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**THE GARDENS' EYES:
AN ALTERNATIVE VISUAL GUIDANCE SYSTEM**

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ABSTRACT

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The ancient gardens of Suzhou in the Jiangnan region of China are mysterious and time-honored. Many visitors to these ancient gardens, in particular overseas visitors, want to understand and explore them more deeply. They also want to view them in a simple way (Song, 2015). This thesis project aims to enable this through an informed symbolic visual guidance system. The system is both material and symbolic. The visual guidance system design integrates the culturally symbolic and spatial meaning of the leak windows of four famous Suzhou classical gardens as well as the visual effect, aesthetic, functional value of those leak windows.

In the thesis project, I investigate how the essence of four of the classical Suzhou gardens can be communicated through symbolic graphic design, materiality and spatial installation. In it, I aim to convey the history and cultural values contained in these different period gardens by combining visual effects, aesthetic and functional values. This design exploration takes the form of a unique artwork composed of patterns, symbols and shapes that combine to convey each garden's historical value and cultural heritage through modern expression. The symbolic shapes, material form, and images specific to each garden are then synthesized into a visual guidance system at the center of which is the leak window.

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