

# 权力、文化与审美： 当代城市景观中的三重“幻象”

## AUTHORITY, CULTURE, AND AESTHETICS: THE TRIPLE PHANTASMS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN LANDSCAPES



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### 摘要

文章批判了当下城市景观中存在的权力、文化与审美的三重“幻象”，指出景观自身应当寻求作为人之本真生命的归属，而非任何外在的符号所附加的价值。

### 关键词

城市景观；幻象；权威；文化；审美

### ABSTRACT

This article critiques the triple phantasms of authority, culture, and aesthetics in contemporary urban landscapes, and argues that landscape should return to its true value as a spiritual home of human life, rather than being a simulacra of extrinsic symbols.

### KEY WORDS

Urban Landscape; Simulacra; Authority; Culture; Aesthetics

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现代高速运转的工业社会，人口大量涌入、物欲迅速蔓延、交通和居住需求激增，这些都迫使城市以及在城市中生活的人必须在“环境”和“发展”中作出选择。显然，商业的逻辑让城市早已沉醉在发展的迷梦中，环境往往只是一件奢侈品。加斯东·巴士拉在《空间诗学》中不客气地指出，“巴黎没有家宅”<sup>[1]</sup>。让·鲍德里亚则更加尖锐地指出，以纽约为代表的现代城市是“一个移动的沙漠”<sup>[2]</sup>。在商业利益的驱动下，一切都以一种被传媒模拟的幻象呈现为真实，而每个人的生命就在不自觉中虚耗在这无边际的拟象（Simulacra）中<sup>[3]</sup>。

还好，人尚未完全成为城市现代性的奴仆。那依然存留的对美好环境的钟爱——其本质上是对生命的钟爱——是对自身成为城市机器零件的一种抵抗。园林景观给了密闭压抑的城市中的人一种成为“人”的契机，让人们在城市中依然能够寻找到那不被异化的属于自我生命的场所。这一场所绝不是“休闲”、额外的、可有可无的恩惠，它也许在很大程度上可以减缓现代性带来的“城市之病”，而让人可以在其中从“工具”回归到“人”的属性当中。巴士拉曾经描述过一个“家宅”的意象，那里是对“宇宙的最初依恋”，是对自我的安稳保护，是人之为人的场所<sup>[1]</sup>。恐怕，并不是那些有着

“产权证”的高层住宅中的“盒子”，而是景观提供给人一种家的归属感。这是一个可以为冷漠的现代城市人提供一种场所依恋（Topophilia）的地方，是可以当作我们生命一部分的地方<sup>[4]</sup>。

当代的中国正处于一个精神上“无家”的尴尬境地。她在古代史中极度辉煌，近代却急速衰落而被他者迅速占领，原有的“自我”在一百年的批判和革命中几乎消失殆尽，而新的被构建的自我又仿佛是对那强大他者的拙劣模仿。尽管没有被完全殖民，但这种精神上的后殖民现象非常的鲜明。当代重新崛起的中国最重要的任务之一就是重新建立那曾经令人艳羡的身份，寻找到自我精神的新的家园。然而，百年来造成的对传统和西方认识的双重匮乏，令这一家的寻找颇为艰难，甚至，这种急切的心理带来的可能是对他者幻象的追逐和对生命真实的漠视。这并非是仅停留在哲学家脑海中的问题，当代城市景观中所表现的三重“幻象”，已经把这种紧张和漠然清晰地呈现在眼前。

### 权力的追慕

景观，这一看上去颇具普遍性的自然审美的结果，从整个人类的角度来看却并不是一开始就存在的。对自然景观的需求是17

世纪以来人类逐渐从精神桎梏中走出并开始追求自由的一面镜子。正如汉娜·阿伦特指出的，传统的公共性艺术，特别是建筑艺术的衰落，昭示着传统权力结构和社会公共性之间关系的解体<sup>[5]</sup>。而与此同时，景观这种起源于诗歌和绘画的审美形式出现在社会公共领域，正预示着个人精神自由展开时代的来临。遗憾的是，今天的城市景观依然存在着一种“前现代”的特点，即通过空间的放大以及全景视角来凸显主体在政治和经济上的地位。这种从个人到政府对彰显自我优越身份的极度焦虑，让城市景观越来越退入了17世纪的权力模式。宽旷的广场、巍峨的博物馆、华丽的剧院，一切都让城市的核心地带显得如此“集中”。然而，广场没有驻足交谈之处，博物馆无法亲近展品，剧院外景的空阔让人再无想象的空间……此处的“人”是被无限压制的，空间、历史和艺术以一种全然冷漠的表情告诉人们：膜拜我吧，我是你的主人。

还有一些隐性的权力模式也在控制着景观。譬如，把“国家级”、“5A”、“一级”当作景观最美丽的装饰，仿佛这是对景观品质的最好证明。这样的“评价”或许对于管理者和投资者有一定的参考价值，但对于那些想要追求一种活泼泼的生命状态的人而言——如果这是景观的作者和读者都更喜

欢的状态的话——这些标签并不会成为其建造或到访的原因。这就像一位真正有品位的观众（在古代这便是文人）不会由于一个艺术家声称自己是“国家画院专职画家”而赞叹他的艺术水准。真正的景观和真正的艺术一样，都具有一个亲近生命本真的品质；园中之风月，惟有在自由中展开。

### 文化的外衣

当下似乎所有的景观都颇钟情于“文化之名”。一个模仿苗寨的度假村，被称为“少数民族文化景观”；而那拼凑的不知风格的欧式建筑，则美其名曰“意大利异域文化风情村”。文学作品被利用得更加惨不忍睹。经考证李白去过某地、留下诗篇，此地马上就会树立起“文学景观”的大旗，标榜自己为人文胜地。最极端的现象则是丽江——这个满足人们对“异域”和“民族”，“传统”与“现代”的全部想象的世外桃源，已然成为这些被文化符号所包装的产物。事实上，无论是少数民族文化景观、意大利文化风情街，还是丽江，在景观的营造者眼中没有丝毫区别，它们统统被异化为一个“拟象”。人们已经忘记欧洲的小镇不是单凭图纸就能建成今日的面貌，李白也不是因为去过庐山就成为了一代诗仙。

一个非常值得注意的问题是，文化并不等于“历史”。之所以把这一历史加上引号，是因为许多人把考古学意义上拼接的物品/文字史当作唯一的历史形态。之后，这种知识的碎片又因商业利益的需求被包装成一个具有品牌价值的商品符号。对于研究对象相对物质化又亲近商业的景观领域而言尤为如此。灰瓦白墙和黄瓦红墙常常被并置统称为“民族文化”，进而根据个人喜好胡乱地添加到“新中式”的建筑中，但这其实是中国文化中两个截然不同的传统，现在它们却被无知地如橡皮泥般“捏”在一起。

真实的历史本身是“人文化成”的，没有人文，就没有历史。历史不是一些偶然留存下来的文物碎片，而是在人的认同中被传承的意义。只有彻底理解这其中的缘由，传统才真正成为一个传统。或者说，传统从来都不是“拿来”的，而是从自身长出来的。没有这个生长的过程，一个景观也只是披着一件虚华的文化外衣的空壳。当这一外衣同其他一切流行元素一样逐渐被厌弃时，景观本身也就不会存有任何价值。在当代，这一厌弃的速度比人们想象得更快。一些附庸的“风雅”最终难以免于被冠以“俗”的恶名，因为其流行起来的原委正是俗之本意：对自我身份的外在炫耀。在这一目的下被利用的文化在本质上依然是权力和身份的附属品。

### 美学的幻象

20世纪，在现代商业与媒体的影响下，审美在人类生活中被覆盖了一种新的“伪装”。遍及世界的所谓“城市美化运动”，恰是这种意图的标志性产品。城市被一种意念中的美感所塑造，而这塑造所需要的道具往往只是一层虚浮的外衣。这一“化妆”很容易让人想起时下流行的美容业和整容业，其带来的社会效果显而易见：伴随着所谓“颜值”的提高，容颜之间的差异性显著降低，所谓美人越来越呈现出一种“平均”的面貌，而这个美的标准就是时下流行的某个明星的面孔“模具”。“颜值”一词的滥用也说明了这一社会化审美所映照的苍白心灵——没有情感、没有思想、没有灵魂，而只有联动“眼球”的神经。这种平均美造成的一个结果是，在无数表演者趋之若鹜、前仆后继地赶赴诊所的同时，观众面对这些面孔，除了第一反应“颜值不错”之后就再也难以留下更多的印象。但是，人们并没有停下脚步反思，反而以更快的速度去制造这一“刹那的好感”。“拟象”已经替代了世界的真实，生活完全被裹挟，在这个虚幻世界中的人类早已乐不思蜀。

如果受过教育的设计师也具有类似的想法，那将是一件相当可悲的事情。而事实

证明，这种想法确已在不少人那里根深蒂固。这并不是个别的教育水平的问题，而可能是整个景观领域所面临的问题。关于标准“颜值”的故事已经真实地发生在我们的城市、乡村以及一切景观建设中。这并非中国或是发展中国家的特色。在大洋彼岸，资本主义的魁首——美国的城市发展已经成为现代式景观的一个典型。鳞次栉比的摩天大楼、闪耀着霓虹的夜晚、高度模式化的游乐场以及街头随处可见的广告和大荧幕构成一个典型的美国城市意象，这也是大部分的美国城市的意象。看到一个城市的照片，人们根本无法判断这是“哪一座城市”，而这种景观，也正是这一城市建设的初衷——一个呈现在效果图上的美丽幻像。生活的一切批判形式和美学形式消失了，文化在此地微不足道。<sup>[2]</sup>

中国正在步其后尘。我们沿着本作为前车之鉴的危险车辙碾出了一个更为拙劣的摹仿痕迹。或许可以将之称为“拟象的拟象”：纽约、华盛顿、洛杉矶，这些城市成为中国城市化整形中的那张“标准之面”。在毫无自觉的情况下，我们把属于自己生命本性的特点彻底损毁，整出了与自己身份极为不符的另一幅“美”的面孔。当这个面孔作为所谓的“城市名片”时，它带来的并非是认同感的增强，恰恰相反，标签化的名片

意味着自我的消亡。我们用摩天大楼、霓虹灯、摩天轮来证明自我，将其作为城市身份标签的同时，城市的精神已完全被这种虚幻的外表取代。

尤其值得注意的是“城镇化”进程中发展出的新农村。这些地方与城市在经济和教育水平上的巨大落差，让人们把自己原本的文化也归入了自卑的原因中。那GDP的数字、光鲜的现代生活成为了新的文化，而那些传统的、不合时宜的文化被以“落后”之名厌弃。而当村民们收入提高，开始为自己营建“新居”时，他们对景观的选择颇有代表性：最发达的东南沿海地区，其以欧式洋派建筑为主，巴洛克风格尤其受青睐；中东部的地区则比较喜欢二三线各色小楼，颇似20世纪90年代二三线城市的楼房。这一切的面貌，并不是科技落后和经济匮乏的结果，而恰恰是二者发展之后的现象。人们对“发达”的趋之若鹜，其结果是景观的贫乏。显然，经济的发展并没有带来真正意义上的好的景观。那么，我们不禁问：到底什么被遗失了？

答案或许是令人惊惧的：“人”被遗失了，与人一同遗失的，还有生活本身。生活已经完全被异化为一系列令人动心的符号，这些符号以权力之名、以文化之名、以美学之名侵蚀着人类最后一点心灵的领地。如果

连景观的作者和评论者都不警醒，还依旧沉睡在“效果图”的美梦当中，那么，不久的将来，这虚幻的效果图很快便会成为生活的全部，塑胶的面孔会成为每个人美的标准。或许我们不应该再谈“景观美学”，以及基于这种“效果图”取向的“审美评价”。景观可以评论（而非评价），这一评论应基于生活世界自身展开“描述”。巴士拉说，“要找到关于世界的哲学本质，要从它的形容词开始。”<sup>[1]</sup>这正是美学的精髓，也是人文景观的精髓。可惜，它完全被误解为一种已被庸俗化的“美”，以及在此基础上延伸的一切定语，诸如“国家一级”、“中国文化”以及“现代之都”。在这种以幻象包装的美的外衣下，空洞和苍白的灵魂无法带给人类真正的幸福生活。理解人文景观美学的探索之前，首先应注意的不是要寻求什么，而是要慎用什么。这三重“幻象”正是在面对真实景观时首先应当被慎用的，这些看起来属于自我的符号，在本质上都是他者塑造的美丽面具。以这种面具作为自我的伪装，最后的结果可能是自我的消亡。作为心灵栖所的景观，不是由任何“他者”决定的地方；只有内心的认同，才让一个场所成为了家。LAF

# AUTHORITY, CULTURE, AND AESTHETICS: THE TRIPLE PHANTASMS OF CONTEMPORARY URBAN LANDSCAPES

In modern rapidly developing industrial societies, characterized by increased population, transportation, and housing consumption and demand, cities, as well as the citizens, are forced to choose between environment and development. Intoxicated by the prospect of commercial growth, the environment often becomes an unnecessary luxury. In the book *La poétique de l'espace*, French philosopher Gaston Bachelard argued that “none of the places in Paris can be called ‘home;’”<sup>[1]</sup> and sociologist and philosopher Jean Baudrillard criticized New York and other modern cities for being nothing but “floating deserts.”<sup>[2]</sup> Driven by economic interests, cities become an artificial phantasm produced by mass media, while individual lives are being unconsciously absorbed and wasted by boundless “simulacra,” to use Baudrillard’s term<sup>[3]</sup>.

Thanks to our passion for beautiful environments — essentially the passion for life — human beings have not been completely enslaved by urban modernity and have largely resisted becoming a part of this urban mechanism. Landscape offers a reprise from isolated, stifling industrial environments, allowing people to realize the true nature of being

human. Landscapes, here, are not just inessentials for recreation and leisure, but a valuable escape from the pace of urban life, and are a place where people can distinguish their most essential human attributes from the tools of urban mechanism. Bachelard described an image of home — a place of initial attachment and safety where we can practice the art of being human<sup>[1]</sup>. Home, in this case, does not mean the concrete boxes of high-density towers and a property ownership certificate, but a landscape that provides us a sense of belonging and a topophilia to nature that is hardly found in the indifference of modern cities<sup>[4]</sup>.

Contemporary China is becoming a place of metaphoric “homelessness.” China, so glorious in ancient times, has become culturally and aesthetically preoccupied by the successes of the West. China’s identity, as a land of innovation, art, and culture has perished to almost nothing over a hundred years of revolution, instead rebuilding a new identity as an imitation of the powerful West. Although never physically colonized, China’s post-colonial trauma is obvious. One of the most important

tasks of contemporary China will be to rebuild its individual identity and find a new spiritual home. However, the past hundred years of revolution has caused a lamentable fact that the contemporary Chinese lack cognition of their traditional heritage. It makes this task difficult and would most likely result in chasing fantasies and disregarding reality. This is not just a theoretical proposition: the triple phantasms of authority, culture, and aesthetics existing in urban landscapes have underscored the intensity and apathy of unchecked contemporary urban life.

## The Adornment of Authority

Landscape has not been aesthetically appreciated since the beginning of human civilization. The need for natural landscapes stemmed from the spiritual liberation movement in the 17th century. Hannah Arendt argued that the decline of traditional public arts, especially architecture, suggests a divorce from conventional structures of authority and social commonality<sup>[5]</sup>. At the same time, landscape, as an aesthetic form

derived from poetry and painting, had emerged within the public sphere, as a form of individual spiritual liberation. Regretfully, urban landscape is still often characterized by its pre-modern appearance that highlights political and economic status by enlarging spatial overhead views. Current individual and governmental anxiety to manifest state superiority have pushed landscape design back towards the symmetric and oversized style of the 17th century, when vast squares, grand museums, and extravagant theaters reinforced cities as centers of power. However, when the human scale was removed from the design, there was no place to rest or talk, museums felt inaccessible, and public landscapes were too wide and lack imagination. While the state reinforced power through scale, the human felt infinitely miniscule and dominated within the unrestrained space and estranged from history and art.

In China, there is also a hidden authority dominating the urban landscape. Official rankings, such as “national class,” “5A,” and “top level,” have formalized the quality of a landscape. This type of assessment might be useful for an administrator or

investor, but for a visitor who wishes to simply enjoy the landscape, these labels are not useful. A well-versed reviewer would not praise a painter’s work just because he has, for example, been trained at the national fine arts academy. Like genuine art pieces, good landscapes draw out multiple emotional and personal reactions, regardless of awards or rankings.

## The Cloak of Culture

Today, many landscapes market themselves as places of culture. A resort that imitates a Miao village, for example, is called the “landscape of a cultural minority,” while a jumble of European architectural styles are ubiquitously labeled an “Italian cultural village.” Literary works are abused even more. For instance, a mountain the famous poet Li Bai wrote on poem for becomes a “literary landscape.” An extreme case is Lijiang old town, a Shangri-la of the exotic and ethnologic, traditional and modern, a manufactured mashing of unrelated cultural symbols. These landscapes have no cultural meaning to designers or builders; each is a simulacra produced to complete an

idea of a constructed image.

Culture does not equal history, but rely on each other. History, here, cannot only be understood as archaeological relics or historical records. Culture is being turned into a commodity with brand value, especially in landscape design where the finished product is closely linked with aesthetic materiality. Gray tile with white walls and golden tile with red walls — two different traditional Chinese landscape patterns — are often referred to together as the “national style,” and indiscriminately used in the same landscapes as a euphemistic “Neo-Chinese style.”

History is all about the human. Cultural history is kept alive through inherited human-to-human practices, not preserved fragments of a cultural relic or material trucked in to symbolize ghosts of the past. In other words, a genuine cultural landscape cannot be established without cultural development and growth. When a landscape is covered only with a new, popular cloak, it will soon tire. In today’s built environment, the speed of aesthetic or cultural blase is faster than we imagine. Some popular “elegance” will unavoidably and eventually

become vulgar, because of their inherent display of power. Cultural landscapes are being abused as accessories to authority.

### Aesthetic Illusions

Throughout the 20th century, business and media have influenced aesthetics. The City Beautiful Movement increasingly shaped cities towards superficial aesthetic

perceptions made up to lose their distinguishing identities. Similarly, the word “looking-score” (“颜值” in Chinese, used to describe someone’s appearance), which has recently become one of the hottest words in China, shows the vacuity of general aesthetic values. Rather than spiritual pursuits, people have flocked to get better appearances. Simulacra have replaced reality, with people losing themselves in this illusory world.

It would be unwise for well-educated designers to have this worldview, however many are preoccupied with a narrow standard of beauty that has emerged in the construction of our cities and landscapes. It is not just about education or an issue isolated to China and other developing countries; this is a crucial question for the entire profession of landscape and urban design. Urban development in America, the global capitalist leader, is typical of

modern urban landscapes. Row upon row of skyscrapers, bright nights, highly patterned playgrounds, and advertisements visible from the street compose a typical image of large American cities. However, if we show people the photos of these mega-cities, they cannot tell the differences between each. Ironically, this kind of urban landscape is exactly what designers want — standardized “beautiful” visions. These visions lack aesthetic form and cultural significance.<sup>[2]</sup>

In China we are guilty of the worse imitations, the “simulacra of simulacra.” We have replaced our own cultural heritage with another standard of beauty, that of New York, Los Angeles, or Huston, which is inconsistent with our identity. We create ideal city images by constructing “high looking-score” projects. We use skyscrapers, neon lights, and sky wheels to prove ourselves to the world, while the spirit of the city is corroded by illusory appearances.

More notably, the new developed countrysides of China’s urbanization have a sense of inferiority towards their traditional cultures because of the large socio-economic gap between rural and urban in China. Urban life has become the new desired culture, making traditional rural life feel backwards. As rural incomes increase and more

building occurs in the countryside, the architecture is becoming increasingly exotic, with styles ranging from faux-European to baroque to American McMansions. This is not a result of technological backwardness and economic desperation. This kind of development occurs after an influx of capital, but results in a spiritual impoverishment of the landscape. So, what is missing?

The answer: the human spirit is missing. Life has been eroded into a series of symbols that are replacing the spiritual territory of the human in the name of authority, culture, and aesthetics. Landscape designers must awaken from the dream of computer generated visions before it becomes our reality. Perhaps we should stop discussing and evaluating landscape aesthetics and visions before our standard of beauty is replaced with generic plasticity. Landscapes should be critiqued — rather than evaluated — and can only be critiqued within the true, living world. Bachelard said that the “philosophical essence of the world starts from the discovery of adjectives.”<sup>[1]</sup> This is the essence of aesthetics and cultural landscapes, but sadly it has been misunderstood to imply a singular perception of beauty. The pale and inane simulacra will not benefit human beings. Drawing from

the concept of epoch in the sphere of phenomenology, we need to know the tools at our disposal before we explore the aesthetics of cultural landscapes. The triple phantasms of authority, culture, and aesthetics must be suspended when we address physical landscapes because we need to release the camouflage over our spirit. Landscape, as our spiritual refuge, cannot and should not be defined by any others; our self-recognition makes it a home. **LAF**



1. 深圳市人民广场  
1. People's Square in Shenzhen

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