

Garden Of Flowing Fragrance 香林園 A Case Study

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Overview



Figure 1 Love for Lotus Pavilion in Garden of Fragrance

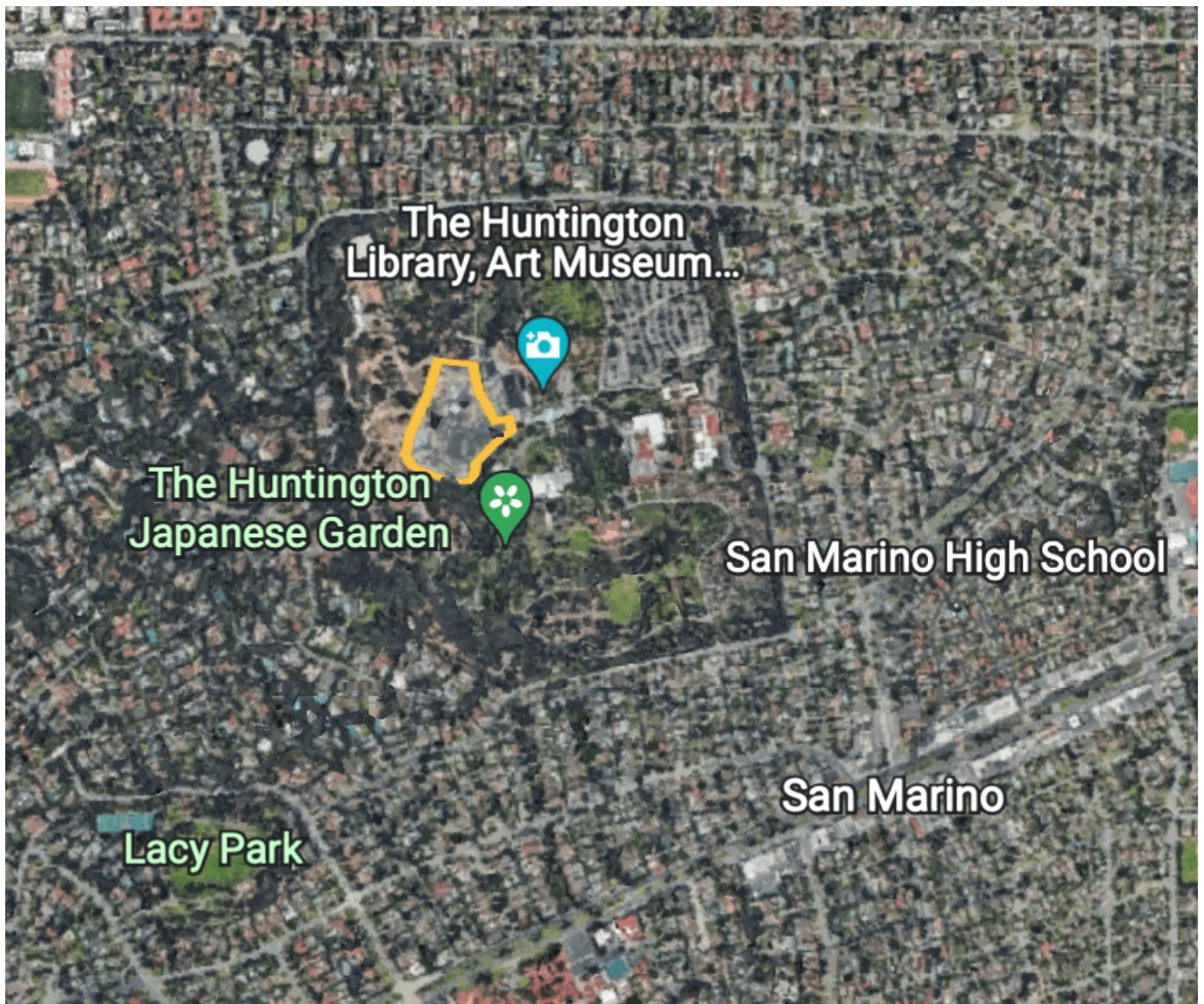
The Garden of Flowing Fragrance, or Liu Fang Yuan (流芳园), was designed by Chen Jin, a Chinese landscape artist and architect. He came up with the idea of this garden in collaboration with Jim Folsom in 1999; the development of the garden was initiated when a generous donation of \$10 million was made to The Huntington by Peter Paanakker, a Los Angeles businessman. The design phase of the garden started in 2000 and went on till 2003. In 2008, the garden was completed and opened to the public. This garden is a great example of classical Chinese architecture; the plants in this garden are native to China, giving the whole garden a mystical oriental outlook. Another highlight of this garden is that it pays homage to different Chinese literary and artistic works by referencing them in architecture (Huntington 2020).

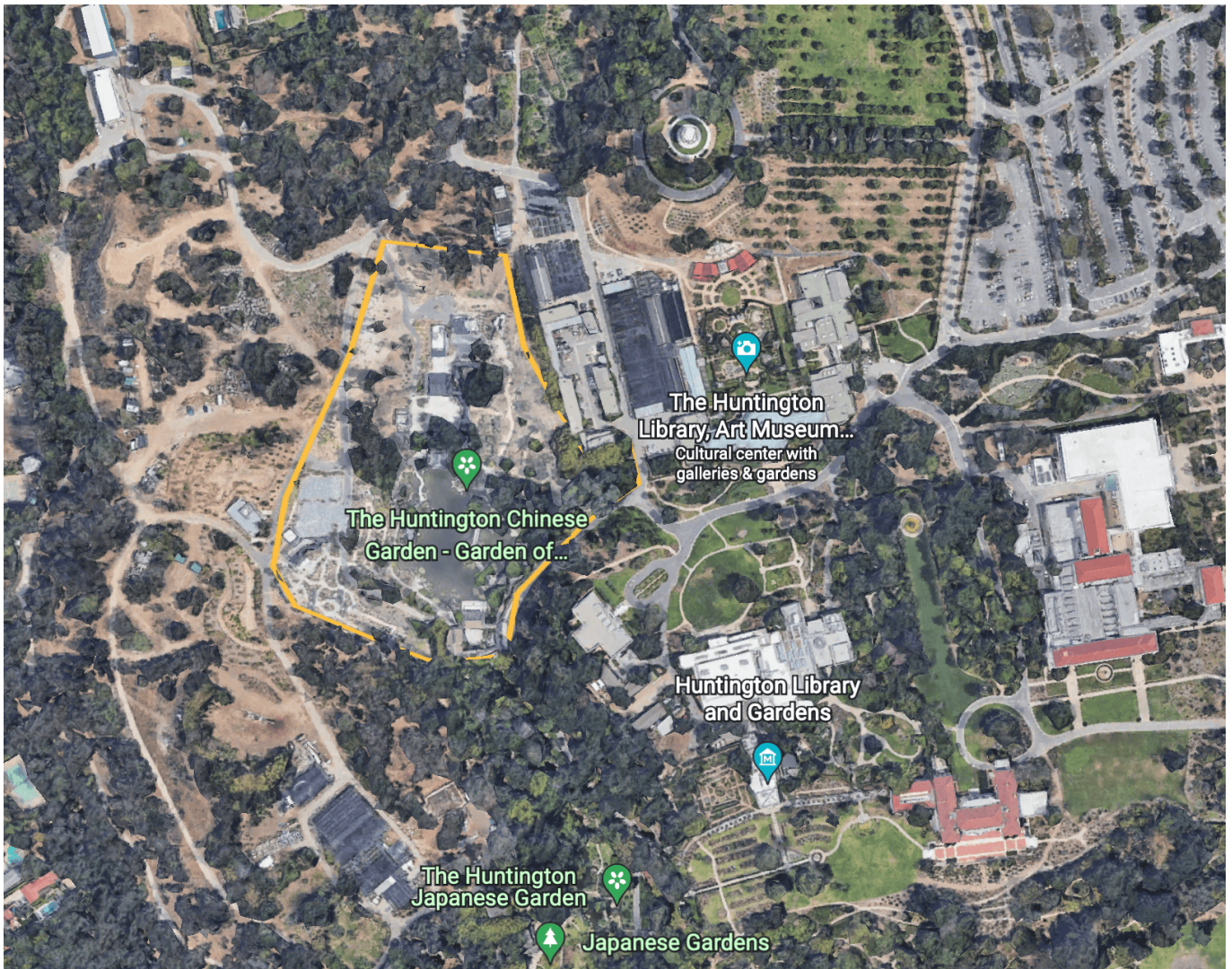
The main focus of Chen Jin was to produce an innovative design that was not a copy of Chinese Gardens all over China, so it took him almost four years to complete the design of the garden. With the 3.5-acre land at the west section of Huntington Library and Botanical Garden, this garden is one of the finest examples of classical Chinese gardens. It is also the biggest garden outside of China, and it depicts Chinese culture. The garden is filled with Chinese architecture, literature, art, culture, and botany, which educates visitors about China's beauty.

When the garden was first opened to the public in 2008, it had six pavilions, a one-acre lake, and three bridges, all designed individually to fit the classical Chinese aesthetic (June Li 2015). Two pavilions and a rock grotto were added in 2014; the master plan to expand the full fifteen-acre garden began in August 2018, was finally finished, and opened to the public on Oct. 6th, 2020. In total, \$55 million was spent to complete this garden, and it took almost three decades to bring this garden to completion.

Context

Huntington Library was built on the ancestral lands of the Gabrielino-Tongva and Kizh Nation peoples, who continue to call this region home. The Garden of Flowing Fragrance, the fifteen-acre land, was designed to be located on the 207-acre grounds of Huntington, which was largely undeveloped and amassed woodlands framing the property. It was planned that 12 acres would be allocated to this Chinese garden, and it would include some of the traditional elements of Chinese gardens found in Suzhou. These elements included pavilions, lakes, bridges, teahouses, and numerous poetic references. It was also planned that the existing features of the landscape would be incorporated into the garden along with native Chinese plants. Huntington Library and Botanical Garden are located in San Marino, California. It is defined by Orlando Road to the north, South Canyon Drive to the west, Euston Road to the south, and Oxford Road to the East. Surrounding neighbourhoods were developed single-family homes (Waterman 2017).





Google Earth Aerial View

Design Development

The garden follows the design principle of Scholars of Suzhou of the 16th and 17th centuries from the Ming Dynasty. The design also takes into consideration the local nature by incorporating it into the design. In the area where the Garden was being developed, rainwater was collected in a natural basin. This feature was incorporated into the Lake of Reflected Fragrance, which was being added to the garden. The oak trees that are native to California were also incorporated into the design, and to protect their roots, the ground level of the Court of Assembled Worthies was raised. The pavilions and pathways were designed in a way that made it feel like an ancient Chinese scroll was being unravelled, and new views were revealed as the visitors walked through the garden.

The garden draws on the beauty of the plants native to China, which is why these plants are also part of the design. These plants are also inspired by the Suzhou gardens as these provide cultural, artistic,

and literary significance to the overall design of the garden. Some of these flora hold seasonal significance; spring is represented by peach blossoms, and autumn is represented by chrysanthemums. Human qualities are also represented through plants. For example, the lotus represents purity, and the orchid signifies humility. Skilled artisans were hired from China to create carvings from pine, bamboo, and plum blossoms. In the Pavilion of the Three Friends, the ceiling is adorned with these carvings. These three plants represent the cold winter and are considered the three friends; hence, the name “Pavilion of the Three Friends” epitomizes the hardships of cold weather and perseverance in this weather. This is because the bamboo is strong and does not break easily, pine remains evergreen regardless of the weather, and the plum tree only flowers in winter. This kind of attention to detail makes the Garden of Fragrance exquisite.



Figure 2 Pavilion of Three Friends

Every element of the garden is part of the design, and even the rocks are essential to the design layout. The rocks present in the Garden of Fragrance were sourced from Lake Tai, which is located near Suzhou. These are limestones that have been shaped by the flowing water of the lake, giving it a very naturalistic feel. These limestones are prized specimens known for their holes and strange shape. Near Patching Up the Sky, which is a teahouse, is one of the most significant limestone towers over the landscape.



Chinese calligraphy is present all around the garden; this feature was also inspired by the classical Chinese gardens found in Suzhou. Every pavilion has its name at the entrance, written in Chinese. Poetic couplets have also been added to some of the pavilions. Artists from China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, the United Kingdom, and the United States were hired to create these calligraphic inscriptions for the pavilions. More than thirty artists were assigned to this task. The poetic couplets were taken from classical Chinese literature.

Figure 3 Limestone near Patching Up the Sky Teahouse



Figure 4 Calligraphy at the Entrance of the Pavilion

Garden of Fragrance was a result of years of international collaboration. The master plan for the garden was designed in the early 2000s by designers who lived in Suzhou. Architects from the United States oversaw the design development to ensure that the design was seismically sound and accessible to all. The material that was used for the garden's outlook was sourced from China, and it included roofing tile, wood beams, paving pebbles, and granite terraces. The installation of these materials was carried out by Suzhou artisans. The steel frameworks and concrete foundations were the work of the construction workers in America (LEVINE 2007).

This collaboration between the Offenhauser Architects and Suzhou Institute of Landscape resulted in an immaculate design. This work is a combination of aesthetics and knowledge as the ancient Chinese techniques are skillfully replicated and incorporated with Chinese literature and culture. The traditional elements were masterfully incorporated into Huntington's existing landscape without destroying it. The reason that this garden is seen as a masterful piece of architecture is that not only was it designed and implemented skillfully, but there was also a language barrier between the two teams working on this project. Another challenge that they had to overcome was to ensure that the architecture of the garden met all the construction codes so that they would be able to finish it on time.

Maintenance Of Garden Of Flowing Fragrance

To maintain the garden, different programs are offered, like music recitals every Wednesday and performances of opera by Chinese troupes that recreate classical pieces of theatre. The history of East Asian gardens is covered by lectures, and exhibitions are conducted to showcase Chinese art and literature. The money raised through these efforts is used to maintain the garden (Lennon 2013).

Conclusion

The Garden of Flowing Fragrance is a beautiful example of a 16th-century Suzhou garden in China. It is the biggest classical Chinese garden outside of China. The attention to detail and inspiration from ancient Chinese culture make the garden a mystical landscape that stimulates the minds of the visitors. It invokes a meditative state that allows the viewer to take in the beauty of this garden. It is a remarkable homage to classical Chinese architecture and landscape.

List Of Plants In Garden Of Flowing Fragrance

- Bamboo
- Peking Cotoneaster
- Kurile Cherry
- Maidenhair Tree
- Manchurian Golden-bells
- Fragrant Plantain Lily
- Sacred Lotus
- Primrose Jasmine
- Chinese Matrimony Vine
- Manchurian Walnut
- Dawn Redwood
- Tree Peony
- Fragrant Olive
- Buddhist Pine
- Thunberg Spirea
- Pear Tree
- Thuja
- Plum Tree
- Pine Tree
- Chrysanthemums
- Orchids
- Azalea
- Gentian
- Sweet Osmanthus
- Scotch Pine Tree (Han 2018)

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