

Contemporary Translation of Blank Space Art in New Chinese Architecture

Changjiang Jin*, Sheng Zhang

Luxun Academy of Fine Arts, Shenyang, 110003, Liaoning, China

*Corresponding author

Abstract: This article focuses on the contemporary translation and poetic space creation of blank space art in new Chinese architecture. Through theoretical tracing and translation path analysis, it shows that "blank space" is rooted in the Taoist "existence and non-existence" and Confucian "doctrine of the mean and implicitness". In traditional architecture, it is reflected in the spatial organization of "unity of the virtual and the real", the interface treatment of "transparency and emptiness", and the logic of creating "infinite artistic conception". In the creation of contemporary new Chinese architecture, the systematic translation of traditional architectural space organization, interface treatment, and material color is the core path to solving the dilemma of symbolic replication and creating poetic spaces. Creators need to activate imagination, regulate rhythm, and elevate space into a 'poetic field'. In addition, there are problems such as formalism and lack of individuality in the current practice of new Chinese style construction in China. In the future, it is necessary to deepen philosophical understanding, establish collaborative mechanisms, and promote regional innovation. The study provides a path for the inheritance of new Chinese architecture from "likeness" to "likeness", enriches contemporary expression of traditional aesthetics, and provides inspiration for cultural identity and spiritual return of architecture in the context of globalization.

Keywords: New Chinese Style Architecture; Blank Space Art; Contemporary Translation; Poetic Space

1. Introduction

Cihai provides three definitions for the term "architecture": firstly, it is a general term for buildings and structures; The second is the comprehensive creation of engineering technology and architectural art; The third is the construction activities of various civil engineering and construction projects. It is not difficult to see that architecture has dual characteristics of functional attributes and cultural and spiritual carriers. In recent years, many creators have attempted to integrate traditional aesthetic genes into the modernist framework, using the new Chinese style as a standard means of reviving traditional culture and carrying out a large number of practices. But currently, the vast majority of new Chinese style architecture is limited to mechanical reproductions in the form of "symbol collage", which not only deviates from contemporary lifestyles but also severs the ideological core of traditional architecture. The academic community urgently needs to explore more vibrant paths for aesthetic translation[1].

'Blank space' is the core category of traditional Chinese art. From the Chinese concept of "planning white as black" to the classical garden concept of "hidden and exposed", it actively stimulates imagination through "absence" and achieves the aesthetic characteristic of "endless meaning in words", which is in line with the psychological needs of contemporary people for "spiritual blank space". It provides an aesthetic fulcrum for the breakthrough of functionalism and the realization of poetic expression in new Chinese architecture. Currently, academic research on "blank space" is mostly limited to the creation of formal language in space, and there is a weak research on its systematic translation in contemporary Chinese architecture[2]. The research on new Chinese architecture focuses on form replication and material innovation, with insufficient exploration of the contemporary transformation of traditional aesthetic spirit, resulting in insufficient explanation of its translation logic, practical techniques, and poetic construction mechanism.

Based on this, this article focuses on the contemporary translation and poetic space creation of blank space art in new Chinese architecture, and focuses on three core issues: the spiritual core and spatial logic definition of "blank space" in traditional art; The translation path of "blank space" from traditional art to architectural space in the context of new Chinese style; The mechanism and contemporary value and limitations of "blank space" translation in the creation of poetic space. The research aims to reveal the

translation rules of "blank space", provide theoretical and practical references for the spiritual expression of new Chinese architecture, and enrich the research on the transformation path of traditional aesthetics in contemporary architecture.

2. Theoretical Origins and Traditional Spatial Expression of Blank Space Art

2.1 The Core Connotation of Blank Art

The spiritual core of "leaving blank space" originates from the dialectical thinking of the pre Qin period. The Taoist cosmology of "existence and non-existence" laid the foundation for its thinking. The chapter "The Movement of the Counter Dao" in the Tao Te Ching reveals that "nothingness" is the prerequisite and driving force for the existence of "existence", just like how empty vessels have the function of accommodating space. The "nothingness" of "blank space" is precisely the substrate for the generation of artistic conception. During the Wei and Jin dynasties, the metaphysical theory of 'valuing nothingness' further elevated this idea. Wang Bi's ontology of "based on non-action" makes the emphasis on "emptiness" in "blank space" an aesthetic response[3].

Different from Taoist thought, Confucianism emphasizes the ethicalization of the aesthetic characteristic of "leaving blank space". Confucius' doctrine of the mean, which emphasizes the importance of "enjoying without debauchery and lamenting without hurting," is projected as a restrained nature of "leaving blank space," which avoids excessive exposition through omission and carries infinite meaning in a limited form. Zhu Xi interpreted the concept of "achieving neutrality" in the Doctrine of the Mean, making the pursuit of "neutrality" by "leaving blank space" an aesthetic simulation of the order of heaven and earth, achieving a balance between "existence and non-existence" and approaching the path of nature.

From an aesthetic perspective, the core of "blank space" is the dialectical relationship between reality and virtuality, where "virtuality" and "reality" are interdependent and transformed. For example, in calligraphy, "pen breaks and meaning connects", blank space is an implicit extension of lines. The acceptance mechanism is composed of "endless words and infinite meanings", giving the viewer the initiative to produce meaning through information gaps, just like the saying "Where there is no painting, everything becomes a wonderful scene" by Qi Chongguang; Its pursuit of the true essence of nature refuses deliberate carving, and uses clever means to dissolve artificial traces, making the blank a spiritual channel connecting the work and nature, which is in line with the Taoist idea of "Dao follows nature".

2.2 The Expression of "Blank Space" in Traditional Art and Architecture

In graphic art, "blank space" presents the evolution from practicality to aesthetics. The Chinese painting concept of "white as black" incorporates blank space into the composition, giving equal weight to "white" and "ink". For example, in the works of the Eight Great Mountain Masters, large blank spaces are used to highlight fish and birds, highlighting the subject while implying infinite space, making blank space a carrier of artistic conception.

In spatial art, especially in architecture, the expression of "blank space" is more complex. Classical gardens often use "borrowing scenery" and "hiding dew" to expand spatial sense: Suzhou Humble Administrator's Garden "Sitting with whom in the pavilion" frames the scenery of Xishan with fan-shaped window frames, and the courtyard blank between the window and the scenery extends the viewer's imagination; The "Quxi Tower" in Liuyuan filters the mountain scenery into the room through a leaky window, creating a hazy atmosphere of "seemingly separated but not separated" with blank window frames and light and shadow. In the construction of traditional residential buildings, ancient people also achieved the unity of function and spirit through the construction of courtyards, open halls, and other structures: Huizhou style residential buildings regard courtyards as the "core of the void", with both lighting and drainage functions, and also symbolize the microcosm of "heaven, earth, and man" communication; The northern quadrangle courtyard "Mingtang" is designed with a blank layout, forming a rhythm of "expansion and contraction" through scale comparison. It is not only a living space, but also a spatial metaphor for family ethics[4].

2.3 Spatial Logic of "Blank Space" in Traditional Architecture

Traditional architecture uses "blank space" to construct a spatial logic that combines "virtual" with "real". In terms of macro layout, traditional architecture revolves around "virtual spaces" such as

courtyards, squares, and roads, connecting the "real spaces" of houses and forming a structure of "yin and yang coexistence". The "emptiness" of the Taihe Hall Square in the Forbidden City highlights the "reality" of the three major halls. The openness of the square enhances the sense of solemnity, and the large-scale "blank space" guides people's reverence for the "infinite" imperial power, making the building a carrier of spiritual order.

The interface treatment of traditional architecture often adopts the techniques of "transparency", "leakage", and "emptiness", using "blank space" as a medium for spatial infiltration. Taking the common moon cave gate in classical gardens as an example, the gardener breaks the monotony of the wall with a circular "void", connecting the inner and outer spaces of the gate through the blank opening, dissolving absolute boundaries, and achieving harmony between "inside" and "outside". As the poem "Yuanye" says, "Although created by humans, it seems to have opened from heaven[5].

'Blank space' can guide people to perceive 'infinity' and achieve a leap from physical to spiritual space. Traditional architecture implies the infinite universe through the concept of "seeing the big in the small". The Buddhist Fragrance Pavilion in the Summer Palace borrows the "virtual" scenery of Kunming Lake to make the pavilions seem to "float in the sky", with a blank water surface connecting the building and the sky; The "small courtyard" of Jiangnan residential buildings introduces sunlight, bamboo and stone, becoming a "heaven and earth in a pot", allowing people to perceive the eternity of nature. This imagination inspired by emptiness makes architecture a spiritual home for poetic dwelling, confirming that the 'nothingness' of matter is the ultimate form of the 'existence' of artistic conception.

3. Contemporary Translation of Blank Space Art in New Chinese Architecture

3.1 The Context of New Chinese Architecture and the Necessity of Translating "Blank Space"

New Chinese architecture emerged in the contemporary context of globalization and localization, with its core mission being to break the historical limitations of traditional architectural forms and reconstruct cultural identity under modern lifestyles and technological conditions[6]. However, the current creators are restricted by the actual conditions, and there is a widespread creation inertia of "symbol transplantation" - some construction machinery copies traditional elements such as arch of wooden architecture and cornice, or simply collages carved flowers and plaques as cultural labels, resulting in the separation of form and function. Currently, some commercial real estate projects that focus on "Chinese style gardens" have become "cultural bonsai" due to excessive stacking of rockeries and pavilions, squeezing residents' activity space. The dilemma of "resembling the separation of gods" is essentially a misinterpretation of the spirit of traditional aesthetics: the value of traditional architecture lies not in concrete symbols, but in the philosophical connotations presented in space and the aesthetic character of "implicit restraint".

At the same time, the spiritual crisis of contemporary society provides a realistic demand for the translation of the aesthetics of "blank space". In the process of urbanization, high-density buildings and fast-paced life constantly compress people's spiritual breathing space, and people's demand for quiet space is becoming increasingly prominent. As Norberg Schultz stated in "The Spirit of Place," the alienation of modern architecture lies in the "loss of connection with the roots of existence," and the "virtual stillness" characteristic contained in blank space art is an important way to cope with this alienation. From the perspective of cultural inheritance, the contemporary translation of "blank space" is the key to avoiding the "museum like" transformation of traditional aesthetics. This construction technique is not a replica of classical forms, but rather injects the concept of "virtual and real coexistence" into modern architectural language, giving vitality to traditional cultural genes in contemporary contexts. Therefore, the translation of blank space art is not only a methodology for breaking through the formal dilemma of new Chinese architecture, but also an inevitable choice to respond to the spiritual needs of the times and achieve sustainable cultural inheritance.

3.2 Core principles of Contemporary Translation of Blank Art

The contemporary translation of blank space art requires a dialectical balance between traditional spirit and contemporary context, with its core principle reflected in the unity of three dimensions.

Firstly, the principle of continuity of the spiritual core. The premise of translation is to adhere to the aesthetic essence of blank space art. This requires creators to maintain a dialectical thinking of "the interplay between reality and illusion". For example, the spatial organization logic of traditional gardens,

which combines virtuality with reality, can be transformed into a dynamic balance between open and closed spaces in contemporary architecture. In addition, creators should continue the aesthetic character of "implicit restraint", reject excessive decoration and visual impact, and convey cultural connotations through "less is more". Wang Shu emphasized in "Building Houses" that "tradition is not a style, but a language ability", and the translation of "blank space" is the embodiment of this "language ability", which needs to go beyond concrete symbols and directly reach the philosophical core of "creating something out of nothing".

Secondly, the principle of innovation in formal language. The lightweight characteristics of steel structures can achieve cantilevered spaces that are difficult to achieve with traditional wooden structures, and parametric design tools can accurately control the form of light and shadow gaps... Contemporary technology and materials provide new means for "leaving gaps", which can effectively extend the formal language expression of traditional architecture. Taking the skin texture of Hangzhou Raffles City as an example, the perforated pattern generated by the algorithm creates a dynamic "blank space" for the light spot projected by sunlight over time, breaking through the static limitations of traditional "ice crack" windows. This innovation is not a departure from tradition, but rather a potential activation of traditional aesthetics through contemporary language.

Thirdly, the principle of adaptability to real-life scenarios. The 'blank space' needs to be deeply coupled with modern lifestyles to avoid falling into the formalism of 'leaving space for the sake of leaving space'. The "ventilation and lighting" function of traditional courtyards can be translated into "shared courtyards" in contemporary times, while the "changing scenery" of traditional gardens can be translated into "spatial narrative" in modern streamlined design. Taking the Pingjiang Road renovation project in Suzhou as an example, the design team used the width of the alleyway and the virtual and real changes in the interface to create a walking experience that not only continues the blank space atmosphere of "winding paths leading to secluded places", but also adapts to the walking rhythm and viewing habits of modern people. This adaptability requires that the blank space is not only an aesthetic object, but also a place that carries the sense of contemporary life rituals.

3.3 Techniques for Contemporary Translation of Blank Art

The contemporary translation of blank space art presents multidimensional technique innovation in spatial practice, covering three levels: spatial organization, interface processing, and material expression.

At the level of spatial organization, the translation of "blank space" is manifested as "the structuring of virtual space" and "the dynamism of spatial rhythm". The former, such as Wang Shu's design of the Xiangshan Campus of the Chinese Academy of Fine Arts, reconstructs the traditional courtyard system with courtyard clusters. The architectural complex is arranged around open-air courtyards of varying sizes, which serve as the "core of virtual space". These courtyards not only provide ventilation and lighting functions, but also create a "breathing" interaction between the building and the environment through natural elements such as vegetation and water bodies. The latter is reflected in the sequence design of "collection release collection" at the spatial scale, such as Li Xinggang's Jixi Museum, where a narrow passage (collection) guides the line of sight at the entrance, leading to the open central water courtyard (collection), and then transitioning to the exhibition hall (collection) through a corridor. This "blank buffer zone" in the scale change not only continues the traditional garden's logic of leaving blank space first and then suppressing it, but also strengthens the sense of ceremony in the space through the geometric language of modern architecture.

At the interface processing level, the translation of "blank space" breaks through the material limitations of traditional "transparency, leakage, and emptiness", and develops "the gradient of virtual and real on the surface" and "the temporal blank space of light and shadow". In the design of the exterior, contemporary architecture often uses "material stacking" to create virtual and real layers: for example, in the new building of Suzhou Museum, the "stone rockery" wall is fixed with metal frames to form a semi transparent interface, and the mottled light and shadow projected by sunlight through the stone crevices becomes a dynamic "blank space", which not only echoes the traditional garden's "leaking scenery" technique, but also dissolves the sweetness of classical symbols with the cold texture of modern materials. In terms of the use of light and shadow, Tadao Ando's "Church of Light" is not a Chinese style architecture, but its treatment of "white space in light" has reference significance. The light introduced by the cross shaped window holes forms "light marks" on the dark walls, and this "light for white" technique has been transformed into "sky light guided design" in new Chinese architecture. The original villa complex of Beijing Yihe also uses the tilt angle control of the roof skylight to create a narrow spot of noon sunlight on the indoor floor, which moves with the seasons and becomes a "blank space" in the

time dimension, in line with the traditional perception of natural rhythms in the concept of "harmony between heaven and man".

At the level of materials and colors, the translation of "blank space" is reflected as "highlighting the authenticity of materials" and "using color subtraction". In terms of material selection, new Chinese architecture tends to preserve the original texture of materials - the demolding marks of plain concrete, the oxidation texture of corroded steel plates, and the knots and cracks of logs. These "imperfect" textures have become carriers of contemporary "blank space". Taking the Luyeyuan Stone Carving Museum designed by Liu Jiakun as an example, the exposed concrete walls have not been decorated in any way, and the "visual blank" formed by their rough surface can evoke more associations with the weight of history than fine carving, just like the blank space effect of the "dry brush" in traditional ink paintings. In terms of color control, the translation of "blank space" is manifested as the restraint of high saturation colors, using low contrast tones such as black, white, gray, wood, and light beige as the basis, creating layers through the brightness differences of the material itself, and giving "blank space" contemporary tension through the texture contrast of modern materials.

4. Poetic Space Creation of New Chinese Architecture under the Guidance of Blank Art

4.1 Connotation of Poetic Space

Poeticity is a spiritual attribute of architecture that transcends material function and technological rationality. Its core lies in the creation of spatial form and atmosphere, which triggers human existence thinking and emotional resonance, achieving the unity of dwelling and "poetry". Heidegger proposed in his "Reflections on Architecture" that "humans reside poetically on the earth", revealing the essence of spatial poetry - not simply aesthetic decoration, but the spatialization confirmation of human existence meaning. In the context of new Chinese architecture, poetic space has three dimensions: firstly, the generativity of artistic conception, that is, the imaginative space formed by the combination of elements such as virtuality and virtuality, light and shadow, forming an "image outside the image" and "meaning outside the taste". A more intuitive one is the miniature cosmic artistic conception constructed by traditional gardens with "a spoon for water, a fist for mountains"; Secondly, the embodiment of experience emphasizes that people obtain immersive poetic experiences through physical perception and spatial interaction, such as walking, staying, and observing; Thirdly, the memorability of culture, space as a carrier of collective memory, awakens people's identification with cultural roots through creative transformation of traditional aesthetic symbols.

The opposite of poetic space is "spatial alienation". When architecture becomes a pure functional container or capital symbol, its poetic nature is dissolved. The pursuit of poetic space in new Chinese architecture is a rebellion against this alienation. It refuses to simplify space into functional zones on a floor plan, but instead embeds a spiritual dimension in the physical dimension through aesthetic techniques such as "blank space", making the building a "home of existence".

4.2 The Empowerment Mechanism of "Blank Space" on Poetic Space

As the core catalyst of poetic space, 'blank space' empowers poetry through a triple mechanism, constructing a transformation channel from physical space to spiritual field.

Firstly, imagine the activation mechanism. 'Blank space' reserves space for the viewer to produce meaning through 'incompleteness', shifting the aesthetic experience from passive acceptance to active construction. The wisdom of "counting white as black" in traditional art is transformed into "spatial suspense" in architecture. In the new building of Suzhou Museum, the wall behind the rockery is not decorated in any way, but it is enough to guide viewers to imagine it as a continuation of distant mountains or the sky, and the blank "nothingness" becomes an infinite extension of "existence". This mechanism is in line with the theory of reception aesthetics summoning structure, where the blank serves as a void of meaning, inspiring people to mobilize their own experiences to fill it, and presenting diverse possibilities of spatial meaning in the interpretation of different viewers, thus breaking through the limitations of physical space.

Secondly, the rhythm regulation mechanism. 'Blank space' constructs a poetic rhythm with temporality through the relaxation and expansion of spatial scale and density. Like pauses and line breaks in poetry, blank spaces in architecture can form visual and psychological breathing nodes. The Ningbo Museum designed by Wang Shu uses a courtyard enclosed by tile walls as a spatial "blank space". Its tall

and spacious scale forms a strong contrast with the compactness of the surrounding exhibition halls. When people enter the courtyard from the exhibition hall, the sudden "relaxation" of the space triggers a sense of sudden enlightenment, which echoes the rhythm of Chinese classical poetry's "beginning, ending, turning, and ending", creating a dynamic poetic flow in the static space.

Thirdly, the mechanism of dialogue between heaven and man. 'Blank space' constructs a poetic connection between architecture and nature by introducing natural elements, reproducing the cosmology of the unity of heaven and man. In traditional architecture, the courtyard receives sunlight and rain through the void, which has been transformed into ecological space in contemporary times. For example, in the glass dome courtyard of the Xixi Wetland Museum in Hangzhou, rainwater drips through the gaps of the dome, forming dynamic water patterns on the ground. Sunlight passes through the glass and projects tree shadows on the walls. The blank courtyard space becomes a "theater" of natural forces, where people can intuitively feel the cycle of seasons and natural rhythms, thereby confirming their relationship with heaven and earth in the space and achieving a poetic dwelling.

4.3 Reflection on the Practice of "Blank Space"

Although "leaving blank space" provides an effective path for creating poetic spaces in new Chinese architecture, there are three misconceptions in current practice. One is the formalization of "pseudo blank space", which simplifies "blank space" into physical blank space. For example, some commercial buildings blindly insert empty courtyards or plain colored walls, which become idle spaces due to the lack of light and scale design. This is a symbolic interpretation of the aesthetics of "blank space" and deviates from the traditional "virtual real interaction" thinking. The second is the binary opposition between function and poetry. Some cultural buildings compress functional space in pursuit of artistic conception, such as reducing exhibition hall area and expanding courtyards, which leads to exhibition damage. Traditional "blank space" is originally a symbiotic relationship between function and spirit, and contemporary translation should continue this unity. The third issue is the dissolution of regional individuality, and the homogenization of blank space techniques has caused buildings to lose their distinctiveness. For example, in the north, the leaking windows of Jiangnan were used as cold wind passages due to the climate, while in the west, Suzhou Shuiyuan was copied as a decoration due to water shortage. In fact, "blank space" should be rooted in regional conditions. In the future, designers need to deepen their understanding of the philosophical core of blank space, explore design methods that combine poetry and functionality, promote regional innovation, and balance Eastern aesthetics and regional culture.

5. Conclusion

In traditional architecture, "blank space" is manifested as the spatial organization of "integrating the virtual with the real", the interface treatment of "revealing the empty", and the logic of creating "infinite artistic conception". This aesthetic trait is translated into contemporary Chinese architecture through the reconstruction of virtual and real space organization, the dialogue between ancient and modern interface processing, and the authentic presentation of material colors, forming an expression paradigm that adapts to modern lifestyles and technological conditions.

The contemporary translation of blank space art can not only solve the dilemma of symbolic replication in new Chinese architecture, but also become the core path for creating poetic spaces. By activating imagination, regulating rhythm, and connecting with nature through a triple mechanism, "blank space" transcends physical functions and elevates architectural space into a "poetic field" that carries cultural memories and spiritual experiences. At present, the various problems faced by the creation of new Chinese style architecture indicate that future related practices need to continuously deepen the understanding of the philosophical core of "leaving blank space", establish a collaborative mechanism between poetry and function, and promote regional innovation. The case selection in this article still has certain limitations, and the analysis of the differences in the translation of "blank space" in different climate zones is not sufficient. Subsequent research can combine cross regional comparison and quantitative analysis to further expand the universality of the theory.

In summary, the contemporary translation of blank space art provides a path for the inheritance of new Chinese architecture from "likeness" to "divine resemblance". The value construction of poetic space can not only enrich the contemporary expression dimensions of traditional Chinese aesthetics, but also provide important insights for cultural identity and spiritual return of architecture in the context of globalization. The development of new Chinese style architecture can only truly achieve a poetic

dialogue between tradition and modernity by constantly innovating on the basis of adhering to the traditional spiritual core, and constructing a living space that combines cultural depth and the spirit of the times.

References

- [1] Gao A Q. *On the Form and Environment of Blank Space Art in Space Creation* [J]. *Housing and Real Estate*, 2020, (09):112.
- [2] Liu Y. *The Application of Traditional Elements in New Chinese Style Architectural Design* [J]. *Jushe*, 2020, (35):85-86.
- [3] Li Z. *Regional expression and cultural inheritance innovation of new Chinese style residential architecture* [J]. *Urban Construction*, 2025, (09):95-97.
- [4] Li M Y. *Research on Blank Art in Environmental Space Design of Art Museums* [D]. Nanchang University, 2023.
- [5] Wang H X. *Analysis of the Art of Blank Space in Chinese Painting* [J]. *Daguan (Forum)*, 2019, (03):28-29.
- [6] Hu X. *Speculation on Poetic Space: Heidegger's Thoughts on "Architecture, Residence, and Thought"* [J]. *Tianjin Social Sciences*, 2016, (03):22-27+77.