

# A Brief Analysis of the Role of Architectural Aesthetics in Chinese Architectural Education from the Perspective of Mental Health

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**Abstract:** With the progress of the times, Chinese education must enable students to understand that architecture is not only a tool for life, but also an artistic creation. Architectural aesthetics also involves historical, cultural, and social factors, as well as psychological health. To cultivate architects with good artistic cultivation, it is necessary to increase education in art, aesthetics, psychology, and humanities such as traditional architectural theory, Chinese traditional philosophy, Chinese and Western architectural aesthetics, aesthetic principles, Chinese and foreign art history, mental health, architectural geomantic omen, literature, calligraphy and painting appreciation, sculpture, photography, etc. In recent years, some art colleges in China, such as the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Fine Arts of Shanghai University, have successively introduced the subject of architecture, which is a great experiment and makes up for the shortcomings of traditional engineering and architecture colleges that focus on technology and light art. In terms of architecture education, it is necessary to cultivate students' creative thinking and enhance their artistic cultivation, and closely unite architectural aesthetics with mental health. In this regard, we are continuously discussing teaching methods, summing up teaching experience, and introducing new ideas to keep pace with the times.

**Keywords:** Architectural Education; Aesthetic Psychology; Teaching Methods

## 1. Introduction

In the "Aesthetics" by Hegel, it is argued that "architecture is also the earliest art as far as

the sequence of its existence or appearance is concerned," and this classical architectural aesthetic opinion is very representative [1]. In ancient and modern Western Europe, architecture was described very romantically, and people referred to architecture as "frozen music." Nonetheless, the author has always had a question: does music represent beauty? There's so much unbeautiful music in this world, so ugly buildings abound. Although architectural aesthetics is a specialized subject, the vast majority of architecture admirers are laymen. Where there are people, there are buildings. It can be said that architecture is well known to everyone. No matter how your professionals appreciate it, it will be fixed if ordinary people take the phrase "big pants" as a standard. As educators in modern architecture education, what kind of architects do we need? How to cultivate architectural design talents who are in line with the international community and have Chinese culture and Chinese aesthetic concepts? The author believes that the top priority is to improve the knowledge system of architectural aesthetics, establish one's own architectural theory and academic system, promote national subjects, follow a path of "national modernization at the same time modern nationalization."

## 2. Characteristics of Architectural Art

"Art" is a broad concept. It is a general term for many types of art that use modeling to shape visual images, which mainly includes painting, sculpture, architecture, arts and crafts, calligraphy, and seal carving [2]. Among them, architecture is a type of practical art with practicality as its basic function. Meanwhile, aesthetic function is based on practical function. The ancient Roman architect Vitruvius proposed the three principles of

applicability, strength, and beauty.

In essence, building is a place of activity for people to live in, which first satisfies people's practical needs. At the end of the original commune (advanced stage of the barbaric era), architecture appeared "the sprout of architecture as art", only then did it have practical architectural beauty, and only then did architecture really begin to have aesthetic elements [3]. On the premise of ensuring functional requirements, how to build a house to look better has become the main pursuit of architects.

Function dominates, and determines the structure and image of a building. Then, is the artistic image of the building in a completely passive position? It is certainly not. Due to differences in design ideas and artistic processing techniques, as well as differences in specific environments, the same functional requirements, the same materials or technical conditions may well produce artistic images with different styles and tastes. The basic characteristic of architectural art is the combination of technology and art. It is both engineering planning and artistic creation.

### **3. Architectural Aesthetics**

Architectural aesthetics, as an important branch of fine arts and architecture, is an emerging discipline that studies beauty and aesthetic issues in the field of architecture based on architecture and aesthetics. Although architecture has taken a long way with human beings, the appearance of architectural aesthetics is something in the 20th century. The architectural aesthetic view of western architecture believes that the more perfect the form of architecture shows the lofty and great spiritual content, the higher the aesthetic value, architectural beauty is a kind of objective existence, and the shape of architecture is beautiful only if it conforms to the objective law of formal beauty. Hamlin's American book "Form and Function of 20th Century Architecture", published in 1952, gave a comprehensive overview of the basic content of architectural aesthetics.

### **4. Aesthetic Psychology of Architecture**

While describing the beautiful natural scenery of mountains and rivers, writers often use the term "staggeringly beautiful". When we appreciate the beauty of the exterior image of

a building and the beautiful landscape of its environment, we also often have an "staggering" aesthetic experience. In other words, the object being viewed is "beautiful", and the subject of the spectator is "receiving". This "beauty" and "harvest" is also an appropriate expression of the aesthetic psychological activity of the building [4]. So what is the aesthetic mentality of architecture? Simply put, the aesthetic mentality of architecture refers to the special psychological activity caused by people watching beautiful architecture. Beauty lies in the object, while the sense beauty is the subject's active reflection of beauty. As the three universal forms of beauty, natural beauty, social beauty and artistic beauty are such, as the comprehensive form of architectural beauty is no exception. The information sending of architectural beauty lies in the object itself, but the information receiving of architectural beauty is "the sense beauty", which depends on the architectural aesthetic ability of the subject, and depends on the reflection degree and reflection condition of the aesthetic subject to the architectural object.

Architectural aesthetics can influence a person's state of mind through visual elements. Beautiful architecture and landscapes can stimulate people's sense of joy and satisfaction, and reduce anxiety and depression. This positive environment can promote a person's mental balance and emotional stability. Secondly, architectural aesthetics can also affect people's mental health through space design. Good space design can provide a comfortable, safe and private environment, helping to enhance people's sense of belonging and security. For example, bright rooms, comfortable temperatures, and fresh air can all improve a person's mental state. Moreover, architectural aesthetics can also have an impact on people's mental health through social interaction. The design of public spaces can promote people communication and interaction, and enhance community cohesion and sense of belonging. This social support can relieve loneliness and anxiety, and has a positive impact on mental health. This kind of social support can relieve feelings of loneliness and anxiety, and has a positive impact on mental health. Therefore, architectural aesthetics in architectural education can influence people's mental health

in many ways to enable students to fully consider people's psychological needs in the architectural design process and create a beautiful, comfortable, safe and a sense of belonging to a living environment.

### **5. Differences in Entrance Examinations for Construction Education at Home and Abroad**

Architectural aesthetics is an important part of architectural education. However, Chinese architecture education students have a weak foundation in art. Courses majoring in architecture focus on technology rather than art, and lack their own aesthetic theory system. Architecture majors in China are specially set up in engineering colleges. Most science and technology students don't even know what major is architecture before entering university, nor are they making personal choices about their own strengths and interests. They choose this major out of a vague judgment about employment prospects. Although many science and technology schools take additional art tests for enrolled students, they are only used as a reference score and are not included in the overall score. Compared to art skills, college entrance examination cultural scores seem to touch the hearts of admissions teachers. Therefore, architecture students in science and technology colleges are characterized by "strong logical thinking, poor image thinking, high cultural test scores, and a weak art foundation."

However, in Europe, America, and Japan, architecture subjects are generally classified as art, with a very high entry threshold. The Department of Architecture at Nihon University is not part of the Ministry of Engineering but the Department of Fine Arts. From a historical perspective and art system, its teaching system is from the Bauhaus Institute in Germany. Japanese architects studied in Germany or France and brought these traditions back to Japan, then integrated their teaching methods into Europe by integrating with native Japanese culture. In addition to the necessary cultural courses, the entrance examination also has a number of high-threshold practical skills tests, such as the one-day architectural sketching exam, to mainly test students' drawing ability and observation ability. Their level of painting is even higher than that of students in

professional art departments in China. There are also three-dimensional composition tests, such as making various three-dimensional objects using items such as paper and wooden sticks to examine students' creativity, imagination, and hands-on ability [5].

### **6. Consequences of the Lack of An Aesthetic System for Architectural Education in China**

The following are some training requirements in the talent training program of the Tsinghua University Department of Architecture, one of the "Eight Old Architectural Schools":

#### **6.1 Knowledge Structure Requirements**

Master the core theories such as basic principles of architectural design, architectural design process and methods, the architectural history and theory, architectural behavior and environment, urban design, landscape design, economy and regulations, building structure, building materials and structure, and building safety; familiar with the practice of architects, service responsibilities and other business knowledge. Master a foreign language, have a certain listening, speaking, reading and writing ability.

#### **6.2 Capacity Structure Requirements**

Master the basic procedures, thinking methods and working methods of architectural design, master the methods and skills of architectural drawing and design expression, have good plan design ability and initial working ability in construction drawing design; have the ability to apply architectural design principles and theories, architectural technology knowledge and architectural related knowledge in architectural design; master the operation and application ability of computer in comprehensively processing text, image and graphics information in the professional field..

#### **6.3 Professional Core Courses**

Architectural design basics, building composition, building structure, building mechanics, building structure, architectural design principles, architectural design, construction equipment, architectural sound environment and light environment, architectural thermal environment, Chinese and foreign architectural history, introduction to urban and rural planning, urban design,

graduation design and internship.

It's not hard to see from here that Many of the students we train are senior engineers, not artists, so they only know the design skills and some relevant knowledge. Judging from the core curriculum, the theoretical system of architectural aesthetics, which is the main subject of architectural education, has been directly ignored.

An excellent architect must have a profound artistic accomplishment, which is the embodiment of the designer's comprehensive ability, and its results are directly reflected in China's urban construction. The imperfection of architectural aesthetics curriculum in China's architectural education directly leads to the lack of Chinese "context" and the lack of urban architecture and the loss of regional characteristics. The new city construction and the old city between no national, the lack of regional culture care, architect personal humanistic pursuit or characteristic. It is a failure of architectural education to ignore Chinese culture, ignore the inheritance and development of historical context, and give up the exploration of Chinese historical and cultural connotation. Therefore, it is necessary to keep a clear head on this issue and try to change it.

## **7. The Necessity of Establishing the Theoretical System of Architectural Aesthetics in China**

### **7.1 The Necessity of Studying Traditional Chinese Culture**

At present, traditional Chinese culture is facing a sense of crisis. Today, if we don't have the consciousness to study and develop our own traditional culture, then our traditional culture is likely to shrink or even collapse. To this end, Chinese people must have a clear understanding, and must also see that to create a new era of Chinese culture, continuing to discover, inherit, and innovate traditional culture is indispensable. If Chinese architectural research has experienced two generations of management (30 years as a generation according to traditional Chinese concepts), then the main contribution of the first generation pioneers was to absorb foreign scientific methods, collect data, and establish systems while the second generation showed that it expanded the achievements of the first

generation and developed in depth. For the third generation, in addition to continuing to expand, a very important task is to further raise the study of traditional Chinese architecture to the theoretical level of the system. We must improve our consciousness in theoretical research on Chinese architecture [6]. Traditional architecture in China over thousands of years has not had a complete architectural aesthetic theory, so the establishment of a Chinesized architectural aesthetic system is a necessary process for the development of architectural education in China. This is not something that can be achieved by one person or project research; it requires the entire architectural community to work together to achieve it

The Pritzker Architecture Prize, which was established in 1979, is an individual award given to a living architect every year. The award is known as a Nobel Prize in the architecture industry due to the impartiality and authority of its procedures and the influence of the winners, and is extremely prestigious. It has a 44-year history from 1979 to 2015. Among the winners, 6 are American architects, 8 are Japanese architects, the other 22 are European architects, and only 1 is an architect from China. The only Chinese architect to have received this award so far is Wang Shu, the dean of the School of Architecture and Art of the China Academy of Art, doctoral supervisor, and a Chinese architectural star. The Xiangshan Campus of the China Academy of Art is his famous masterpiece. The buildings of the entire Xiangshan campus are lined up, with heavy eaves, and patchwork. It is a modern building with local Chinese characteristics. Much of its inspiration comes from traditional Chinese landscape paintings and the concept of natural dialogue. The scenery of Lake Mountain, idyllic scenery, and even some farmland is preserved. After the entire site was built, all the remaining land was leased to farmers to cultivate as farmland. Wang Shu collected more than 7 million pieces of old bricks and tiles from different eras from demolition sites around the world to give them new life on the roof and walls of the Xiangshan campus. This kind of recycling is not only inexpensive, but more importantly, it has created a Chinese style.

The reason why the Pritzker Commission gave

the award to Wang Shu is that over the years of China's rapid economic development, driven by a combination of power and money, it has blindly pursued a landmark behemoth with great success and lacked a deep sense of national development in architecture, yet Wang Shu was able to stand alone and continue to explore new possibilities starting from his own understanding of Chinese culture and understanding of architectural space and function; this kind of exploration against the trend is extremely rare in China. The award is to encourage architects around the world to think more about the combination of their own traditional culture and modern design, rather than pursuing fame and fortune and blindly seeking greatness

## **7.2 Traditional Chinese Aesthetic Psychology**

“Physiology”, “Psychology”, and “Feelings” are a trilogy of architectural beauty activities. This is very similar to “touching a scene” and “feeling in a scene” in traditional Chinese aesthetic psychology. The more and more important manifestation of the phenomenon of empathy in architectural aesthetic and psychological activities is the social content it incorporates. An elegant and beautiful residence not only makes people happy, but also its architectural form reflects the content of “home”, which makes people think of the warmth of “family affection” and the joy of “family reunion” when they see their residence. Beautiful architecture and landscapes can stimulate people's sense of joy and satisfaction, and reduce anxiety and depression. This positive environment can promote a person's mental balance and emotional stability.

After the founding of New China, the remodeled Tiananmen Square Tower, with red walls, yellow tiles, gable and hip roof with single double eaves, and skirt-roofs was majestic and majestic. People either watched, admired, or took pictures in front of it. It went beyond the aesthetic enjoyment of ordinary architectural forms, but instead expressed and supported some kind of patriotic ideals, feelings, and national pride. The new Tiananmen Square Tower has been historically confirmed as the most solemn and respectable emotional symbol that symbolizes the birth of New China. “The waters and skies merge in

one colour” and “stars gather” ceiling in the auditorium of the Great Hall of the People in Beijing is an ingenious artistic idea. It comes from the poetic inspiration of “The evening glow parallels with a lonely duck to fly; The autumn river shares a scenic hue with the vast sky”, yet in reality, the emotional beauty people get from it has long exceeded the limits of this huge material space, thus reaching a higher and deeper spiritual realm. The cultural connotation of buildings can stimulate people's sense of belonging and pride, and help improve psychological well-being.

It is essential for Chinese architectural education to incorporate traditional Chinese aesthetics. It is a unique form of expression of Chinese architectural design. Adding these elements can better carry forward Chinese traditional culture, enrich the connotation of architectural design, make it more with Chinese characteristics and national style, enrich the connotation of architectural design, and cultivate students' aesthetic ability and creativity.

## **8. Focus on Traditional Culture Education and Reform China's Construction Education System**

In urban construction in China, from the perspective of individual buildings, the artistic design of many buildings lacks aesthetic pursuit. The spatial shape, façade treatment, and color and texture are unappealing. Judging from the relationships between individual and individual buildings, individual to group, and architecture and environment, the planning and construction of urban buildings lacks overall diversity, making it difficult to achieve a harmonious aesthetic pursuit in the midst of conflict. If you walk down the street or look up at the architecture of the entire city, it's easy to find that the buildings on both sides of the street are cluttered and “yes”. There is no “dialogue” affinity between the individual units. It's funny and ridiculous, like wearing a long robe and horse coat but wearing a pair of leather shoes on your feet. Due to repetitive plagiarism and formality, our country's architectural design lacks quality, and there is a gap between the overall design level and advanced countries. This is related to designers' lack of extensive knowledge and culture, careful living experience, and good artistic cultivation. It is also related to social



productivity and the overall level of education of citizens. In Europe and the US, education specialized in architecture was developed earlier, and the level of national education is high. It focuses on traditional art, art, architecture, etc., and has a strong social arts and culture education background. The overall level of appreciation and popularity of architectural knowledge among citizens is quite high [7]. Architecture education in China was introduced from Western countries in the early 20th century, and architectural knowledge was ignored in primary and secondary school education. This made ordinary people less aware of architectural knowledge and lacked a basic understanding of architecture majors.

We must pay attention to traditional Chinese education and strengthen the instillation of traditional culture, such as qin, chess, calligraphy, and painting as well as the cultivation of verses, ditties, odes and songs -- the four forms of poetry, and historical culture as it is conducive to cultivating students' excellent character, and enriching and developing students' imagination and creativity. Wang Shu, the only architect in China to receive the Pritzker Prize so far, is considered to be the most literate architect in contemporary China. He is proficient in Chinese painting, calligraphy, and ancient poetry, and enjoys the reputation of "China's most humane architect." He became proficient in Kant's "Introduction to Metaphysics" when he was in his junior year. He read a wide range of topics; he is proficient in ancient literature, and he can memorize "A New Account of the Tales of the World" when speaking; all of his designs were drawn by hand, and the master's successful experience is very worth learning.

In architecture education, it is also necessary to rationally analyze the various styles of architecture abroad, get the best out of them, and not blindly follow trends. More importantly, study local architectural culture and historical architecture to stimulate students' love for traditional culture.

### **9. Architectural Education Should Reform the Teaching System to Cultivate Talents with Artist Qualities**

Currently, the talent training plans and syllabuses of most construction colleges in China are very similar. The core courses are

all architectural design, and there is very little involvement in other subject areas. Architecture, on the other hand, is an extremely broad field of study. To train architects with good artistic cultivation, it is necessary to increase education on artistic, aesthetic, and humanistic qualities. Such as: increase traditional architectural theory, Chinese traditional philosophy, Chinese architectural aesthetics, western architectural aesthetics, aesthetic principles, Chinese and foreign art history, architectural geomantic omen, literature, calligraphy and painting appreciation, sculpture, photography, etc. In recent years, some domestic art colleges, such as the Central Academy of Fine Arts and the Academy of Fine Arts of Shanghai University, have successively introduced the subject of architecture. This is a great experiment. It will make up for the shortcomings of traditional engineering and architecture colleges that focus on technology and light art. Of course, due to the lack of architectural technology at the Academy of Fine Arts, it will also limit the development of architectural design in the future to a certain extent. It would be best if engineering colleges and universities could co-operate schools with the Academy of Fine Arts, integrate resources, and take advantage of their strengths; this requires a long period of effort.

### **10. Reforming Traditional Teaching Models**

Architecture students from Western European countries spend most of their time doing extensive field trips at home and abroad. Travel is a form of reading in daily life, which can help a person increase their understanding of this world. Travel, is the reading in life, can help a person to increase the understanding of the world. In the process of going out, you can learn to observe and appreciate every detailed thing around you, learn to study hard and judge all aspects of things, and find interest and inspiration in the seemingly trivial and disorderly details [8]. The old Chinese saying "read ten thousand books and travel thousands of miles" brilliantly summarizes the principle that "reading" and "travelling" complement each other. Here, I would like to quote a passage from Wang Shu when he launched his new work "Washan (Waterfront Mountain Residence)" (the first work after winning the Pritzker Prize, located in the Xiangshan

Campus of the China Academy of Art), which is his travel experience 27 years ago:

What really moves people's hearts is definitely not just general alliterative knowledge from the history of literature, the history of painting, and the history of architecture. The rise of creation also comes from pure personal memory experiences. Naming this waterside house involves villages, landscaping, mountains, wooden frames, soil, and water, all of which are related to personal experience. ... When it comes to villages, I always think of the village called Dongting Creek by the Yuanjiang River in western Xiangxi. That trip was in 1987. I followed the route of Shen Congwen's "Sketches of Travel In Hunan" and walked along the Yuanjiang River, one village at a time. ... When I think about this village over and over again, it must be related to the site situation of the new house, the Academy of Fine Arts. Although the buildings of the entire Xiangshan campus are complex and diverse, they are not fragmented; they imply a large structure. I imagine that this new house will have a 100-meter-long tiled roof, containing a variety of architectural typologies, such as Dongting Creek. It can be said that it is a bit strange, but it actually exists; although it is impossible for people to see this kind of content in any college edition of "History of Chinese Architecture." Based on my reading experience, none of the various editions of "A History of Chinese Architecture" is an actual history of construction activities in China; reading it is more like a kind of obscuring [9]. It can be seen from here that travel is of great significance to students studying architecture. The current education mode in China is mostly passive, closed and conservative, so that students have poor subjective initiative in learning, low interest in learning, and low feeling of architecture. Therefore, I think we can change our teaching mode, so that students can go out of school, contact with different cultures and understand the architectural forms under different social backgrounds in the process of travel, and directly experience the architecture. These experiences can provide inspiration for future design and become a precious treasure house of material.

## 11. Conclusion

Architecture is inextricably linked to people's

social life, making it a vehicle for integrating human social life and customs, culture and art, mentality and behavior. In this connection, the artistic problem of architecture is not just a matter of aesthetics; its spiritual appeal is multifaceted, enduring, and has a broad mass base. Architectural art teaching is responsible not only for teaching techniques, but more importantly for cultivating students' creative thinking and enhancing students' artistic cultivation. Therefore, we are continuously discussing teaching methods, summing up teaching experience, while introducing new ideas to keep pace with the times. It is certain that we must clearly recognize the difficult task and mission of "the road is long and far; I will go up and down to search".

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