the 'Seven Sages of the Bamboo Grove' in Chinese Painting," *Artibus Asiae* 36, no. 1/2 (1974): 5-54, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3249709> and Richard Vinograd, "Family Properties: Personal Context and Cultural Pattern in Wang Meng's 'Pien Mountains' of 1366," *Ars Orientalis* 13 (1982): 1-29, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4629310>.
  37. For example, see Robert Harrist, *Painting and private life in eleventh-century China: Mountain villa by Li Gonglin* (Princeton, N.J.: