

The Historical Evolution of Colored Glass Windows in Guangfu Architecture and Their Role in Urban Landscape

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Abstract

This article explores the historical evolution of colored glass windows in Guangfu architecture and their role in urban landscapes. As a unique decorative art form in Lingnan, this type of glass window not only carries historical and cultural significance, but also plays a role in modern cities. The article traces its origin, analyzes its historical evolution, explores its application in urban landscapes, and its impact on urban attractiveness and cultural identity. Finally, it discusses its protection and innovation, emphasizing its importance in cultural heritage and sustainable urban development.

Keywords: Guangfu architecture; Colored glass windows; Historical evolution; Urban landscape; Cultural value

1. Introduction

Cantonese-style stained glass windows, commonly known as "Manchu windows," represent a unique form of architectural and decorative art in Lingnan architecture. Their history can be traced back to a period when Guangzhou served as a pivotal hub for cultural exchange between China and the West. This type of window combines the artistic styles of East and West, becoming an integral part of Cantonese-style houses, and also serving as an architectural visual symbol of Guangzhou and the Pearl River Delta region. The exquisite wooden window frames and colorful glass inlays serve as a clear testament to the open, tolerant, and innovative character of Guangzhou's residents.

This article examines the historical evolution of stained glass in Cantonese architecture and their role in the contemporary urban landscape. First, it traces the origin and development of stained glass,

analyzing how they combined Eastern and Western elements over time to create a unique artistic style. Then, it discusses the use of these windows in the urban landscape, as well as their role in increasing the attractiveness of the city and the cultural identity of the inhabitants. Finally, issues of protection and innovation in this precious cultural heritage are addressed, emphasizing their importance in the protection of culture and sustainable development of cities.

Stained glass in Cantonese architecture carries both history and culture. Studying their historical evolution and cultural significance can provide deeper insight into Guangzhou's urban development history and the various styles of Lingnan culture. During the period of modernization, the study of ways to protect and inherit this precious cultural heritage is very important for maintaining the cultural diversity of the city.

2. The Historical Origins and Evolution of Cantonese Architectural Colored Glass Windows

As a center of cultural exchange between China and the West, Guangzhou is closely associated with the historical origin of Cantonese architectural stained glass. During the late Qing dynasty and early Republic of China, Cantonese-style houses made extensive use of stained glass with distinctive spatial and regional features. These displays are not only visual symbols of Guangzhou architecture and the Pearl River Delta, but also reflect the open and innovative personality traits of the inhabitants of the Lingnan region, bearing deep value and spiritual significance. They are not just a unique manifestation of traditional skills, but a visual reflection of the style of the time.

The historical evolution of Cantonese stained glass combines Eastern and Western culture, as well as traditional and contemporary elements. Known as "Manchu windows," these windows are the result of the incorporation of stained glass into traditional Chinese wooden window frames. The history of this type of storefront can be traced back to the middle of the Qing dynasty, and then they gradually became popular in Guangzhou and the Pearl River Delta region, reaching the peak of development at the beginning of the Republic of China. With unique geographical advantages, Guangzhou was the first to master the technology of stained glass engraving. As described in the words of bamboo branch Lingnan: "five-color glass, Moonlight on three sides," these windows formed the unique and romantic art style of Guangfu with its colorful characteristics.



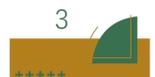
The creation of the Manchu window demonstrated the aesthetics and wisdom of the inhabitants of Guangzhou. The window frame is based on traditional Chinese window construction, and also combines the features of some Manchu-style residential windows. The wooden window frames retain a pronounced Chinese aesthetic charm in terms of craftsmanship and style. Manchu Windows retain basic elements of traditional Chinese Windows, such as window boards, partitions, etc., and the central part of the window, regardless of its shape or material, has its own unique characteristics. The styles of combinations of these windows are different. Not only did the structure of the upper and lower wings change, but also the shape of the three windows divided into three steps in the upper and lower middle sections, as well as the combination of four windows with one step in each upper and lower left and right layers, as well as changes in the six windows, nine and even more types of fans.

Guangzhou Masters absorbed Western influence in addition to traditional skills and brought their own skill. They transformed Western floral patterns into Chinese motifs, such as traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy. This evolution eventually led to Cantonese-style stained glass showing a fusion of eastern and Western styles. Techniques such as stained glass Engraving and etching were introduced and gradually refined, allowing Guangzhou Masters to develop a style that retains traditional craftsmanship and integrates Western technology, which shapes the uniqueness of Cantonese stained glass.

The making of these windows shows a harmonious combination of eastern and Western influences. The stained glass windows in the Cantonese style are not only a manifestation of local cultural identity, but also reflect Guangzhou's open attitude towards various foreign influences, which is why a unique architectural form of art was formed. Over time, skills and styles merged, and these exhibits became symbols of Guangzhou's historical and cultural significance

3. Artistic Features and International Comparison of Cantonese Architectural Colored Glass Windows

The stained glass windows in Cantonese architecture show unique craftsmanship and rich pattern ideas, while combining Chinese and Western art styles.



Guangzhou glass windows are of high quality workmanship. The Chinese-style wooden window frames are decorated with stained glass, and their common name is "Manchu window". This type of window is at the same time practical, artistic and decorative. Guangzhou Masters borrowed Western techniques and changed the subject of glass painting, replacing the original Western flower patterns with traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy. In such showcases, eastern and Western styles combine with each other, creating unique glass showcases of a wide range of colors.

The window frames of Guangzhou stained glass are made in accordance with the basic structure of traditional Chinese windows and include a number of features borrowed from the windows of Manchu houses. In terms of craftsmanship and style, these wooden window frames retain pronounced Chinese aesthetic characteristics. Over time, elements of Western design were introduced into the window frame design system, resulting in their shape and style constantly undergoing new changes.

In addition, the patterns on the Canton-style stained glass windows are varied and colorful and contain many traditional favorable elements. Patterns such as Baoxianhua, moire pattern, and Sihe Ruii not only attract people's attention from the outside, but also contain deep cultural connotations and favorable meaning. For the example of Baoxianhua, it can be traced to the era of Wei, Jin, Southern and Northern dynasties and is associated with the flourishing of Buddhism. It is mainly created through the art of combining colors such as Lotus, peony and chrysanthemum. The unique combination of a bat and a copper coin symbolizes a good blessing "a blessing before you".

In addition, the colors of the glass paintings on these windows are mainly blue, red, green and yellow. To create patterns, wood carving and engraving techniques are used. After etching technology became more advanced, glass paintings gradually shifted from a strict style that mimics Western floral design to depicting the more complex themes of Chinese painting and calligraphy.

The stylistic features of stained glass in the Cantonese style embody a combination of eastern and Western elements. Traditional Chinese elements were retained, and Western stained glass production technologies were also borrowed, leading to a unique artistic style. Guangzhou is the center of cultural exchange between China and the West, and its openness and inclusivity are reflected in the development of the Cantonese style of painted showcases. The colorful and colorful artistic characteristics of these windows highlight the exceptional lifestyle of the residents of Guangzhou. The combination of eastern



and Western elements made the painted Cantonese-style windows a very attractive feature of Lingnan architecture and made an important contribution to the cultural landscape of Guangzhou.

3.1 International Comparison

By comparing the stained glass windows of Cantonese architecture with those of Europe, we can better understand their uniqueness. European stained glass is mainly used in important buildings such as churches and often has a religious theme. On the other hand, stained glass in Cantonese architecture is more common in residential buildings, and there are many patterns present here, such as flowers, landscapes and characters. There are differences in the technology of making: European stained glass focuses on the painting and joining of glass fragments and presents complex and colorful patterns, mainly on the topic of religion and history. Guangdong architecture stained glass combines traditional wooden window frames with stained glass inserts for a unique decorative style. This combination of wood and glass is rare in European windows, but gives Guangdong glass windows unique aesthetic characteristics.

3.2 Global Influence

Although stained glass of Cantonese architecture is popular in Guangzhou and the Pearl River Delta region, due to its unique artistic style and skillful execution, they may have influenced architecture and Arts and crafts in other regions. International cultural exchanges or exhibitions have encouraged her design concepts and technology to spread gradually across different cultural circles and are accepted and appreciated in different locations. With the constant expansion of this intercultural dialogue, the influence of Cantonese stained glass has managed to spread throughout the world, far beyond the home region, thus, this unique form of artistic expression became more famous.

4. The Role of Cantonese Architectural Colored Glass Windows in the Urban Landscape

Stained glass windows in Guangzhou's buildings perform many functions in the urban landscape. Such windows can not only give the city a unique aesthetic value, but also contain a deep cultural meaning.



Bright colors and complex patterns on stained glass became a wonderful feature of urban architecture, and also increased the visual appeal of the city. Such windows are often made by inserting stained glass into traditional Chinese wooden window frames. Typical of them are the “Manchu windows” in the buildings of Guangzhou and the Pearl River Delta. As a visual symbol of the architecture of the region, these windows reflect the open and innovative attitude of the residents of Guangzhou and show an irreplaceable level of skill and spiritual value.

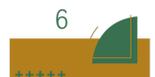
Secondly, the stained glass windows in the city's landscape highlight the unique charm of Lingnan culture. For example, in the design plan of the Yuexiu Xiujiangwan exhibition space, the building is inspired by banyan trees to create an urban living room "new banyan tree" that combines functions such as coffee preparation, tea, reading and family activities. The design combines the "Super Guangfu Yuexiang circle", the "Guangzhou Rhythm" shopping street and the 1,000-square-foot banyan tree block Street Park that not only showcase Lingnan culture, but also convey the warmth of the neighborhood of Guangzhou residents.

Innovations and protection of stained glass in contemporary design urban landscape reflects the attitude of the city towards traditional culture. Guangzhou Museum has gathered more than 400 Cantonese-style stained glass windows in modern homes in the Pearl River Delta area, which are iconic elements of Lingnan architecture. A year-long survey selected 74 outstanding works, and social organizations joined forces to create a special exhibition designed to revive cultural relics. The protection of traditional craftsmanship also brings a new note to the modern urban landscape and promotes cultural heritage.

5. The Application of Cantonese Architectural Colored Glass Windows in Contemporary Urban Architecture

5.1 Reuse of Design Elements

In modern urban architecture, the elements of stained glass design in Cantonese architecture can be creatively reused, which contributes to the preservation of urban context and uniqueness. The design facade of a new building can be integrated into color combinations and stained glass patterns to create an architectural look that is both modern and full of traditional cultural elements. Large-scale stained



glass windows can also be placed in public places and commercial spaces as ornamental landscape elements to attract tourists and locals to stop and observe.

5.2 Sustainability and Innovation

When applying elements of stained glass design in Cantonese architecture, sustainability and innovation must also be taken into account. New environmentally friendly materials can be used as a substitute for traditional glass, such as solar glass or materials with better thermal insulation properties, thus increasing the energy efficiency of buildings. Modern technologies such as LED lighting and intelligent control systems can also be integrated. Night visual effects will be more shocking, the charm of the Night City will increase, and the overall atmosphere will be filled with dynamics and vitality. By combining traditional and contemporary innovations, such architectural elements can not only achieve the goal of preserving cultural heritage, but also promote the process of Sustainable Urban Development.

6. The Cultural Connotation and Social Significance of Cantonese Architectural Colored Glass Windows

6.1 Cultural Connotation

Cantonese-style stained glass is a unique type of decorative and Applied Art in the Lingnan region and has a deep cultural meaning. This type of window combines traditional Chinese wood window making technology with Western stained glass technology, demonstrating the openness and inclusiveness of Guangzhou, a key node of the Maritime Silk Road. Patterns such as Baoxianhua, Guyun pattern, and Sihe Rui on the windows reflect traditional Chinese auspicious symbols that symbolize beauty, harmony, prosperity, and happiness. With the development, the theme of stained glass on these windows has also changed, and Western floral patterns were gradually replaced by Chinese elements such as traditional Chinese painting and calligraphy. This change demonstrates the innovative ability of Guangzhou artisans to integrate Western skills into local culture, using them in the process of creating a Cantonese style with its own characteristics.

In addition, the stained glass windows in the Cantonese style show the characteristic features of the Lingnan desire for nature and their desire for a better life. Landscape patterns, Orchid patterns etc.

they contain oriental charm and artistic expressiveness, and also reflect the sophisticated lifestyle and unique aesthetic understanding of the residents of Guangzhou.

6.2 Social Significance

At the social level, stained glass in Cantonese architecture performs many functions. In houses in the traditional Cantonese style, exquisite stained glass often symbolizes the wealth of the family and high social status. They are a decorative part of the living space, but also show the taste and economic value of the owner. Secondly, stained glass windows in public spaces and families perform practical functions. They play an important role in lighting and ventilation and guarantee a certain degree of privacy. In the hot and humid climate of Lingnan, the design of such windows allows the air to circulate better, and stained glass plays an important role in filtering light, softening interior lighting and creating a comfortable habitat.

Such windows are a necessary element of the culture of the local community. In the past, the unique stained glass windows of each family in the Cantonese style created a magnificent landscape, reinforcing a sense of cohesion and belonging to the community. Thus, visual features became a form of expression of community identity and collective spirit, and the presence of Windows reinforced this feature.

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8. Conclusion

The stained glass windows of Cantonese architecture in the Lingnan region are presented as a unique architectural and decorative art form that contains a lot of historical and cultural information and plays an important role in the contemporary urban landscape. A deep study of the cultural significance it carries, as well as new methods for its application in modern urban planning, will help to better protect and exploit this precious cultural heritage. At the same time, it is also useful for promoting the process of Sustainable Urban Development and preserving cultural diversity. Their



effective use also brings significant benefits. After all, this window is no longer just a relic of past times, but is an important environment for maintaining traditional and ongoing exchanges that can create a unique platform to create a more colorful and rich world and ensure the sustainability of the city.

Future research should focus on the specific challenges in preserving artisan skills, the dilemmas of commercialization, and the tension between authentic preservation and modern adaptation. Further exploration of the spatial concepts and aesthetic philosophies underlying the differences between Cantonese and European stained glass would also deepen the international comparative perspective.

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