

# Ho Wai-On

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ARTS  
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OF ENGLAND

### INTER ARTES YUANLIN

*(Yuan-Lin-Tong-Yi in Chinese)*

## Report to the Arts Council of England

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# **INTER ARTES YUANLIN (YUAN-LIN-TONG-YI IN CHINESE)**

*The Development of "Hua-Yuan Journey" and Inter Artes,  
influenced by Ho Wat-On's visit to China*

## ***THE NAME AND THE MEANING:***

The working title of this project is "Hua-Yuan Journey", but Hua-Yuan (flower garden) confines the project to gardens with an emphasis on flowers. My observations in China have made me realize "Yuanlin" (see description of various Yuanlins, 9th-17th Nov), the landscape gardening in Jiangnan (south of the Yangzi) is a more appropriate title. "Yuan" means garden, and "Lin" means woods, grove, forest... and represents nature including flowers. "Yuanlin" is an artistic environment in an inner-city area, which is a fusion of design, painting and poetry, and which represents a miniature of nature in harmony with the more refined area of the human spirit. The environment is the result of collaborative efforts over a long period of time, and flexibility in planning so as to make the best out of the surroundings and other circumstances.

"Journey" in the working title signifies the time leading to an artistic, a cultural or spiritual understanding. "Tong-Yi", i.e. Inter Artes in Chinese, is more appropriate to the philosophy behind this project: "Tong" means through, open, lead to, communicate, understand, expert and whole; "Yi" means the arts, refined taste, and is often linked with the Chinese character meaning culture and literature.

"Yuan-Lin-Tong-Yi" signifies that through Inter Artes' reinterpretation of the concept of "Yuanlin", this artistic communication leads to an exposure to and understanding of cross-art forms of refined quality, and with cultural links, forms an artistic entity. "Yuan-Lin-Tong-Yi" is poetic and a suitable name for this innovative artistic microcosm. "Inter Artes Yuanlin" is its English name, and IAYL for short.

## ***THE CONCEPT:***

This is a complex, cross-cultural, combined-arts and collaborative creation. As a one-off event, it will not justify the time, effort and expense required. "Inter Artes Yuanlin" should be on a permanent site in an inner-city area, partly indoor (preferably with a high ceiling) and partly outdoor. It should be dotted with permanent and temporary artistic installations and art objects, all serving indoor or outdoor practical purposes, and created one by one over the years by various artists inspired by the concept of "Yuanlin". This environment is visually inspiring; is particularly suitable for unusual performances such as live art, cross-cultural and combined-arts; can accommodate small scale more conventional performances, as well as human activities such as music, chess, calligraphy, poetry and painting. When there is no live performance, people who live or work in the inner-city, can come to this artistic environment to read, relax, contemplate, reflect, and enjoy its fusion of design, painting, poetry and music reflecting nature.

Due to my own Chinese-British background and artists available at the time of writing, the cultural links will be British and Chinese to begin with. But the aim is to be inclusive rather than exclusive, i.e. to encompass the human community as a whole. This was the reason for my choosing landscape gardening as the basis for this collaborative artistic creation: a garden is a human connection with nature in an unnatural surrounding (such as an inner-city area), and is a human expression reflecting nature. Unlike the jungle, a garden is more often associated with the better side of human nature. It is a friendly and

enjoyable environment transcending racial and cultural boundaries. A garden provides a spiritual experience which is accessible to all people - this is somewhat akin to the Buddhist philosophy (an element in the concept of Chinese and Japanese gardens) that one understands and appreciates according to one's knowledge and spiritual level.

Amongst gardens, the concept of "Yuanlin" appears to be comprehensive and profound. Its concept has influenced Chinese and Japanese (especially Zen) gardens, as well as some European gardens: such as the Trianon de Porcelaine in Versailles, Jardin Chinois, Jardin Anglo-Chinois, and some English garden buildings. The latter versions are, however, often superficial - Chinoiserie, instead of showing an understanding of the philosophy. But in Britain, the love and interpretation of the countryside, has resulted in the creation of many beautiful gardens reflecting nature as well as their owner's personality (e.g. Sissinghurst Castle Garden). British rock gardens and wall gardens are particularly akin to the concept of "Yuanlin". This common language in landscape gardening seems auspicious for a British and Chinese cultural link in this project.

Like nature, Yuanlin is under threat: the pursuit of material gain and the tendency towards over-development may hasten its being a dying art. Thus it seems appropriate for artists who are non-professional gardeners to maintain the "Yuanlin" philosophy through an artistic reinterpretation. "Inter Artes Yuanlin" can serve as a prototype for other similar artistic microcosms in inner-cities - like the many different Yuanlins I have visited in China, each reflecting the people involved in its creation and their interpretation of nature, and fulfilling the needs of its users. "Inter Artes Yuanlin" also reflects my life-long work in creating a flexible art form which is organic - a basic structure which can accommodate different art forms and cultures, and the result is an intimate interaction between the individuals involved, and the reflection of the circumstances at the time - thus the creation changes according to the changes of human and circumstantial factors, i.e. the opposite of the concept of tinned food. This was the reason for my forming Inter Artes in 1988 after fourteen years' thought on the matter. Inter Artes is itself a flexible art form (hence often impossible to pigeon-hole and often misunderstood), which serves the purpose of gently erasing some of the unnecessary boundaries between art forms and cultures. Many good things are not appreciated because of people's lack of knowledge and experience, and many unnecessary barriers create suspicion and hostility between people. Most people love gardens. A creation based on the concept of landscape gardening may lessen their hostility towards contemporary art forms. This may also demonstrate that not all things from the past are dead (to be housed in museums) or should be destroyed (replicas cannot really replace what the Red Guards destroyed during the Cultural Revolution). I believe that it is possible to experience a living tradition by contemporary artistic expression, and an artistic community-building by design.

## ***THE LOCATION, SPACE AND BASIC SUPPORT REQUIRED***

### ***The Location:***

My experience in China (see my China visit diary) demonstrated that it will not be wise to attempt to build IAYL in China at this stage - too much time, energy and expense may have to be spent on dealing with hassles, ridiculous situations, unrealistic expectations, and other problems which are the result of political situations. As the project is large scale, complex and demanding, it will be more fruitful to work on familiar ground to start with - i.e. the initial site should be in cosmopolitan London. But Hangzhou (see the Surprise of Hangzhou, 12th-13th Nov) can be considered as the first link with the initiation. Information and materials obtained in China can be assimilated into the London initiation. Other contacts in China are the seeds of future links.

### ***The Space and Basic Support Required:***

Using Wangshiyuan as a blue print (see illustration: the plan of Wangshiyuan, and description of the same 14th Nov), the space required will be about an acre (can be less). The space should be partly indoor and partly outdoor so as to fulfil the indoor and outdoor purposes required, and assimilated into the structure and planning of a much larger establishment (see description of the structure of the Forbidden City, 3rd Nov). I will submit the proposal to establishments which are intending to reorganize their space, or develop new sites - such as the New Tate Gallery, the South Bank Centre, the British Museum, and will consider other suggested venues and organizations. Peter Nelson (lighting designer, see biography) suggested the City of London Partnership, Ross MacGibbon (video/film director and editor, see biography) suggested the Commonwealth Institute, and Maxine Braham (choreographer/dancer, see biography) suggested Richmond Park...

This vision of artistic community-making requires time as well as effort and cannot be cheaply bought. It is essential for "Inter Artes Yuanlin" to be incorporated into a larger establishment, whilst retaining its individuality. The host organization would provide essential back-up, maintenance and security; this provision of basic support enables those who are involved in the building of IAYL to concentrate their time, efforts and talents on artistic and important matters; and the backing of a large establishment makes it easier to attract sponsorships. As the project will involve many people and the Chinese at some stage, the backing of an establishment will provide a stronger position in all the dealings and negotiations concerned. Professor Brian Trowell of Oxford University, who christened Inter Artes, has on several occasions mentioned to me the benefit of being attached to an establishment, and I finally understand this piece of wisdom. But I also feel that it is important that the host organization will allow IAYL a certain amount of independence while providing basic support - at least at the initial stage, and tolerate a certain lack of rigid structure, as both artistic creation and community making are incompatible with rigidity, and the concept and structure of organization.

### ***USING THE MEDIA AS THE FIRST STEP:***

"Inter Artes Yuanlin" needs space, a host organization, and funding. A successful communication (with potential supporters and the general public) about the project is essential. As the project is rather complex, and most people are not fond of reading a document about transforming an artistic vision into reality, with the help of the media, the following may be more fruitful:

#### ***1. Publication:***

With further polish, the diary of my visit to China (2nd-21st Nov) can be a piece of enjoyable reading with some interesting observations. The polished version with a short prologue about the project, can be sent to the press and other publications, such as magazines, periodicals and newsletters, especially those with an interest in China.

The inclusion of my diary in China lightens the project's promotional booklet, as well as showing that I will go to great lengths to achieve my goal. The booklets will be sent to potential supporters.

#### ***2. Radio:***

Excerpts of the diary and a summary of the project may be of interest to programmes such as "Woman's Hour", for this signifies a woman's artistic "Long March" - I spent fourteen years thinking before forming Inter Artes in 1988, I have now spent another seven years in creating and staging cross-cultural and combined-arts projects for Inter Artes. "Inter Artes Yuanlin" is a further step to realize my vision.



### **3. Video / Television:**

#### **a) Carlton Television's "Dilly Down Town III"**

I am to be featured in this new series to be transmitted this Summer, in which I have talked briefly about this project.

#### **b) The Making of the First Video:**

The video will be 15 to 40 minutes (depending on funding), and a combination of artistic interpretation and documentary. The narration of my diary in China serves as the basis of the script. Images will include photos and materials collected for this project; choreography performed by one British and one Chinese dancer which is a visualization of the cross-cultural aspects as well as my bi-cultural mind; and one weeks' filming in Hangzhou. The project will be introduced through visual and imaginative means. The director/editor will be Ross MacGibbon (see biography), who was a professional dancer and has visited China. He has directed many highly acclaimed dance features for television. The photographer will be Tony Keene (see biography). The choreographer and British dancer will be Maxine Braham, and the Chinese dancer will be Tina Chen - they have both worked with me and Inter Artes before, with good results. I will work closely with Ross and Maxine, appear in the video, and write music for it.

The filming in Hangzhou will involve a small team (3-6) using only essential and portable equipment. The filming will include:

1. Scenery relevant to my diary; conversations between me and people related to the project; images relevant to the project.

2. Artists' work and other relevant images for the projects "Initiation" (see under that heading in the following). Myself, Neil McConnon and Hale Man have made contact with many artists; - mostly connected with the Academy of Fine Arts (see description of the Academy 13th Nov), and they are willing to let me capture images of their work (see appendix re some of their names and samples of works). Much of their work is inspired by Hangzhou's landscape and elements relevant to the concept of Yuanlin.

3. The workshop in Hangzhou: both myself and Neil McConnon have made useful contacts with the Academy of Fine Arts there, and many artists in Hangzhou have expressed an interest in the project. We have already found suitable sites for conducting a workshop for this (see illustration, and Hangzhou 13th Nov). The workshop will involve local artists, and if there is not enough funding to include our own choreographer and dancers, it is possible to work with local dancers.

Other relevant information: according to the British Council's structure, Hangzhou is under Peter Grout (see Shanghai 17th Nov). He said that I could submit a funding application to him for helping the team to go to China. The officials of the Chinese Culture Promotion Society Division of Cultural exchange have also mentioned that they might be able to help financially (see Beijing 8th Nov). It is because of having this video in mind that I researched into television in Beijing, Hangzhou, Shanghai and Hong Kong for possible slots. Ross and I will work on the preliminary script in the hope of attracting a commission from UK television organisations. Even if the video has to be accomplished under a stringent budget without a commission from a television organization, it will help to attract big sponsorships, and can be of use in the future.

#### **(c) The Making of the Second Video:**

This will be about the development from the time a site is available to the project's "Initiation" (see The Initiation of IAYL in the following).

## ***THE CONCEPT OF THE STRUCTURE OF INTER ARTES YUANLIN***

Flexibility is a key word in the concept of "Yuanlin". The following descriptions and ideas of a possible "Inter Artes Yuanlin" may sound incomplete. This should be viewed as a concept that can flexibly marry into any given space and situation. One builds a Yuanlin according to the peculiarities of a given site, the surroundings and other circumstances - so as to make the best and most imaginative use of all natural and human factors, and so reflect the better qualities of the people who are involved or connected with this created environment. All this will require time and the allowance of fluidity of thought. One must have a goal, but a rigid plan is only suitable for a simple event - the more complicated a creative project, the more necessary is flexibility so as to ride the course of events. As soon as a space is given, and a host organization and funding for the "Initiation" secured, "Inter Artes Yuanlin" will be in operation. There will be sufficient attractions for the general public, while the ideas of the rest of the structure will be accomplished one by one - this budding collaborative creation can be metaphored as the bud of a plant gradually growing into luxuriant foliage.

### ***THE INITIATION OF INTER ARTES YUANLIN:***

This will consist of three parts:

#### ***1. The Story of the Stones or the Living Tradition:***

Stones and rocks, and the arrangement of them to represent nature and other images, and to provide visual beauty and spiritual awareness is an important element in the concept of Yuanlin (see illustration: Stones and Rocks in Yuanlin(s), and descriptions of the same: the Summer Palace 4th Nov, Jingxinzhai and Gongwangfu 6th Nov in Beijing; Tianyige in Ningbo 9th Nov; Putuoshan 11th Nov; "The Peak that Flew from Afar" in Hangzhou 13th Nov; Lion Grove and Blue Wave Pavilion in Suzhou 15th Nov).

An indoor space within IAYL will be allocated for an artistic reinterpretation. The area will be dotted with art objects representing rocks and stones (see illustration: a possible example of "The Stones"). Real stones and stone-like objects will be artistically arranged as seats for visitors. Apart from forming a visually unique area, the objects representing rocks and stones can be used as screens for projection, and to house video monitors with special screens on the surface of the "rocks" to enlarge images. The projection and videos will transmit the following themes to the visitors:

##### ***a) The Real and the Unreal, the Past and the Present:***

This will be a combination of mobile images captured on photos, slides and videos (see The Making of the First Video under "Using the Media as the First Step") of relevant landscapes and Yuanlin in China (the real), and artists' work inspired by such (the unreal). Artists' work will be mostly by those who are connected with the Academy of Fine Arts in Hangzhou (see 13th Nov), who have agreed to the use of the images of their work - there is quite a wealth of work suitable for this theme (see illustration: two examples of artists' work suitable for Theme (a) of "The Stones"); together with relevant British artists' work on Chinese themes.

"The real and the unreal" is a theme of the Chinese novel "The Story of the Stone" (its later version "The Dream of the Red Chamber" is better known) which has influenced my preliminary concept of this project (see references to this novel: Beijing, Grand View Garden 5th Nov and Gongwangfu 6th Nov). The spiritual world, where the main characters of the book come from, is the reality these characters will return to after experiencing the materialistic world, while the real world with its superficial glamour and falsehood is transient and unreal. In the novel, the stones signify the beginning, and the mending of an

insecure world which has a hole in the sky. The principal male character is the human form of the only stone (the minority) which has not been used for the grand purpose of mending the sky. His appreciation of talented young females as valuable humans (before they are tarnished by their association with and influenced by characteristics attributed to men in privileged positions, and conformed to being stereotyped women), and his distaste for the seeking of power, status and wealth, have caused him to be misunderstood and unappreciated by the materialistic, reactionary and unjust society in which he was born. Since the novel has many themes which are in sympathy with this project and which have influenced it; is well known to the Chinese; and getting better known to the British: relevant images related to the novel can be assimilated into the experience of "The Stones" in IAYL.

"The past and the present" will be a combination of mobile images of paintings depicting past images of gardens and historical places I visited in China, and their present day images captured by camera and other means - i.e. the organic story of these places. This will also include images of all the mini-gardens (see description of them in the following) and each new installation, art object and special event in IAYL - i.e. the organic story of IAYL (see The Making of the Second Video under "Using the Media as the First Step").

**b) The Kaleidoscope:**

This will be an attempt to recreate what I have experienced in Suzhou's Wangshiyuan (see description of a kaleidoscope of Chinese paintings in Wangshiyuan, 14th Nov).

**c) The Raw Material or the Living Tradition:**

"Stones" signify raw materials or items in an unpolished stage in Chinese. Many artists and key people of cultural and artistic establishments I met in China expressed their wish to have their work known in the West. There is an increasing number of British artists who are interested in working on Chinese themes, and there are people in the UK who seek exposure of their artistic or cultural work. The "Stones" in IAYL will show an artistic arrangement of images provided by cultural and artistic organizations (such as The Gallery of Oriental Instruments and the Shanghai Museum, see 16th and 17th Nov), as well as creative and performing artists. This may act as a catalyst to other artistic or cultural ventures.

IAYL is the evolution of the very first Inter Artes project created by me, which was conceived while I was walking in a museum. Instead of just sitting in a museum, I wanted to see images from the past coming alive, inspiring and integrated into live performances. I called this creative project "The Living Tradition", and intended originally to have it performed as a large scale special event for a museum. My ideas and the structure I created acted as a catalyst to creative and performing artists who took part in its eventual staging in London and Hong Kong.

**Other Relevant Ideas for "The Stones":**

The funding of the Initiation should include commission fees for the design of a simple and organic lighting and audio-visual system by experts who are familiar with live performances and installation work (eg. lighting: Peter Nelson, audio-visual: John Whiting of October Sound and Simon Beer of Integrated Circle). The system should be compatible with live performances, and have the potential to expand according to the growth of IAYL. However, I have some ideas which may be of use for the Initiation:

**Lighting:** mobile and simple. I am thinking of the combination of lanterns and modern objects (see illustrations: An idea of lighting for "The Stones" ). Their flexibility will make it more suitable for projection and live performances taking place in this area.

**Music:** for the Initiation, I will create music using recordings of the sounds of ancient and oriental instruments provided by the Gallery of Oriental Instruments in Shanghai (see 16th Nov). This will require the application for a commission from IRCAM in Paris to enable me to use the computer music facilities there. Before that materialises, I have a collection

of suitable music which can be used for this purpose, and can include existing music by contemporary composers in Beijing, Shanghai, the UK, Hong Kong and Taiwan, as well as traditional music performed by Chinese musicians whom I have made contact with (see Beijing 3rd and 8th Nov, Shanghai 16th Nov, and appendix: Reservoir of creative and performing artists. The music can be performed live or on tape.

Audio-Visual Equipment: to be housed in specially designed art objects inspired by those I saw in the courtyards and gardens of temples and other historical buildings during my visit in China (see illustration: An idea of art objects to house sound and projection equipment for "The Stones")

A manufacturer of audio-visual equipment may sponsor the creation and building of "The Stones".

## ***2. Mini-Garden or Hua-yuan Journey:***

This is inspired by my observations of the mini-garden within Beijing's Beihai Park (see illustration of Jingxinzhai and description of the same, 6th Nov). A partly indoor and partly outdoor space within IAYL will be allocated for this purpose - which is a temporary artistic display or installation inspired by any type of garden, and can include flowers and plants. This will emphasize the "journey" element - the design should prolong the time one spends in this area, and prevent an immediate view of all that is there. When I visited Beijing's Summer Palace, I saw loudspeakers with wires linking from tree to tree (see 4th Nov). This idea can be artistically transformed into relevant music or sounds (such as those recorded in nature) coming from art objects representing trees.

An artist or a small team of artists will be commissioned to put on and look after his/her/their mini-garden in this area for a period of time. There are two examples of possible mini-gardens (see illustrations): One by Neil McConnon who intends to team up with Erika Tan, and the other by Hale Man (see biographies of these three visual artists).

Between commissions, the area can be used for any displays and exhibitions, or for private lettings so as to obtain funding to commission new mini-gardens.

## ***3. Live Performances using Existing Visual Elements:***

Both "The Stones" and "mini-garden" can be used as visual elements to complement live performances. As the contents of these two areas will have new versions from time to time, this will inspire new live performances.

I have three ideas of involving British artists in the creation of performances combining dance and visual art on Chinese themes:

a) Guanyin: based on images of this Goddess of Mercy and Compassion and other goddesses (see illustration: images of Guanyin and goddesses; Guanyin in Putuoshan 10th Nov, Chenxiang Ge Shanghai 16th Nov).

b) Two performances which involve young people:

i) The Rock of the Two Turtles (see illustration, and the legend of this in Putuoshan 1st Nov).

ii) The Stories of Ji Gong (see the Temple of Ji Gong in Hangzhou 13th Nov).

Maxine Braham (Choreographer/dancer, see biography) has ideas of live performances (see appendix). Artists who have taken part in past Inter Artes projects will be invited to put on their own shows (see appendix: Reservoir of artists).

The "Initiation" of IAYL is like my diary from China - a multi-faceted cultural and artistic journey which may offer considerable potential, and an insight into unknown areas.



## ***TIME SPAN FOR AND A BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE REST OF THE STRUCTURE OF IAYL***

The creation and development of a Yuanlin is a long-term commitment. I envisage that the time span from IAYL's "Initiation" to the completion of the following plan will be seven years. "The Stones" and the "mini-garden" will ensure continuous activities in IAYL for the general public after the Initiation, while artistically designed installations and objects inspired by the concept of Yuanlin will be created and erected one by one during the seven years, flexibly planned according to: funding and sponsorships; the best use of the given space; consideration for its users and the host organisation. The following is a list of possible installations, art objects, and human activities for the seven-year period. Artists involved in the creation of each new installation will work closely with me. But to start with, some general principles are necessary:

### ***Some General Principles in the Design of IAYL***

#### ***Flexible and Elastic Circle, Triangle and Square:***

Western gardens appear to favour symmetrical and geometrical designs, while Chinese gardens are often asymmetrical, and asymmetrical elements are used to counteract any basically symmetrical layout (see Forbidden City and the Imperial Garden, Beijing 3rd Nov). Since IAYL is a cross-cultural creation, it seems appropriate to combine the concepts of Chinese and British gardens. Maxine Braham (choreographer/dancer, see biography) mentioned the three basic shapes: circle, triangle and square in a meeting. These shapes are used in both Chinese and Western gardens (see illustration: The use of circle, triangle and square in Chinese gardens). In Chinese gardens, the circle is used in the designs for windows and doorways (often without doors) between different sections of the garden. What one sees surrounded by the circle can be interpreted as a different world or the moon - hence going through such a doorway is like entering into another world or the moon. Triangle is the shape of the top part, while square is the lower half of buildings as well as the most common shape for interior functional areas. I am thinking of introducing a flexible element to counteract geometrical designs - i.e. the outlines of the circle, triangle and square are elastic and flexible, so that one can bend and stretch them to vary the shape; and the use of incomplete circle, triangle and square to further counteract symmetry. The concept of the flexible geometrical shape will offer some degree of unity as well as freedom in the designs by different artists.

#### ***Symbolic with Room for the Imagination:***

IAYL is an artistic reinterpretation of Yuanlin, and is not meant to be real buildings or gardens. That is why I use the term "artistic installation" - a symbolic building or garden which is an artistic creation in itself.

#### ***Easily assembled and maintained***

#### ***In Harmony with what is already there:***

i.e. respecting individuality in this artistic community but not encouraging hard-edged individualism.

#### ***Functional, serving a Purpose for the Users and compatible with Live Performances***



## ***Possible permanent Installations and Art Objects in IAYL***

### **Nature in all Seasons:**

An outdoor installation or several installations representing an element or a combination of many elements of nature: water, rocks, mountains, forest, trees, plants flowers... and responding to the elements such as rain, snow, wind, the sun and the moon (kinetic art is a possibility).

### **Flowers of Tradition or the Library:**

The creators of Yuanlins in the past were cultivated people. That is why a Yuanlin always has at least one library. Tianyige in Ningbo (see 4th Nov) is a famous example of a library as an artistic creation. An indoor area will be designated for this purpose, and an artistic installation will house relevant artistic and cultural information including music and videos, documentation (especially in the area of combined-arts and cross-cultural creation and activities) and reference materials. It is the custom for a library in a Yuanlin to have a pond near it for the practical function of extinguishing fires. This can be symbolically reinterpreted by an artistic arrangement of white sand or pebbles (as in Japanese gardens). Ideally, the installation should be accomplished by the sponsorship of a computer company, so that a computer system will be used for the purpose of storing words and sounds, as well as images by scanning. This will be particularly useful bilingually (it is now possible to transform information into many languages by computers), and the pinyin system (using the alphabet to represent the sounds of Chinese characters) makes Chinese easier for computing purposes. There is an increasing number of people in Britain who are familiar with pinyin. A suitable computer system will save space, time, effort (such as scanning) and manpower; will allow simultaneous use of existing material by many; produce copies required; and will be a tool for IAYL's own bi-lingual publications (Tianyige in Ningbo also served the purpose of producing and preserving Fanqin's own publications). I believe that good quality bilingual publications will help promote my vision. From the time I formed Inter Artes, I have included publishing bilingual booklets in its structure. This has only been partially realized due to limitations on funding. I have not come across any English-Chinese publication in the UK which is dedicated to the promotion of greater understanding between cultures and art forms. In fact, I have not even come across any Chinese publication in the UK which is really about culture and art. I have come across one or two attempts, but the content and the style of writing are inferior to European editions of Chinese newspapers from Hong Kong, and the standard has not improved over the years. One of the publications even included latest gossip about the love life of a Hong Kong starlet known for the size of her bust - maybe Chinese women are not usually busty (see my experience re eye-drops in Beijing 7th Nov), thus the image of the starlet's bust might have attracted more readers, but somehow I wondered who decided to fund this publication as cultural food for the "Chinese Community"? The computers will merge into the artistic design, so that they will be visually pleasing as well as serving a purpose - like most things in a Yuanlin. Before a computer system is available, the installation will house the collection of materials in writing, illustrations, photos, tapes and videos.

### **For specific Human Activities:**

This will be an indoor artistic installation where people can take part in activities such as painting, poetry, calligraphy, chess, music and lectures. This installation will also be suitable for small scale conventional music, dance and dramatic performances; and for performances which demand that the audience may see everything - unlike those which take part in other installations, where what one see and hears depends on where one is at that moment, and will change accordingly when one moves on. This installation can also be used for social functions (private lettings) such as weddings (see Guo Zhang in Hangzhou 13th Nov). The design will take into account opinions from performing artists who intend to use the space (such as including acoustic shells in the design).

### We eat Art:

This will be an indoor installation for the provision of good quality and unusual snacks and refreshments (both Chinese and Western) for the visitors. I was not very impressed by the food I had in China (see Beijing -3rd, 4th, 6th Nov; Putuoshan 10th Nov; and Suzhou 16th Nov). Maybe some Chinese have lost the art of cooking - a great shame! However, good food is still one of the best ways to attract Chinese attendance (while creative art is near the bottom of the list of attractions). Performances well attended by the Chinese usually provide food before, during or after a performance. The British appear to have become more adventurous with food over the years. Since the preparation of food is an art in itself, it seems appropriate to include it in this artistic community. This may attract visitors as well as revenue. Snacks and refreshments will be carefully selected for their quality, packaging and manageability, and new selections will be added from time to time. A food manufacturer may sponsor the creation and building of this installation.

### Artistic Conveniences (including for the disabled):

I once heard a survivor of the Holocaust say that after being denied sanitary facilities for a few days, the people in the concentration camp were reduced to the state of animals. The treatment of waste substances also determines whether animals are pets or cattle. I have come across some of the least self-respecting people during my visit in China (see Beijing-Ningbo-Putuoshan 3rd-10th Nov). Maybe communism has something to do with it, as one is not supposed to have a self to respect. The over-emphasis on selflessness may be the reason for the emergence of the other extreme - greed. But I also came across some of the worst loos while I was there (Beijing 3rd, 4th Nov; Putuoshan 10th Nov). I feel that something basic such as better sanitary facilities may improve self-respect, and is more constructive than huge campaigns of persecution and destruction. I believe that self-respect is beneficial for human kind and can bring about a better world. A number of artists in the West have designed conveniences which provide an artistic or simply a pleasant experience. This can also be achieved without huge cost. I had a pleasant experience in a fish farm once. The loo was a straw hut in the middle of a large fish pond, with a timber and bamboo bridge leading to it. Though primitive, it was not dirty or smelly. The position of the window enabled one to see the pond with landscape while being caressed by a gentle breeze. One could see the fish through the opening on the floor - however, a thin and careless person might well have ended up falling into the pond! A manufacturer of toilets may sponsor the creation and building of these artistic conveniences, which will include artistically designed toilets for the disabled (a step in the right direction of improving human rights).

### Artistic and Practical:

This will include art objects serving the purpose of seats, tables, dustbins... and designs for lanes, corridors, windows, doorways, paving... etc. They should reflect nature and enhance the view of IAYL (see double corridor, Blue Wave Pavilion, Suzhou 15th Nov). It seems such a pity that many historical buildings and Yuanlins which I have visited in China contain ugly and vulgar present-day things which do not match the place (see Beijing: Forbidden City 3rd Nov, Worker's Cultural Palace and the Summer Palace 4th Nov, Gongwangfu 6th Nov; Putuoshan 10th Nov; Suzhou: Wangshiyuan 14th Nov, Blue Wave Pavilion 15th Nov).

### The Emptiness:

Buddhism is an important element in Chinese and Japanese gardens, and temples are often present in large size gardens (see Beihai Park in Beijing 6th Nov). Some gardens were created under Buddhist influence (see Lion Grove in Suzhou 15th Nov). Buddhism has successfully married into Chinese culture and there is an increasing number of Buddhists in the UK. This will be an area of nothing - as emptiness is a key to Buddhist philosophy. This is not meant for the advance of theology, but rather, for the positive emptying of one's preconceptions, prejudices and unnecessary barriers, which will enhance community-making and an open mind. The location of this space within IAYL should be chosen with care so as to be particularly suitable for reflection and contemplation, even though according to Chinese Buddhist philosophy and Zen, one can be enlightened anywhere. For mortals who have not yet reached that level, the surrounding matters (I once read a Buddhist story about a man becoming a monk, as it was easier for him to achieve enlightenment in a monastery than at home, where his wife and many daughters kept wagging their tongues).

### **The Human Spirit:**

Art objects, sculptures, paintings, calligraphy, poetry... depicting myths and spirituality (see illustration: a painting inspired by myth; and artist Lou Jiaben, Beijing 8th Nov); or related to and enhancing the meaning and beauty of certain areas in IAYL (see Wangshiyuan in Suzhou 14th Nov).

### **The Senses:**

This will involve artistic creations within any area of IAYL which are particularly expressive to the disabled. Maxine Braham (choreographer/dancer, see biography) suggested tactile art objects for the blind.

### **Animals**

I have often heard of China's poor human rights record, but I think animals fare even worse there. In the UK, it appears that the degree of kindness towards and interest in animals sometimes exceeds those for people, especially for people who are considered to be different. A balance between these two extremes may create a sense of harmony in the world we live in. Beautiful images of animals were in harmony with all the places I visited in China (see illustrations: images of animals). Sculptures on this theme may convey the message of humans, animals and nature in harmony.

### **Semi-Panoramic View**

A permanent or temporary (changing according to the changes without and within) design for part of IAYL's border (save cost and provide room for the imagination) which creates optical illusions with the scenery both outside and inside (see bad example: Gongwangfu in Beijing 6th Nov; good example: Blue Wave Pavilion in Suzhou 15th Nov).

## **Human Activities in IAYL:**

### **For the General Public**

(Including young people and the disabled): to enjoy the ever-growing designs visually and the multi-faceted performances. When a sponsorship for a new design is secured, preliminary information will be publicized, so that people who are interested can submit ideas such as a suitable name and other opinions which will be taken into consideration. Selected poetry and other work inspired by IAYL from the general public will be on display (see previous section under "The Human Spirit") or included in IAYL's own publications (see under "Flowers of Tradition"). This is also a place where people can come to eat, rest, contemplate, reflect, relax and read. Other activities will include societies, classes, workshops, lectures, discussions connected with poetry, painting, music, dance, drama, chess, bonsai, social issues, artistic creation using audio-visual technology... and private lettings for social functions.

### **The Professionals:**

Apart from creations and performances put on by IAYL which involve invited professional artists, other artists who are interested in any of the areas can hire space in the Yuanlin for their artistic ventures.

### **The Celebrations:**

Special events will be organized for the launching of each new installation or art object, as well as for British and Chinese festivals such as Christmas and New Year (Dec-Jan), Chinese New Year (Feb), Easter (April), Dragon Boat Festival (June), Moon Festival (Sep).

### **The Participants:**

Though Yuanlin is originally a form of Chinese landscape gardening and I am ethnic Chinese, IAYL is not meant to be a pseudo-community or "ethnic". I have often wondered about the term "Chinese community" - it seems to apply to a certain type of Chinese, and is exclusive. As Inter Artes is sometimes misunderstood as "ethnic", in the past seven years, I have been repeatedly introduced to people who wave the Chinese art or community banners. Many lack talent, training and knowledge in the arts, and their unprofessional behaviour has made the encounter a nightmare. Had they stepped out from the "ethnic"

niche their boasting, name dropping and unprofessional behaviour would have led them nowhere on the "British" or mainstream art scenes. Until more people of the majority have a substantial knowledge of other cultures, well-intentioned "ethnic" policies at best are charity, affected politeness, a pretence of friendliness between people by the denial of any facts that may be considered negative, or a device to confine the minorities to minority issues. At worst it is laziness, and a subtle form of discrimination; so subtle that even those who devised the policies are not aware of it. The result is further dividing people by emphasising certain differences, instead of the acceptance of differences, individuality and growth (see my thoughts during my flight to Beijing, 3rd Nov). My diary in China demonstrates that culture is multi-faceted, there is no short-cut, but there can be an interesting journey for people of any race. In the past, many Inter Artes' projects on Chinese themes have been enriched by the participation of British artists. Many have expressed finding the experience rewarding. There is an increasing number of British people who are not afraid to experience crossing cultures, realising that the experience does not make them un-British. Our society will benefit if people of the majority and the minorities are more willing to extend themselves. The participants in IAYL should simply be people who have the ability to do the work and those who will benefit from the experience.

Management:

The host organisation with manpower and facilities is the management and employs "The Nucleus of IAYL":

Artistic Director (myself), Administrator (shared by one British and one Chinese, for the purpose of bilingual communication), and if funding allows, a secretary and a librarian.

Possible income for the host organization:

Fees: admission, membership, participation in activities mentioned under "For the General Public"

Services such as providing copies for those who use "Flowers of Tradition"

Lettings

Sponsorship and donations.

Sales: food, postcards, souvenirs, tickets and programmes for performances, publications...



## ***EPILOGUE***

Though I can now laugh about some of my experiences during my visit to China (2nd - 21st November), they were not very funny at the time. It was also discouraging to see the effects of ideology and theology (communism and Buddhism). It appears that what is devised to be good can also bring about the complete opposite. I founded Inter Artes because of a vision, in the hope of gently erasing some unnecessary boundaries between people by means of cross-cultural and combined arts. I promised myself to give Inter Artes seven years of my time. This period is nearly up. There have been accomplishments and disappointments. Most artists who took part in Inter Artes projects enjoyed the experience, but it has also become clear to me that some people cannot cross the cultural and artistic boundaries.

However, I understand the complex task cannot be achieved instantly, and I can use what I have learnt and built up in the past seven years to get closer to my goal. I believe that I have the talent, knowledge, expertise and determination required to succeed, and I also have the ability to attract and inspire many good artists working on a project. I have a track record of accomplished large scale cross-cultural and combined-arts projects. But I have also realized that without sufficient funding, projects have been accomplished at the expense of my own creative work, my income, my personal life and my health; while disappointments have occurred as a result of lack of funding to complete all the work required to an achievable quality.

The support from funding bodies, my experience in China, and the interaction with many fellow artists, have enabled me to see clearly "Inter Artes Yuanlin". With sufficient support from a host organization and other funding bodies, I am willing to give this vision another seven years of my time. After seven years, whether or not I stay or move on to something else, there will be a sufficient number of worthy artistic creations and activities for the host organisation as well as for the general public. IAYL's functional purposes may make it appreciated by more people, just as the novel "The Dream of the Red Chamber" has enjoyed a wider readership than in its original version "The Story of the Stone", but those who understand what "Inter Artes Yuanlin" is really all about, will appreciate and use this space on another level, and this will be the continuation and further growth of the vision of Inter Artes. Life has an element of unpredictability, and this is my own perception of Live Art.

***Ho Wai-On***



## SUGGESTIONS MADE BY MAXINE BRAHAM

A small group / audience given a guided tour through the garden - taken to specific events and also catching glimpses of dance / tableaux, much as an urn is placed to complete a vista in a garden design.

A dance which is inspired by and ends in a flower arrangement. The moves are functional and beautiful, and are dictated by the end construction and the dance aesthetic. Flower stems, branches etc are taken as source material for dance and used as 'props'.

A dance based on the Chinese window. Using their limbs criss-crossing and braced within a stable frame, the pattern of the window could change like a kaleidoscope. The frame would be installed so a beautiful view of the garden was seen through the 'living' window.

A summer house with rooms or corners focused solely on each of the senses - touch, smell, sight, sound, taste. As the whole garden is intended to heighten the senses, the summer house could intensify and isolate these. On re-entering the garden the senses would be 'primed'.

A shift of perception - the tour guide or a member of the audience (but really a dancer) steps through an arch or doorway and, bathed in light, does a mini performance and disappears afterwards - perhaps this is the end of the tour? Or a surprise event once the tour's formality has been established.

Seeing the same thing from many angles - like a walk giving many vistas of a house / tree. A dance repeated, say, four times, each time at a different angle which reveals new aspects and details not previously visible.

A doorway between traditions. A frame is set up in the garden: two dancers of different styles (eg traditional Chinese and contemporary dance) edge, process, dance towards each other through and around the frame. The dance culminates in a harmonious duet.

Real and not real. Fake flowers in amongst real ones; pictures of the garden in frames hung upon trees and also empty frames through which to view the garden.

An unfolding experience. A story silk with dancers as human bobbins - a painted silk narrates a story in pictures with live performances in front plus a narrator / musician?

I would like to explore some relevant parallels in Chinese / British tradition.

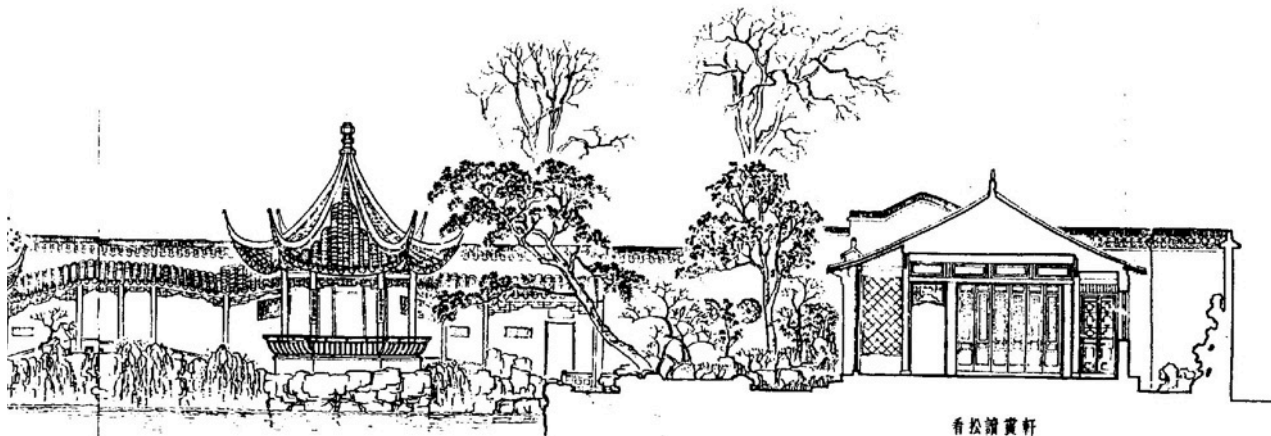
a) Many plants in suburban UK gardens are of exotic Chinese origin. Perhaps the story / details of their discovery could be used?

b) The Elizabethan Knot Garden and Chinese windows - similarities of form and symbolism?

c) Use of words to influence the perception of things seen - the philosophical verses on trees in the Chinese garden; a European parallel was the way Magritte labelled paintings of hats as shoes, or declared "ceci n'est pas une pipe" in a painting of a pipe.

Perhaps elements of a), b) and c) above could be used in the 'doorway between traditions' dance duet.

Wangshi yuan



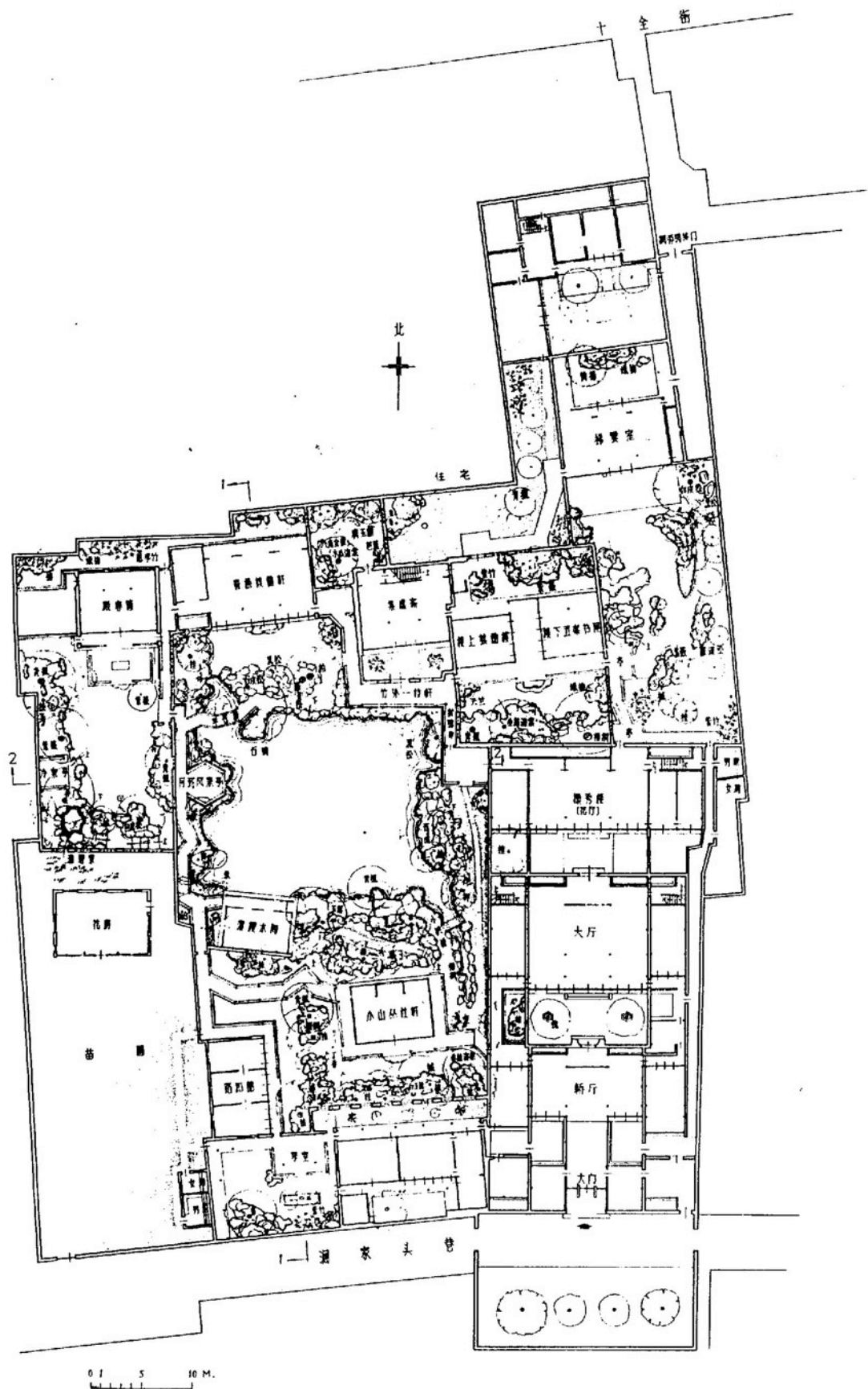
月到風來亭

看松讀黃軒



五-5 中部鸟瞰图

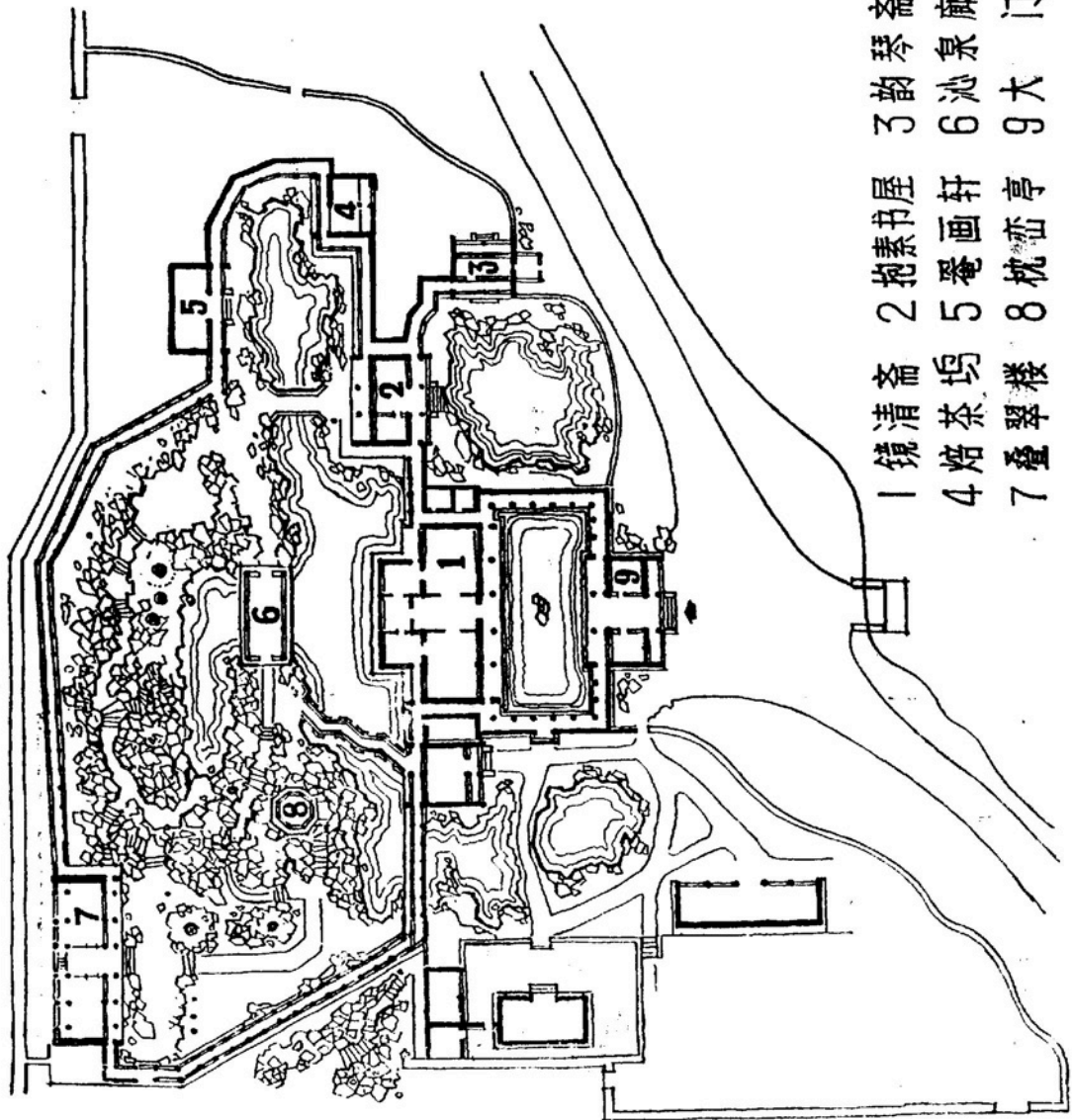
# The Plan of Wangshiyuan



五-2 总平面图

The Plan of Jingxinzhai - the mini-garden within Beijing's Beihai Park

# 北海静心斋平面图



- |   |     |   |      |   |    |
|---|-----|---|------|---|----|
| 1 | 镜清斋 | 2 | 抱素书屋 | 3 | 韵琴 |
| 4 | 焙茶坞 | 5 | 画轩   | 6 | 沁泉 |
| 7 | 叠翠楼 | 8 | 枕峦亭  | 9 | 大门 |





Traditional & contemporary  
works  
→  
Apture (modern trad.) in situ.



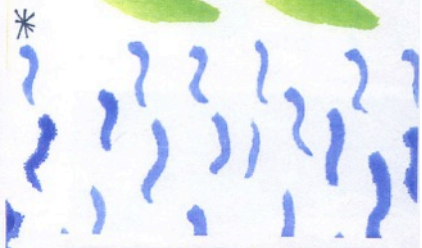
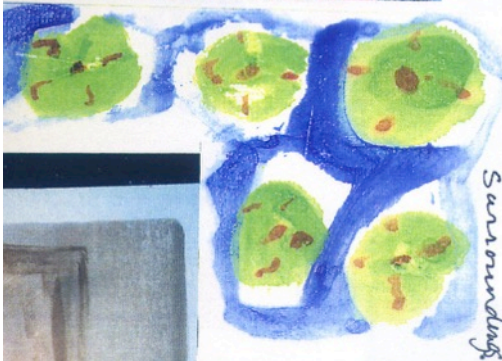
uses from Academy grounds



hanging  
sculpture  
→



Contemporary paintings along  
side slide projections, video,  
sculpture and natural  
surroundings



Mini-garden by Neil MacCormac



*of modern & traditional Anglo-Chinese works.*



*Changing of scale & perspective.*



遼寧省 遼寧省 遼寧省



*Mini-garden for Neil McCom...*



A possible example of "The Stones" by Ido Wai-On

