

Application of Architectural Narratology in Renewal of Historical and Cultural Blocks in Xuzhou

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Abstract: With the rapid development of cities, multiple cultures collide and communicate with each other. People are more in pursuit of novel and popular building and landscape forms in line with the public, while ignoring the cultural conservation and regional characteristics of the city itself. As the carrier of the city memory, the historical cultural block is the core of the city to show its unique building personality and cultural charm. From the perspective of architectural narrative theory, this paper took the architecture and landscape of Xuzhou Huilongwo Historical and Cultural District as an example, analyzed the usage and reconstruction process of the old buildings and structures, discussed the transformation and design methods of the district, and put forward suggestions for the protection and inheritance of local history and culture.

Keywords: Historical and Cultural Blocks, Building and Structure, Transformation and Renewal, Construction Method, Architectural Narratology

1. Introduction of Narratology

Narrative is a literary genre, which is the description of a story in time and space. It contains three elements: narrator, medium and receiver. Narratology is a theory about narrative works, narration, narrative structure and narrativity, which was formally established in the 1960s. With the continuous enrichment of narratology theories and concepts, it also provides methods for many disciplines, which extend to literature, film, painting, garden and other fields. In architecture, the narrator communicates information to the receiver through building elements as a medium, and establishes connection and cognition with people [1]. Historical and cultural building and landscape is inseparable from the combination of story and space. They provide the place for the story to happen, and story telling also endows the building and landscape with cultural connotation, which can be reasonably combined with the theory of narratology to endue space with connotation and meaning. These express the historical space by telling stories, making experiencers generate associations and memories, and making people have a sense of belonging and identity.

2. Building Environment in Xuzhou Huilongwo Historic and Cultural District

2.1. General Situation of Huilongwo

Xuzhou, called Pengcheng in ancient times, is the birthplace of Han culture. Huilongwo, located in the core area of the old city of Xuzhou, is a residential area of the Qing Dynasty. There are many stories and legends, with Hubu Mountain, Kuaizai Pavilion and other cultural relics around it. Because of its low-lying and rainwater accumulation, it is commonly known as "return vortex" and homonymous as "Huilongwo" [2]. Most of the buildings in this place are residential buildings with one or two floors. In this less than 400 square meters of two horizontal and two vertical blocks, Xuzhou traditional architectural features and elements are completely preserved, which has great historical value and becomes the epitome of "old Xuzhou". Today's Xuzhou Wall Museum retains the ancient city wall left over from the Ming Dynasty. After design and construction, it has become an important landscape node of Huilongwo. With culture as its foundation and folk custom as its signboard, the Huilongwo has combined history with modernity to build it into a historical district that promotes the taste of the city, perfects its urban functions, and displays the charm of Xuzhou culture. It is also a city card that shows Xuzhou's unique cultural style.

2.2. Architecture and Landscape Elements

The buildings often reflect the characteristics of an era and have special meanings to form the landscape with stories. The traditional residential buildings in Xuzhou are not only deeply influenced by the traditional feudal culture, but also influenced by the climate of Xuzhou and the geographical conditions of Hubu Mountain. In terms of layout, they basically belong to the northern courtyard [3]. In the space, the steep hard mountain roof, the form of green brick eaves and the masonry method of clear water wall are used [2]. In terms of details, the architectural decoration and color are mainly simple blue and gray, the gables are decorated with white mountain flowers, and some of them are beautified with carved bricks to reproduce the architectural style of the Ming and Qing Dynasties (Fig. 1).

"The ground in a city can become a special symbol of the national culture," said Toru Tomada, a Japanese landscape architect [4]. The pavement also expresses the cultural connotation of the city, and the narrative pavement needs to contain cultural elements. It can express the memory of a certain era or event through the pavement of different materials, and it can also be narrated directly through patterns or words, so that people can obtain information more intuitively. For example, the pavement of the Fifth Avenue in Tianjin adopts octagonal geometric patterns of European style, full of colonial colors, to describe the concession culture. In Huilongwo, the old flagstone road is mostly used to restore the style of Ming and Qing Dynasties, and the pavement showing the geographical location of Huilongwo expresses the historical and cultural axis of Xuzhou (Fig. 2).



Figure 1: Huilongwo traditional buildings



Figure 2: Huilongwo old flagstone road

In terms of plant configuration, local plants that can show the cultural connotation of Xuzhou are matched according to the local historical and cultural background. Combined with the overall characteristics of the building and the street space, plants are used to set off the scene atmosphere, and plants of different colors are used to give people different sensory experience in the four seasons (Fig. 3). Early spring is the *Chimonanthus Praecox* Flower blossom season in Huilongwo, and its overflowing scene creates a simple and poetic atmosphere for the neighborhood. The streets are

dominated by trees, combined with appropriate climbing vines, potted plants and flowers to create the landscape of the block. The flower bed of about one meter is designed close to the wall to match plants and enrich the landscape layers.



Figure 3: Plant configuration in architectural space

2.3. Intangible landscape and Cultural Heritage

The intangible cultural landscape can be the opera performance, the communication of musical instruments, chess, painting and calligraphy, which means that the landscape garden has become a place for people to exchange culture. In the Huilongwo Historical District, citizens spontaneously organize activities such as Tai Chi, Chinese chess, and improvised musical instrument playing. Now people can still feel the kind of happy and contented life in this district that crossing the long river of history. On the other hand, as a historical and cultural block, intangible cultural heritage also adds cultural flavor to Huilongwo, including Xuzhou sachet, paper cutting, fish skin noodles of Hezhen nationality and rubbings (Fig. 4). On holidays, intangible cultural heritage activities are also carried out in this area. As experiencers, people can participate in the cultural exchange and inheritance, giving full play to the preservation, renewal and continuation of the historical and cultural blocks.



Figure 4: Intangible cultural heritage of Xuzhou

2.4. Narrative Expression

Patterns and words are the most direct way of expression in architectural and landscape narration. The experiencers can directly feel the local cultural background and historical information, and quickly blend into the environment. The written narration is mainly to record the history and culture in writing. In Huilongwo, the existing relics and historical changes are mainly displayed through steles and text introductions. As an important building in Huilongwo, the Wall Museum introduces the historical background of the ancient city with a large number of historical materials and documents (Fig. 5). In terms of pattern narrative, relief sculptures are set at the entrance or landmark scenic spots, on which historical stories are engraved, and a few words are combined to briefly describe the meaning (Fig. 6). Secondly, pictures of historical relics are used to intuitively experience the culture and customs of the ancient city, so that visitors can feel the history more deeply.



Figure 5: Picture and text introduction in the museum



Figure 6: Architectural element of Huilongwo relief

3. Design and Construction Technology in Historical and Cultural Blocks

3.1. Static Narrative

In painting or photography, static methods are commonly used to depict things in a specific period or happening[2], while in architecture and landscape, the sketches or commemorative sculptures are mostly used to record an event or a scene. The historical figure sculpture can be seen everywhere in Huilongwo street, which express simple life scenes such as washing clothes, children playing, chatting and so on (Fig. 7). These scenes add to the interest of the block and the sense of belonging of regional culture, visitors and experiencers can also feel the local life through these structures and landscapes.

In addition, static sketches, such as decorative landscape wall, wall painting and relief can be added to the block to enrich the form of sketches and increase the sense of interaction and interest. It can also set up the service sketch, such as the drinking water spring and sink for visitors, handrails for the protection of garden facilities, edge decoration for flower beds and green spaces, etc. The guiding sketches, such as bulletin boards, road signs, cultural relics and ancient building explanatory signs, play the role of publicity and education.



Figure 7: Huilongwo street landscape sketch and architectural environment

3.2. Metaphorical Technique

As a way of expressing emotions, metaphor is widely used in literature and art. The word metaphor is derived from Greek, which means "change of meaning" in Greek, that is, using a word to express a meaning that it could not express before[5]. The use of metaphors in architecture and landscape design is no longer the rhetorical meaning in linguistics, but reflects different meanings through different places, using hints, associations, memories and other methods to create a sense of identity, and citing historical fragments to transform, deform, change the material or position. In the reconstruction of historical districts, metaphors can be used to combine the old space with the new space, allowing people to deeply appreciate the heritage of history and culture.

Specifically speaking, the Wall Museum is constructed with fair-faced concrete and U-shaped glass as a whole (Fig. 8). The U-shaped glass on the roof corresponds to the arrangement of traditional roof tiles, and the fair-faced concrete corresponds to the plain bricks of traditional residents. On the facade, the U-shaped glass and the wooden board are spliced and corresponded to each other, expressing the historical building in a modern context, and a metaphor for the interlacing and linking of time and space[6]. The fair-faced concrete in the Wall Museum, the neighboring traditional residential fair-faced bricks, and the ancient city wall survived in the Ming Dynasty, edit the space scene in a way of intersecting time and space, and store the three in the same space through the intersection of parallel structures between the buildings. This method makes different architectural forms appear in the same space, forming a strong spatial contrast[7]. Finally, the time level formed is balanced and full of tension, allowing people to feel the charm of historical space more deeply. Besides, the architectural exhibition ends with an outdoor courtyard that is lined with multiple line steps along the outside of the city wall, which is a metaphor for the flow of the moat[6].



Figure 8: Building materials and decoration technology of the Xuzhou Wall Museum

It's worth noting that as an important building node, the Wall Museum is insufficiently iconic and indicative. It also needs to use interactive activities such as calligraphy and video exhibitions, festival performances to increase the museum's popularity and cultural atmosphere. Secondly, electronic screens and digital maps can be placed at pedestrian entrances. The computer intelligent guide system can also be introduced to reproduce the architecture and landscape of Huilongwo combined with sound

and light technology. Thirdly, specific logos or slogans may be needed, so that more tourists can easily remember and understand its history and the future development.

4. Conclusion

In summary, the Huilongwo Historic and Cultural District retains the traditional residential form of Xuzhou, with Yongning Alley and Huilong Alley restored in situ, and "one-man lane" added locally, which fully demonstrates the spatial scale and architectural characteristics of Xuzhou's ancient neighborhoods. In terms of the spatial texture, the historical buildings and street space are preserved and repaired as much as possible, and landscape sketches and thematic sculptures are set up in a larger space to reproduce life scenes and express the narrative theme of the space. At the same time, frequent festival commemoration, cultural education, intangible cultural heritage handicraft experience and other activities ingeniously integrate human emotions and historical space, strengthen people's sense of identity and belonging, and enhance the narrative effect.

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