



Design Education in China from the Perspective of Design

—Summary of China Environmental Design Annual Education Conference

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The member of London Olympic Design Team, the Designing Directors of AECOM, Mr. Blackwell introduced the design of London Olympic venues and facilities. And then, he said, London Olympics has ended, yet our work has just begun. The Environmental design in Education design, that is, the development of interior design, which is our research has just started.

Mr. Blackwell mentioned the bridges of London Olympic Stadium in his report. The bridges include narrow and long permanent bridges and broad temporary bridges. The temporary bridges were removed after the Olympic Games, and the permanent bridges worked as functional bridges which emerged with the surrounding plants and environment serve better for the surrounding communities and residents. In 2008 Beijing Olympic Games, Beijing focus on taking advantage of the international stage to advocate Beijing to the world. However, during the Olympic Games in London, London paid greater attention to bring more opportunities, work and skills to communities and aimed at how to bring about long term and positive impact on communities. This provides the education of environmental design an extraordinary and very concrete revelation on how should we gradually shift from idea

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oriented design education to satisfy others' needs oriented design. This is what we have just started to do.

What is others' needs oriented design? The coastal area of China turns out to be extremely hot during summer, and the heat seems hot enough to melt people. Dean of Guangzhou Art College joked that in Guangzhou, people challenge the extreme every time crossing the street waiting for red lights during the eight burning months in Guangzhou. People in Guangzhou are used to lean on the lamp posts to get some shade while waiting for red lights. That's why Guangzhou municipal government tries hard to plant two trees in the middle of or along both sides of zebra crossing for people to take shelter against the burning sun. The afforestation in Guangzhou should be vertical afforestation, that is to say, to plant trees to provide shade. Laying turf is meaningless for Guangzhou. The situation in North Europe is another story. There, if the sun is out, people can have a holiday because for half a year there is no sunlight. People need sunlight. In North Europe, vast green grass satisfies people's needs.

Design should serve for people who use the facilities. When we are teaching design education, should we get rid of the omnipotent design ideas restricted in text books and focus our eyes on the environment that we live in and thinking about how to improve the environment via design and then the next task is to teach students how to think and what to think.

Then let's look at Shanghai Expo that we directly or indirectly get involved in. I believe teachers and students must have taken thousands of tens of thousands pictures at the site for future study. Have we thought about what we really need to think about like Mr. Blackwell said. For instance, the France Pavilion in Expo shown in Picture one. Many people remembered its outlook and some were amazed at the seven national art treasures shown in it. From the perspective of design, besides the outside net appearance of the construction and the national treasure, we should notice the unique design of the transportation and evacuation of the crowd. If one goes into the France Pavilion, one will be transported to the fourth floor by escalator. In other words, inside the France Pavilion, no matter how old you are, no matter you are male or female, all the people are sent to the top floor by escalator at the same speed. Upon reaching the top floor, passed the theme wall of the sensible city and arrived at the five hundred slope exhibition wall. The design take good advantage of the gravity of human weight and the theory of inertia balance allows people to go ahead

without stopping and finally walk out of the France Pavilion. The success of the France Pavilion lies in the fact that it directs throng gathering, throng dissolving and evacuation.



France Pavilion in Shanghai Expo, 2010

Let's take another look at the Building of Holland. Many people think it's not a good design since it doesn't look like an exhibition building. There is a road designed like a spiral track. All the exhibition units are hanging over the track. But this building is the only one that doesn't need air conditioning in 260 buildings in Shanghai World Expo; it is the only building that doesn't need guard to take care of the items on display, and this is the only building shows the spirit of the Shanghai World Expo--- Better city, better life. The city here in Holland building is Shanghai World Expo and Shanghai itself, the whole building represents the streets of the city. Why it air conditioning is unnecessary? Because the stairs are in the open air. Why it doesn't need guard? Because every item was in individual rooms, we could only see the exhibit from outside of the room. This two buildings are not just designed for this big show. It echoes the motif of the Expo in certain environment, this is what we should learn from it.



France Pavilion in Shanghai Expo, 2010

Many schools in China have environmental design major, but with different background. Some has over hundred years history with design specialty, it is a new major in some schools. The staff could be just few young lecturers and students just graduated from school. Some has technology background, some with art background. Another case is the academic leader majored in Chinese painting, just because he is a professor, who is qualified to lead a major to pass the education evaluation. So, we can't expect all the schools to move forward with the same speed in the same way. But it doesn't matter what kind of background the school has, we should emphasize or reemphasize the verbal expression in written form in the four years of design education. This verbal expression in written form we are discussing here is not just rough draft, more specific, we use verbal expression to cover few aspect about the foundation of design education. First, one dimensional foundation design. What is one dimensional foundation design? It's writing skill, starts from the key words. Let's take France Pavilion in Shanghai World Expo for example, stream of people, in and out. Prevention of crowdedness and evacuation are the key words. And make sentences with these key words, to express design ideology clearly. Second, two dimensional design. On the platform of one dimension foundation, we use pictures from our digital camera to

explain the words and sentences. Third, three dimensional design. Similar with building model, put your design thinking into three dimensional space and see how it works in it. Focus on these three key points, schools with different backgrounds are able to bring out diversified potentials and characteristics.

Concerning the graduation design project, from the perspective of design education, we rarely define a role of designer (our students) in final project. Who are they in this project? Project director? Design director? Investor? Engineer? Or what? As an educator, we rarely give our students a role in this whole project from the beginning of design., This is the problem we need to solve. In addition, about the theme/subject of the final graduation project, we could probably make a long term plan, let's say five years plan, to be the goal for every school to develop. For example, the relationship between hard ground and grassbelts, and the relationship between function and space. And how to complete this plan by improving and completing many small projects. This is very important for the enrichment of academic development.