

# Zhongshan Shipyard Park

Kongjian Yu, Pang Wei, Huang Zhengzheng, Qiu Qingyuan  
and Lin Shihong, Turenscape  
Prepared by Marian Hanson



Aerial view of park (Vidiella 2008)

Client:  
City of Zhongshan, China

Location:  
City of Zhongshan, Guangdong  
Province, China

Design Date:  
June 2000 – February 2001,  
completed 2002

Designers: Turenscape

**Zhongshan Shipyard Park** was an old shipyard built in the 1950s. At one time it housed, fed and cared for 1300 workers, but then went bankrupt in 1999. This industrial site represents 50 years of Socialist industrial history and experienced China's Cultural Revolution. Consequently, after it closed, the Zhongshan administration wanted the shipyard turned into a public park and a tribute to the workers (Vidiella 2008, ASLA 2003, World Architects no date, and Turenscape no date).

## Description

11 hectares (27 acres) of reclaimed wetlands, restored shoreline and landscaped park space on the banks of one of China's main rivers, an old industrial area converted to park which provides a tourist attraction, improved landscape, cultural message with history of location referenced in the design, while restoring leftover structures connecting with existing urban context and environmental responsibility (Vidiella 2008, Midlands Biz Profiles LLC 2009)

## Philosophy of Designers

"Landscape design is the process of preserving and modifying existing forms, and, if necessary, creating new forms to visualize significance or meaning of a site. These meanings can be functional, cultural, historical or ecological" (Turenscape, no date).

"Turenscape" means "earth man landscape" and their concept is nature, man and spirits as one (ASLA, World Architects, no dates)

## Design Intent

The designers wanted the park to function as a connected part of the overall urban fabric, not isolated or enclosed. They wanted to express the working culture and the history of this site. They wanted to show that the natural weeds can be beautiful in a design. They used preservation, modification and creation of new forms while restoring the shoreline (Turenscape, no date).

## Challenges and Approach

**Fluctuating water levels** – existing lake connected to the Qijiang River that flows to the sea and the water level fluctuates 1.1 meters a day. A network of bridges at various levels combined with terraces planted with native salt marsh species adapts to the level changes (Turenscape, no date and ASLA 2003)



Elevated boardwalks over water (Vidiella 2008)

**Water width** - regulations dictated that the river needed to expand from 60 meters to 80 meters, but the designers wanted to protect the old ficus/banyan trees along the riverbank. They dug an additional canal 20 meters wide on the other side of the trees to create an island to preserve the trees (Turenscape, no date and ASLA 2003).

**Remnants of rusty docks and machinery** - could be a problem for the community or detract from the site design if just left intact, so pieces were modified and recreated artistically into new forms such as a network of straight paths, a red and a green box docks transformed into tea houses or club houses reusing





(vidiella 2008)

some of the industrial architecture (Vidiella 2008, Turenscape, no date and ASLA 2003).

### **Design features**

Historic message kept alive in the form of an industrial character with “a space to remember and tell stories” Park surrounds a lake that connects to the river Elevated footbridges allow use anytime even though water level fluctuates >3 feet and red and white structures and architecture.

### **Focus on the landscape to revitalize the elements**

- 1) Preparation for dense plantings of diverse vegetation,
- 2) Mass of trees, meadows and bushes pruned into geometric figures, frame the arch elements and highlight artistic shapes
- 3) Riverbank native aquatic flora species
- 4) Mxed grasses show common species can be interesting
- 5) The old ficus/banyon trees were protected by construction of a 66 foot wide trench (Vidiella 2008, ASLA 2003).





Vidiella 2008



## Quote

**Designer Kongjian Yu** (Turenscape website) "...landscape architecture is now on the verge of change in China. It is time for this profession to take the great opportunity to position itself to play the key role in rebuilding a new Land of Peach Blossoms for a new society of urbanized, globalized and inter-connected people. In order to position itself for this sacred role, landscape architecture must define itself in terms of the art of survival, not as a descendent of gardening. The profession must re-value the vernacular of the land and the people and lead the way in urban development by planning and designing an infrastructure of landscape and ecology, through which landscape can be created and preserved as a medium, and as the connecting link between the land, people and our spirits" (Turenscape website, no date and Time 2009).

## Project Was Successful

2009 Global Award for Excellence winner (Midlands Biz Profiles LLC 2009)  
2009 ULI Excellence Award (Zhongshan Municipal Government 2008)  
2008 Excellence on the Waterfront Top Honor Project Award (Waterfront Organization 2008)  
2004 Gold Medal of Fine Arts from the Ministry of Culture in China (World Architects, no date)  
2002 ASLA Design Honor Award (ASLA 2003, Turenscape no date)

## Comments from Users

**"It is a tribute to common people and environmental ethics with native plantings"** (ASLA 2003).

"Visitors were deeply touched and moved" (ASLA 2003).

Client statement: "Our citizens love this park because of its unusual features and its recreational, environmental and historical education functions. It is also an attraction

for tourism. Now a brilliant and essential part of our city, we are quite proud of it" (ASLA 2003).

### **Lessons Provided**

- 1) This is a good example of integrated connections flowing from the urban environment through the waterfront, and into the water bodies beyond.
- 2) Reuse of vernacular artifacts can be effective.
- 3) Native plants and "weeds" can be beautiful additions to landscape design (such as the use of the marsh plants that enable the transition from land to water and tolerate the fluctuations of the water levels).
- 4) Attention to site history and the common man can provide a powerful message and/or connection of visitors to a site.

### **References**

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