Cultural Heritage Integrated Into the Landscape: Inheritance and Activation of Xuan Paper Culture

Shen Shixian¹, Yuan Liujun², He Yang³

¹Department of Landscape Architecture, School of Architecture and Arts, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China
²School of Architecture and Arts, China Academy of Art, Hangzhou, China
³The Design Institute of Landscape and Architecture China Academy of Art Co., Ltd, Hangzhou, China

Email address: 46504057@qq.com (Shen Shixian), 81779327@qq.com (Yuan Liujun), 469011103@qq.com (He Yang)

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Abstract: The traditional handicrafts of making Xuan paper are included in UNESCO's Intangible Cultural Heritage list. It is a historical relic and summarization of human production and life experiences, and an important carrier of traditional Chinese painting, calligraphy, and civilization. Taking the planning of Xuan paper Town in Anhui as an example, this paper proposes a mode of inheriting and activating cultural heritage in the form of landscape planning and design led by landscape architects. In terms of industrial upgrading, the planning focuses on the extension and transformation of Xuan paper crafts to calligraphy and painting arts, traditional Chinese culture, and town life; in the spatial layout, taking the famous landscape painting "Traveling in Streams and Mountains" as a clue, it utilizes the existing streams, ravines, pools and valleys on site to arrange major functional zones. The travel experience of visitors in Xuan paper Town is just like an excursion in a landscape painting, allowing them to physically experience the ingenious brushwork and vibrant charm of traditional landscape paintings. The beautiful environment creation and reasonable spatial layout attract calligraphy and painting artists and cultural creative professionals to live and work here, which further draws tourists for sightseeing and travel. In this way, the intangible cultural heritage of Xuan paper production is revitalized into a scenic town with a thriving industry.

Keywords: Cultural Heritage, Landscape, Architecture, Characteristic, Town

1. Research Background

The rich and splendid natural and cultural heritage is an irreplaceable source of life and inspiration for humans in the past, present, and future. In addition to the tangible heritage, there is also intangible cultural heritage (cultural heritage recognized by UNESCO as of great importance for the traditions and cultural identity of a place, such as folklore, cultural traditions, beliefs, traditional skills and languages, and other forms of intellectual property in intangible forms) [1]. Many times, these two kinds of heritage are intertwined, especially cultural heritage, which is the historical relics and experience summaries of human production and life. They are displayed in the land where human beings inhabit and work. It is the responsibility and duty of contemporary landscape architects to protect, inherit and revitalize these cultural heritages. The culture in history has become a heritage because it incorporates natural landscapes, and the planning and design of this land can give the heritage a new vitality, especially at the level of intangible cultural heritage [2]. Landscape architecture allows intangible heritage visible by some carriers (Figure 1). The following article will take Xuan Paper Town planning and design as an example to explore the inheritance and revitalization of Xuan paper culture.
2. A Splendid Article on the Xuan Paper

2.1. Project Overview

The Xuan paper "originated in the Tang Dynasty and was produced in Jing County". It has a history of more than 1500 years [3]. In 2009, the traditional handicrafts of making Xuan paper were listed as an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Humanity by UNESCO [4]. Many Masters of Chinese traditional calligraphy and painting art visited Xuan Paper Factory many times and left inscriptions. The long scrolls of Xuan paper used in the opening ceremony of the 2008 Beijing Olympic Games and the huge Xuan paper painted by foreign guests at the 2016 G20 summit were also provided by the factory.

2.2. Research on Xuan Paper Culture

2.2.1. Extension from Xuan Paper to Calligraphy and Painting

Xuan paper is one of the important carriers of traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy [5]. The connotation of Xuan paper culture can be extended to the research, creation and exhibition of painting and calligraphy art. The activation of Xuan paper culture is not just the activation of the production process and also includes the inheritance and activation of traditional calligraphy and painting, including the planning of characteristic towns in series with the painting theory of oriental landscape painting.

2.2.2. Extension from Xuan Paper to Chinese Culture

"Papermaking" is the only one of the four great inventions of China that is still fully inherited and used without interruption of civilization, and it has an important feature of carrying on Chinese civilization [6]. Xuan paper can be derived to display traditional Chinese Confucian culture. The planning will display Chinese culture, and integrate behaviors such as viewing, reading, tasting, appreciating, experiencing and writing into a functional layout and node design, so that visitors can experience the life of Chinese Confucian scholars.

2.2.3. Extension from Xuan Paper Production to Town Life

Based on industrial development, the production and display of Xuan paper skills, creation and communication of calligraphy and painting art, education and experience of Confucian culture are integrated. We try to create a livable, business-friendly and tourism-friendly cultural destination for town residents and tourists.

3. The Overall Plan Based on the "Traveling in Streams and Mountains"

Based on cultural research, the overall planning of the town is carried out. The core of this planning is "Observation site" [7], which is also the core principle of landscape architecture. The site is backed by mountain forests in the east, north, and south, and the Wuxi River gurgles out of the upstream canyon, winding three bays, forming a deep and secluded space. "They are high and concave, deep and bent, steep and overhanging, flat and straight, self-contained natural interest", it is the best site described by "Yuan Ye"
Combined with industrial research, the planning team proposes a planning structure of one corridor, three sections, and five areas with multiple nodes based on the situation of the mountains. The three sections of National Paper Water Street, Creative Industry Park, and Transparent Factory are arranged along the river to form the corridor of the national paper culture; Wuxi Art Village, Xuan Paper Nine Gardens, Artist Village, National Paper Paradise, and Art Valley are distributed along the mountain, which become the space carrier for the activation of Xuan paper culture. (Figure 2)

The topography of the site also reminds us of the masterpiece of the ancient painting "Traveling in Streams and Mountains" [9]. With this as a concept, we created 12 landscape themes and 24 landscape nodes to let people experience a noisy to quiet journey. The streams, ponds, and valleys in the paintings correspond to the major functional areas one by one (Figure 3), and land planning and in-depth design are thus carried out (Figure 4, Figure 5).
3.1. Crossing the Gate

Two gates will be set up on the 205 national road that enters the town. The north side gate will be built near the mountain, named "Hanmo"; the south side gate will be built near the water, called "Danqing". The gate is covered with white PC weatherproof film which looks like Xuan paper. The green sandalwoods are planted beside the "Hanmo" gate and the straws are planted beside the "Danqing" gate. They are the two main raw materials of Xuan paper. When people Cross the gates, they start the journey in mountains and creeks.

3.2. Entering the Village

On the west side of 205 National Highway, the original Wuxi Village is improved and upgraded, the existing water system is transformed, and nine pits are set along the creek to display the traditional ancient papermaking scenes and become a public landscape space system for the village. We also will renovate the existing houses in the village, cultivate "paper" cultural and creative markets, and farmhouse restaurants, which will provide tourism facilities for the entire town (Figure 6).
3.3. Wandering the Park

On the southern bank downstream of Wuxi, based on the existing ponds and farmlands, we put forward the concept of the “Open Museum” of Xuan paper. We plan a park for experiencing the culture of Xuan paper outdoors.

The main materials of Xuan paper are green sandalwood and sand straw. Our planning maintains the large-scale rice fields and green sandalwood forests on the site and designs nine small theme gardens hiding in it. These gardens include a sandalwood garden, a grass garden, a rattan garden, a curtain gardens, and so on. They popularize the Xuan paper-making process.

At the same time, a white trestle will be set above the site. Visitors can walk from the parking to the visitor service center. It is not just a quick passage and is also a beautiful landscape in the sandalwood forests. (Figure 7)

3.4. Tracing Stream

The waterfront trails are planned along the Wuxi stream. Wetland native plants will be planted to highlight the leisurely and tranquil environment. Based on the current
situation, Xuan paper Cultural Park, Kongdan Cultural Park, Creative Industrial Park, and National Paper Workshop are planned along the stream in sequence.

3.4.1. Xuan Paper Cultural Park

The Xuan Paper Cultural Park is located at the entrance of the town and consists of the existing Xuan Paper Museum and the newly built National Paper Water Street. National Paper Water Street is divided into three groups of buildings: National Paper Living Room, Xuan Paper Experience Hall, and Xuan Paper Exhibition Center, connected by a continuous roof to form an organic whole. The overall shape refers to the topography around the site, with white vertical sheets forming a rolling mountain-like structure, just like a paper mountain formed by pieces of Xuan paper. Visitors enter it as if they enter a three-dimensional landscape picture. (Figures 8, 9). The environment is introduced into the building, which will be integrated into the landscape. (Figure 10)

The design of the outer square of National Paper Water Street continues the concept of landscape paintings, extending the characteristic scenery of the white paper drying field on the hillside to the site, with a large area of white paving to symbolize Xuan paper, and scatters green spaces to symbolize the splashing ink, creates a minimalist outdoor space.

![Figure 8. Bird's eye rendering of National Paper Street.](image)

![Figure 9. Interior rendering of National Paper Street.](image)
3.4.2. Kong Dan Cultural Park

Kong Dan Cultural Park displays the life stories and legends of Kong Dan, the inventor of Xuan paper. The hillside of drying paper will be named Kongdan hill. A statue of Kongdan will be set up on the top of the hill. The planning transforms the existing workshop into Kong Dan Academy to train calligraphy talents. Cottages are arranged around the academy to provide artists with a place to create and communicate. Kong Dan Square is designed at the turning point of Wuxi. It is a node space on the waterfront walkway, and displays the changing course of the carrier of Chinese civilization from bamboo slips to Xuan paper in the form of landscape installation.

3.4.3. Creative Industrial Park

In the middle reach of Wuxi, it was a former residence of workers of the Xuan paper factory. They are red brick houses as the main body built in the 1960s and 1970s. We thought that it is an integral part of the modern development history of Xuan paper culture, although these buildings have not yet reached the standard of industrial heritage. Therefore, we plan to retain the site characteristics and red memory of this block to the greatest extent, and transform the existing dormitory, movie theater, auditorium and other iconic buildings into new functional carriers.

The planning adapted to the complex changes in height on the site, and connected multiple sets of old buildings through a continuous semi-earth platform-type construction, forming a flexible structure and creating a varied space for mountain settlements. The new and old interwoven courtyard evokes the life of the intimate neighborhood in the past. (Figure 11)

In addition, a series of waterfront buildings such as restaurants, tea rooms, and coffee bars will be set up in the narrow strip of the creek bank, forming continuous open public spaces.
3.4.4. National Paper Works

Two small streams from the canyon converge upstream of Wuxi. This is a magical natural "bifurcation": one stream is slightly alkaline, while the other is weakly acidic. Obeying the principle of "alkaline for pulp making, acidic for paper making", the two streams are guided into different Xuan paper processes and then converge together. This is one of the core secrets of Jing County Xuan paper's millennium-long reputation, but it is also a secret that cannot be replicated. Human wisdom, culture, and nature are perfectly integrated into a legacy that will live on for thousands of years.

This is the core of the existing mill, which includes office, production, processing and storage areas. The planning protects the water resources and renovates the existing factory buildings and environment. It will transform to be a tourist-type factory, demonstrating the process of Xuan paper making with acidic and alkaline water.

3.5. Exploring the Col

The valley on the north side of Wuxi is planned as a national paper paradise with two cols named Wenxin and Yixin respectively. They are connected by a hiking trail (Figure 12). And the Kuixing Pavilion will be established at the highest point. It is a good place to climb and look far, and also a landmark of the town, similar to the statue of Kong Dan.

3.6. Inhabiting the Valley

The valley on the south side of Wuxi is named Splendid Valley, which is the most beautiful and quiet place in the town. The planning Plants kinds of Rosa in the valley and arranges Xinhua village in it, which is a high-end Art hotel.

From Crossing the gate to Inhabiting the Valley, tourists' journey in Xuan Paper Town is just like travel in landscape painting, experiencing the exquisiteness and vividness of traditional landscape painting.

4. Thinking and Summary

The famous landscape scholar Mr. Chen Congzhou once said “You have to focus on the big and do on the small when planning. Here are eyes and hands. The 'eye' is to control the large landscape environment...” [10] It shows the leading role of landscape and cultural heritage in town planning. And the "hand" mentioned by Mr. Chen is the specific design method.

Combining with the practice of planning and design of Xuan Paper Town above, we put forward some thoughts and suggestions to explore the Inheritance and Activation of Xuan paper culture from landscape architecture.

4.1. Cultural Heritage Integrated into the Landscape

The culture is the "soul" of the characteristic town [11]. The landscape is naturally the habitat of culture. And it truly records the historical trajectory, knowledge, and cultural practice of nature [12].

The intangible heritage of Xuan paper culture is closely related to the mountains, rivers and forests where it is located: the acid and alkali stream from the canyon, the lush green sandalwood forest on the hillside, the wild kiwi in the valley, and the sand xuan under the foothills. These raw materials of Xuan paper are also a real carrier of Xuan paper culture. The plan retains and strengthens these landscape elements and increases human experience and interaction [13].

At the same time, the Xuan paper culture is extended to calligraphy and painting culture. In particular, the concept of planning comes from the chines classical landscape painting: Traveling in Streams and Mountains. The planning is based on the characteristics of site.

4.2. Cultural Buildings Integrated into the Landscape

Whether the building of Xuan Paper Town is renovated or newly built, it is designed to integrate into the landscape environment as the primary goal. The National Paper Water Street echoes the rolling hills around the site with a continuous rolling roof; the artist's settlement and the creative industrial park adopt a terraced courtyard to match the falling terrain; the buildings of Xinghua Village are all stilt style architecture, which minimizes the disturbance to the site and merge into the sea of forests and flowers.

The design of these cultural buildings relies on the landscape of the site, and also highlights the culture of the town.

4.3. Plant Integration into the Culture

The plants in Chinese traditional culture all have the characteristics of "gentleman virtues", such as plums, bamboo, and lotus flowers. The cultural nature of plants can reflect the cultural nature of the site subtly.

Xuan Paper Town promotes Xuan paper culture to the heights of Chinese culture and Confucian culture. The planning keeps the native plant tone, studies the plants in Chinese classics culture such as the Book of Songs [14], and chooses the plants that are suitable for local growth, such as awns, reeds, willows, and tallow on the waterfront; sandalwood and hibiscus in Xuan Paper Cultural Park, ginkgo and viburnum in Kongdan Cultural Park, Chinese
sycamore and magnolia in the creative industrial park; Prunus, peach, and plum blossom in the Splendid Valley. The vegetation not only forms the spring and autumn colors of the town but also activates the cultural connotation of Xuan paper.

Intangible cultural heritage is the historical relics and experience summary of human production and life. There are many excellent intangible cultural heritages in China and even the world. This plan provides new possibilities for the inheritance and activation of these intangible cultural heritages. It is hoped that let the intangible heritage be manifested through tangible land and landscape carriers and bring prosperity and vitality to this area [15]. The planning won the 2022 IFLA (AAPME) Analysis and Planning Honour Award, providing a vivid example for the protection and revitalization of the world's intangible cultural heritage.

At present, the planning of Xuan Paper Town has been gradually implemented. The architecture and landscape of National Paper Water Street (Figures 13 and 14) are about to be completed.

Figure 13. National Paper Water Street built panorama image.

Figure 14. National Paper Water Street built image.

References


**Biography**

**Shen Shixian**, Male, Major in landscape architecture, Associate professor, Vice head of the Department of Landscape Architecture, School of Architecture, China academy of art. His research focuses on regional landscape planning and design.

**Yuan Liujun**, Male, Major in landscape architecture, Associate professor, China academy of art. His research focuses on environment design.

**He Yang**, Male, Major in landscape architecture, Engineer, The Design Institute of Landscape &Architecture China Academy of Art Co., Ltd. His research focuses on scenic architecture.