

The Revival of the Spirit of Place

The Environmental Renewal Design of the Huashan Road Entrance of Shanghai Jiao Tong University

Project Statement

The project is located in the southeast corner of the Xuhui Campus of Shanghai Jiao Tong University (SJTU), the "birthplace" of China's Jiao Tong universities. The Xuhui Campus initially served as the site of Nanyang Public School in 1896. The site's "Huashan Road Gate", "Sheng Residence" and "Old Library" are among the eighth group of key cultural units protected nationally in China, and have witnessed the changes of Jiao Tong University over the course of a century. After a hundred years of exposure to the elements, the Huashan Road Entrance's spatial structure has undergone significant alterations. In particular, residential buildings on its west side have severely damaged the tripartite spatial pattern of the century-old buildings. Through the preservation and renewal of historical architectural entities and spatial patterns, the inheritance and continuation of human history and living memory in the site, and the diversification and expansion of spatial functions, this design aims to reshape the Huashan Road Entrance space's temporal expanse, and strengthen "first impressions" of the SJTU campus, so as to activate the the Huashan Road entrance's locational energy, and become a new catalyst linking campus and community.

Project Narrative and Contents

01 Location and general information

The project is located in the southeast corner of the Xuhui Campus of SJTU, the "birthplace" of China's Jiao Tong universities. The Xuhui Campus initially served as the site of Nanyang Public School in 1896. The site's "Huashan Road Gate", "Sheng Residence" and "Old Library" are among the eighth group of key cultural units protected nationally in China, and have witnessed the changes of SJTU over the course of a century. The Huashan Road Gate was built in 1935 in the style of classical Chinese imperial architecture; the old library was built in 1919 in the Renaissance's Baroque style, signifying SJTU's initial formation of a modern educational campus system; built in 1923, the Sheng Residence has a western architectural style and features old Shanghai Shikumen architecture. The combination of Chinese and Western architectural styles demonstrates the inclusiveness and international vision of SJTU. The site total area is 8,079 square meters.

02 Problems and challenges

After more than 100 years of transformation, dense plants of the Huashan Road Entrance not only block the facade of the historic buildings and relics at the site, but present a lack of openness; the interface is disorderly, lacking permeability; in particular, the residential buildings and security management building on the west side have seriously damaged the tripartite spatial pattern of the century-old buildings.

Facing a highly sensitive area given its large number of historically preserved buildings as well the strategic requirement of historic and cultural revitalization, the biggest challenges of the project are:

- 1) **How to restore the "authenticity" of the spatial fabric and highlight the site's historic style?**
- 2) **How to dig far into the humanistic connotations of the entrance's environment, and also reshape the location's spatial memory?**
- 3) **How to further expand the functions of the site, and strengthen the role of the campus's "first impression" and its "international window?"**

03 Goals and strategies

3.1 Restore the "authenticity" of the spatial fabric and highlight the place's historical style

- 1) **Protect the site's historical buildings and historical remains to create a profound historical atmosphere**

The Huashan Road Entrance is a mix of buildings from different periods and with different styles. The landscape design team worked with architectural conservation experts and masters of replicating cultural relics. Using a restoration-oriented approach to environmental transformation, they classified and protected historic buildings and sites, demolished residential buildings and security management buildings, so as to pursue a visual resonance with the historical buildings.

- 2) **Respect the original spatial structure and restore the tripartite pattern at the entrance space**

This design adopts the spatial strategy of "blocking in the north, opening in the south," and "connecting the north and the south" to create a front square with "superior wind and water," a "simple and rich" old library garden, as well as a "delicate and sparse" Sheng Residence Garden. By doing so, it visually connects the north and south

spaces separated by the main roads, thus highlighting the unique and emblematic nature of the Huashan Road Entrance as the first gate of SJTU.

3.2 Dig far into the humanistic connotations of the entrance environment and reshape the site's spatial memory

1) Making history alive with multiple implementation methods

This design systematically studied the value of the site's historical remains site through historical data retrieval, involved interviews with previous presidents, consulted cultural relics experts, and more. These remains include the "boundary marker" of Nanyang Public School, the Stone Roller used during the construction of the school, the Ionic capital of the South Courtyard, and the pedestal of the bronze statue of Yeong Hee-tae, the donor of the old library. Combined with the introduction of the Jiao Tong brand IP, this design incorporates the history of the school in the form of creative landscape art, thus injecting new "blood" into the "old" space. Secondly, by digital means, this design combines the virtual and the real, inheriting and continuing its historical humanistic spirit and active memory of the site.

2) Strengthening spatial memory through the integration of multiple elements

Through the "bonsai" display of engraved historical relics, an enclosing wall with a red surface and green tiles, ornamental windows shaped from the emblem of SJTU—and the flowing art installation engraved with the brand IP of Jiao Tong University—a system for explaining the old school gate and Nanyang Public School is formed. Leisure steps look up at the gate; a stone historical tour path tells the history of Jiao Tong University; and other elements create a unique image of the Huashan Road Entrance, with materials, forms and colors as a whole set by the overall design plan. This thus shows the spirit of place .

3.3 Strengthening the "first impression" of the SJTU campus through the diversified expansion of spatial functions

1) Responding to the developmental demands of a time of diversified exchange through the expansion of functions

In the face of the developmental needs of diversified exchange in the new era, the historic buildings have been given new functions.

As a museum displaying the history of the university, the old library undertakes the function of recording and displaying the history of the whole campus; in its garden, there are recreational steps and a path of school history, serving as an outdoor classroom for the inheritance of campus spirit and the education of school history. It provides a platform for teachers and students to "read" the history of the SJTU, as well as a place to provide patriotic education for communities and primary and secondary schools.

The Sheng Residence has become an "alumni home." It serves the functions of reception, exhibition and alumni exchange, arousing the alumni's nostalgia for campus life.

2) Setting off the atmosphere of "first impression" at the Huashan Road Entrance through plant landscaping

This design removes dense trees and spherical plants, retains the more than 50-year-old paulownia tree, increases magnolias, begonias, cherry blossoms and other characteristic plants with flowers, thus creating an auspicious scene of spring flowers in full bloom. The plant clusters on both sides of the school gate and the six five-needle pines planted in pairs together serve as a foil to the imperial Chinese style of the school gate building as well as to the "auspicious wind and water" feature of the front square. As we enter the school gate, French plane trees planted on both sides create a solemn greeting effect; the verdant lawn sets off the facade of the old library, and the mixed landscape of flowers . The undulating grassy slope of open forest leads people into the "exquisite and sparse" garden of the Sheng Residence.

04 Benefits and effect

4.1 Reshaping the Huashan Road Entrance space's temporal expanse, becoming a new catalyst linking campus and the community

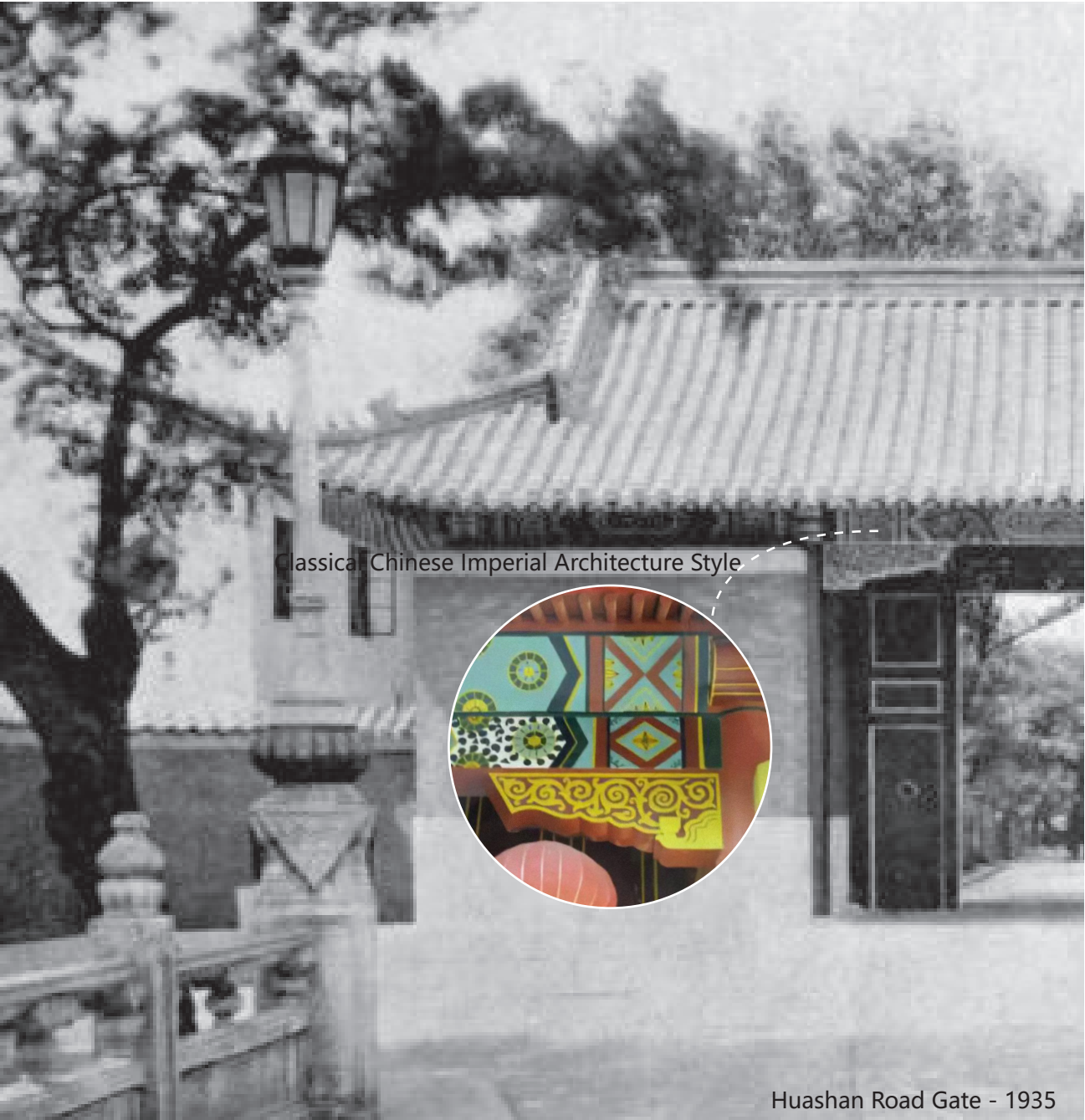
After completion, the Huashan Road Entrance will reproduce lost historical "memory", stimulate the sense of identity and pride of faculties and students, and become a bright icon interpreting the humanistic spirit of Jiao Tong University. On the anniversary of the university's founding, many elderly alumni come with their children and grandchildren to find traces of their school days, arousing strong resonance with culture, and respect for history. At the same time, it attracts a large number of visitors, including residents of the surrounding community and students of primary and secondary schools, becoming a new catalyst linking campus and community.

4.2 Helping with the revival of the spirit of space through a "multi-round consultation with the client and collaboration between multiple disciplines"

This design involved work with experts of cultural relic conservation and masters of replicating old relics to protect buildings and cultural relics in the most scientific way. Cultural relics were reproduced according to a uniform ratio.

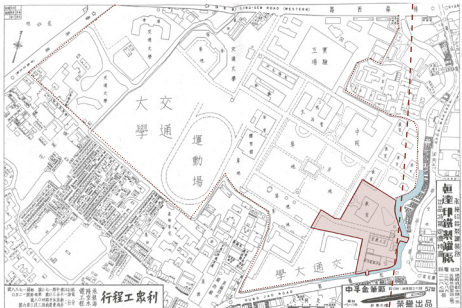
Through multiple rounds of round table meetings and in-depth interviews with presidents, builders and old alumni of SJTU, the design project researched the value of historical relics and historical story lines on the site. The design was completely tested to ensure the authentic expression of the space.

The designers visited a mine in Fujian Province to select stone materials, and discussed construction plans with stonemasons, using water knife cutting technology and digital simulation technology. The three parties cooperated during on-site installation, guaranteeing the creation of smooth and natural special-shaped stone seating and marble pavement.



Classical Chinese Imperial Architecture Style

Huashan Road Gate - 1935



the Xuhui Campus of SJTU - 1935



Design Scope - 2019



Design Scope - 2019

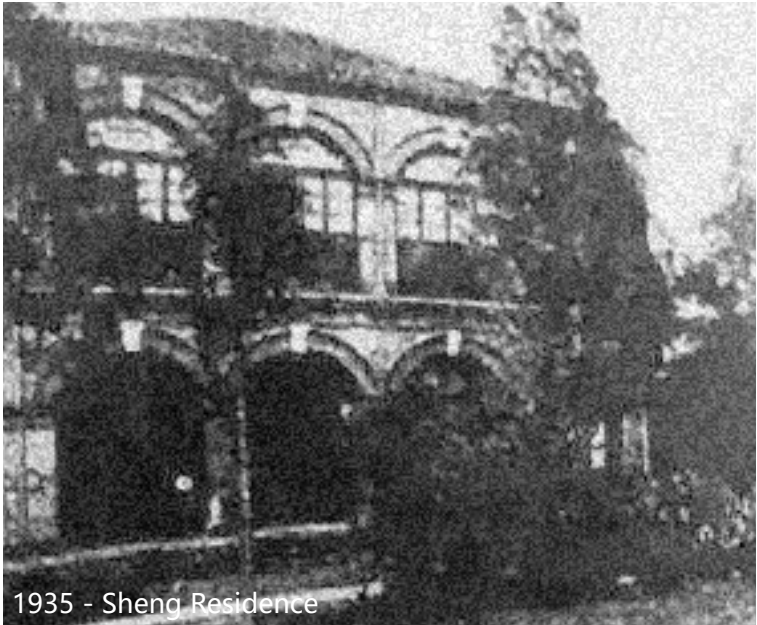


2019 - Huashan Road Gate



Architectural Features of Shikumen

Sheng Residence - 2019



1935 - Sheng Residence



Old Library - 2019

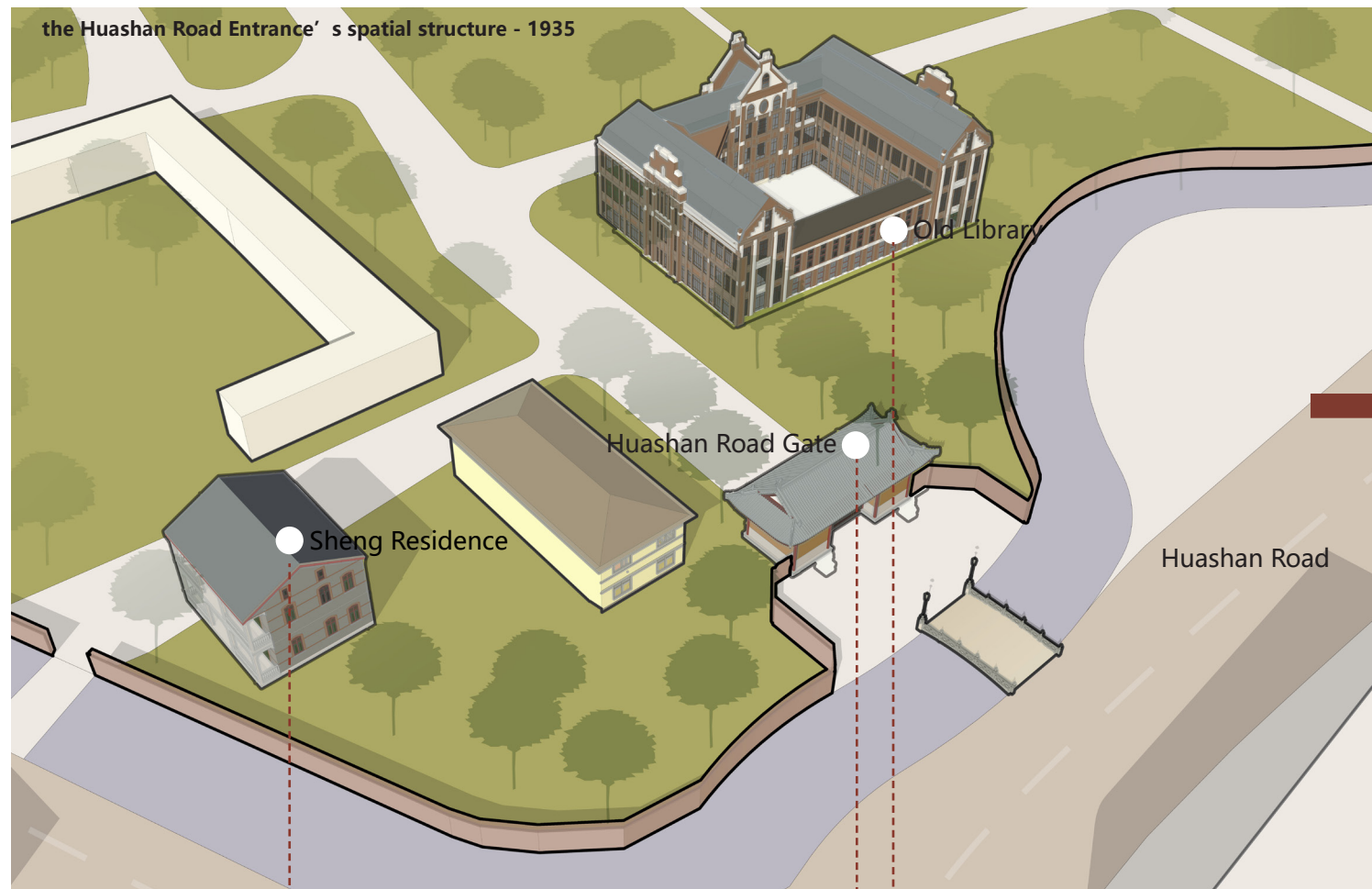


Baroque style

1935 - Old Library

BACKGROUND

The Huashan Road Entrance is the site of the earliest school gate of Nanyang Public School, the predecessor to Jiao Tong University. The site' s three buildings, each with a different style, have witnessed the century-old history of Jiao Tong University. They highlight the inclusive and international characteristics of Jiao Tong University, constituting a "first impression" of the campus.



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How to further expand the functions of the site, and strengthen the role of the campus' s "first impression" and its "international window?"



Sheng Residence

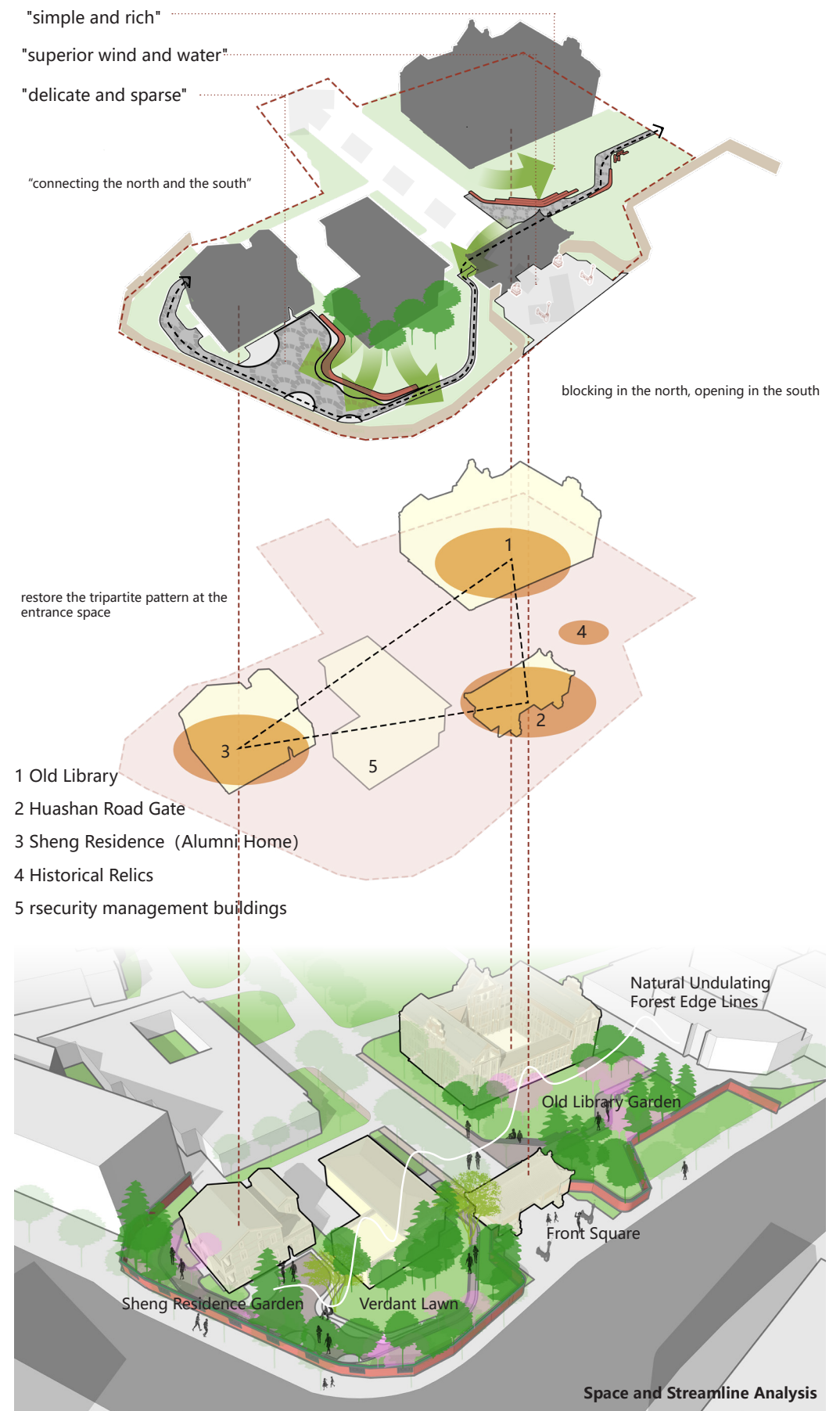
residential buildings and security management building

Huashan Road Gate

Old Library

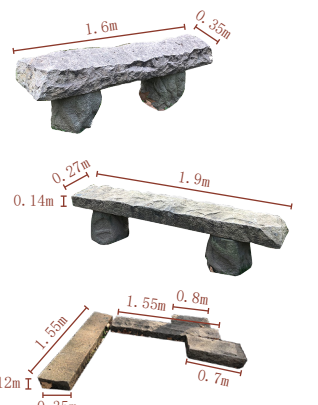
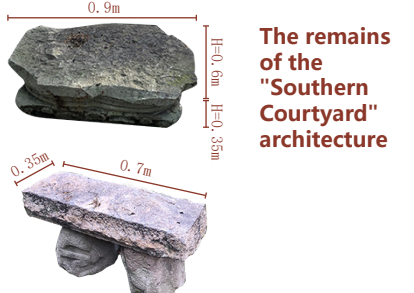
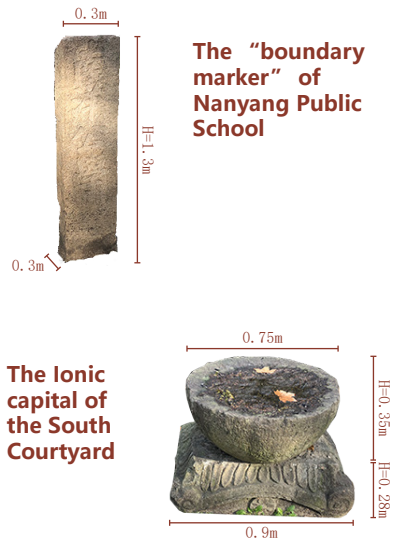
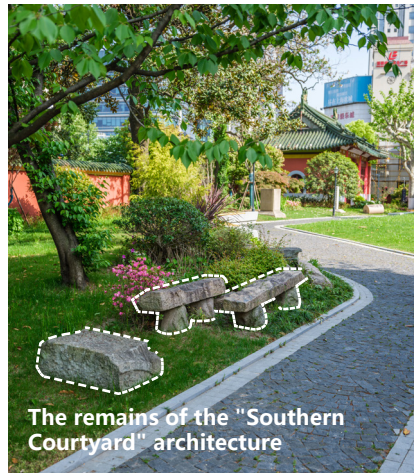
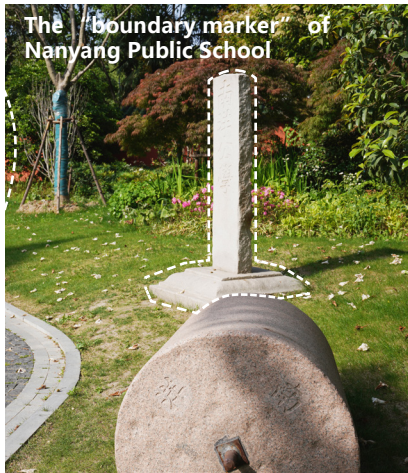
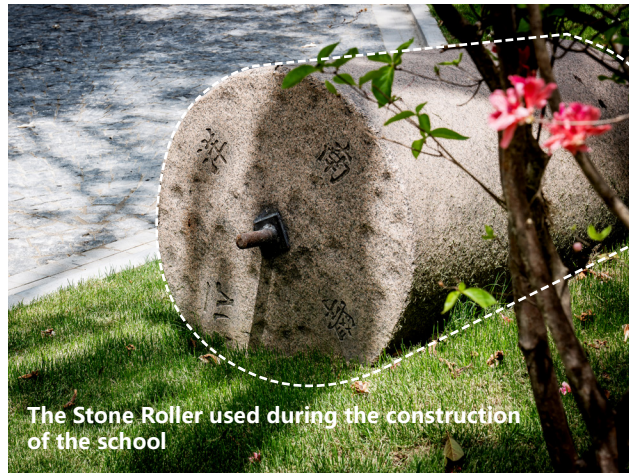
ISSUES AND CHALLENGES

After a hundred years of enduring the elements, the Huashan Road Entrance has a few problems, including the destruction of its authentic spatial texture, a fading memory of the place, and the lack of obvious historical architectural features due to spatial congestion. The question of reviving the site' s spirit of place is the greatest challenge faced by the design.



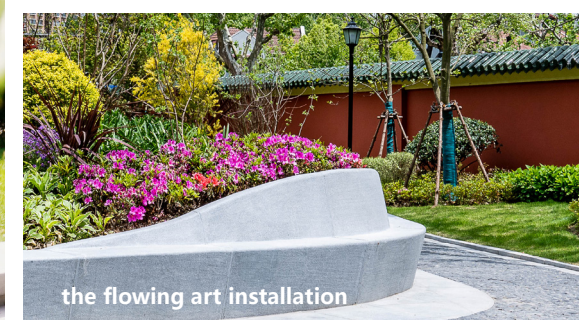
STRATEGIES FOR RESTORATION OF SPATIAL TEXTURE

Classify and protect the historical features in the historic buildings and site, demolish residential buildings and buildings for security management (in the long-term), so as to promote the visual resonance of the historical buildings and restore their tripartite spatial pattern



Strategies for protecting historic features and inheriting the site' s humanistic spirit

The designers systematically researched the value of the site' s historical relics, and properly protected them in the museum of school history. Through the reproduction of physical objects, combined with digital means and multiple techniques of implantation, they vividly presented the site' s history.



Strategies for reproducing spatial memory

Starting from the control of materials, forms and colors, the designers integrated various elements to show the spirit of place of the Huashan Road Entrance, so as to enrich visual and emotional communicative experiences.



Strategies for expanding functions

The historic buildings are given new functions in order to meet the developmental needs of the campus' s gateway space for a new era. Through the integration of multiple elements and the introduction of multiple functions, the vitality of the site is stimulated.



retains the more than 50-year-old paulownia tree, to further enhance the historical significance of the campus



the verdant lawn sets off the facade of the old library



The blooming spring flowers set off the thick old library



Flower border and ancient and vicissitudes of "historical relics"



an enclosing wall with a red surface and green tiles



"delicate and sparse" Sheng Residence Garden



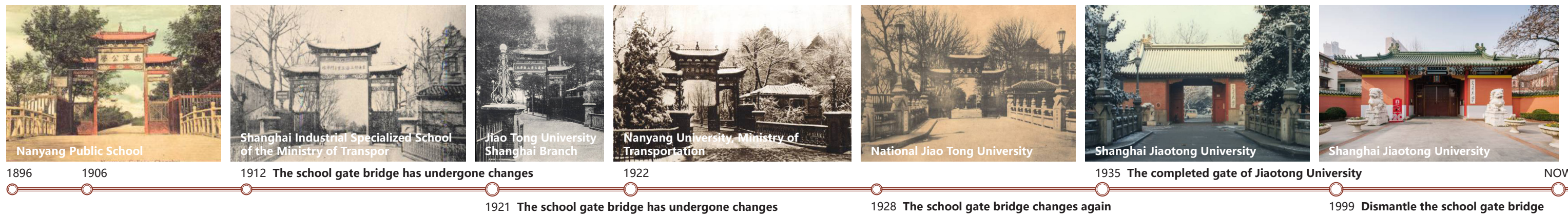
"delicate and sparse" Sheng Residence Garden



Flower border and five needle pine accentuate the imperial Chinese school gate

Strategies for plant landscaping

The plant landscape echoing the spirit of place accentuates the historical atmosphere of the Huashan Road Entrance and the solemn "first impression" of Jiao Tong University.



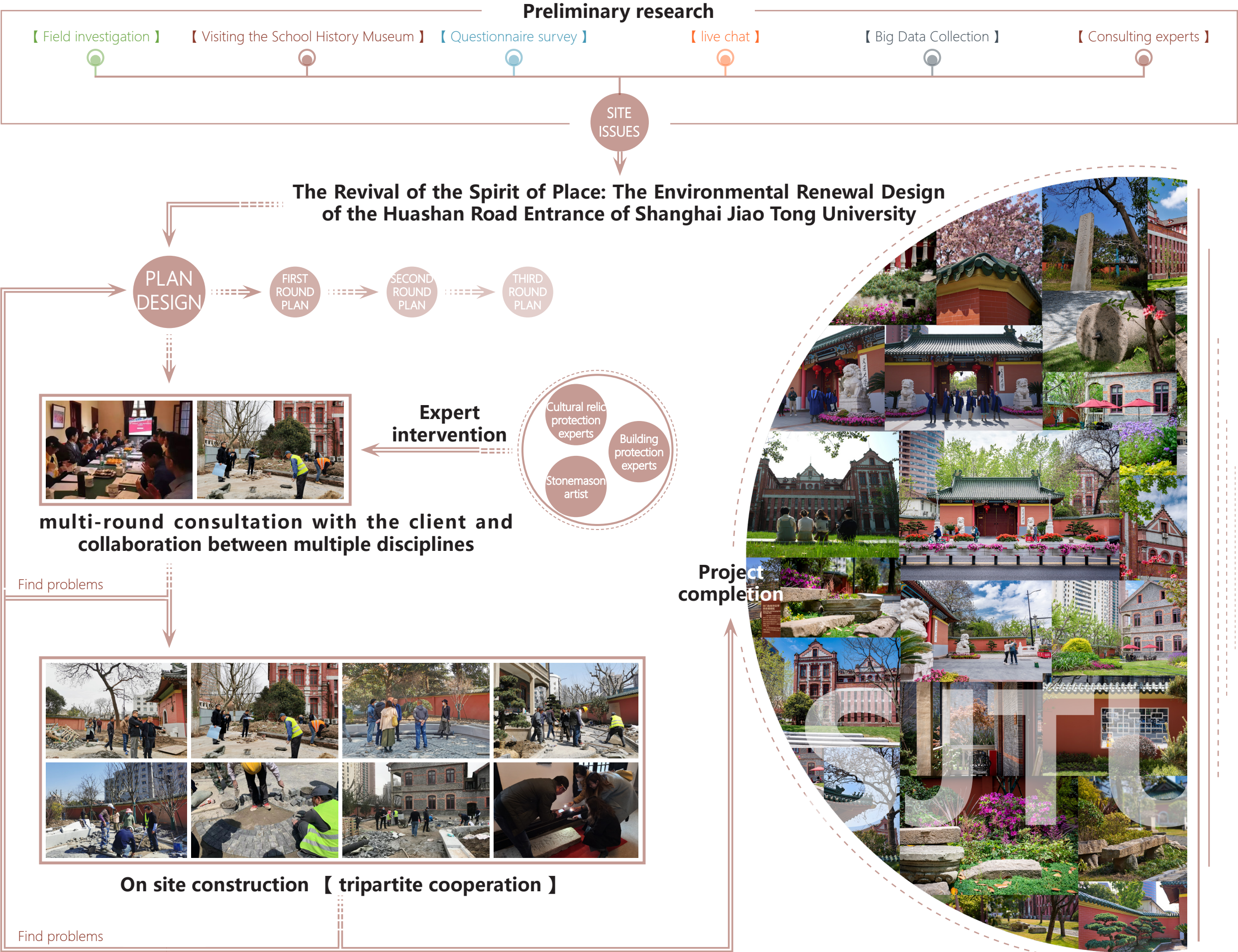
A front square with "superior wind and water"

Fully respect the original appearance, scale and details of the school gate, optimize its functions and streamline the site; symbolically reinstall two white marble lamp posts and railings for the Jinshui Bridge at the original school gate.



A "simple and rich" old library garden

Serves as an outdoor classroom for the inheritance of campus spirit and for education on school history. It provides a platform for faculty and students to "read" the history of the Jiao Tong University, as well as a place for patriotic education for communities and primary and secondary schools



Student Activities and Social Benefits



Benefits and impacts

The design reshapes the temporal breadth of the Huashan Road Entrance, arouses a strong resonance among faculty, students and alumni, becoming a new catalyst for the campus and community, exploring a landscape path for reviving the spirit of space through “multiple rounds of consultation with the client and coordination between multiple disciplines.”