CHAPTER FIVE
CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT AND DESIGN PRESENTATION

Writings and photographs of historic and contemporary Chinese teahouses, study and measurements of proposed site, and observations of local coffee shops provide the basis for developing a design concept and program requirements for this project.

Design concept and programming

Design concept:
The design concept for this contemporary teashop draws from art elements and principles traditionally associated with the Chinese tea culture and historic teahouses with specific focus on the elegance and clarity of line and form. This source of inspiration has been translated into design for a contemporary teahouse for an American setting. Application of the concept is particularly evident in the choice of the hanging lanterns, selection of colors and materials, design of motifs, and organization of space.

Programming development:
• A teashop design was developed for a pre-selected site
• No structural changes were made to the building
• Function requirements and spatial layout for a contemporary teashop were based on the literature review, study of historic and current Chinese teahouse designs, as well as an analysis of local American coffee shops
• Appropriate finishes and furnishings were selected
• A lighting scheme was developed
• Original designs were developed for selected interior details
• The project conforms to the BOCA code and ADA guidelines.

This project was developed for a proposed site in a university town and with a target market of university students and faculty. Based on this physical site and findings, a plan for the space was developed and is shown in Figure 41.

The design

Functional areas:
Traditional functions of teahouses are modified and contemporary functions are added in order to meet the needs of the target market in America. For instance, bright and natural light, as
Figure 41. Floor plan of proposed teashop
the traditional features, are kept in this teahouse design. Hard wood stools are replaced by contemporary chairs for more comfort. In addition, contemporary conveniences and equipment are used in this teashop.

This teashop is planned to be built in America, which has a totally different cultural background from Chinese culture. Therefore, the functions of the teashop are designed not only for serving tea, but also for introducing Chinese tea culture and art. Since this teashop is located in a university town and targets university students and faculty as clientele, the space planning considers both the traditional functions for serving tea and the new function to suit students' lifestyles. For instance, a bar area, not found in a Chinese teahouse, is added to this teahouse. A comparison of activities found in Chinese teahouses and local American coffee shops helped to develop a list of activities for the contemporary teashop. The design provides space for all of the following activities:

- Tea drinking
- Socializing
- Reading books, magazines, newspaper, and doing homework (using personal computer).
- Workshops on tea preparing, traditional Chinese art, and culture
- Art exhibitions
- Selling different kinds of Chinese tea, tea drinks, fruit juice, ice cream, and traditional Chinese snack food
- Providing an introduction to different kinds of tea and tea sets as well as tea preparation instruction.
- Offering both counter service and table service.

The proposed site includes a store area with 1770 square ft. and an outdoor seating area. The space is organized into four functional parts, which are a service area, kitchen, seating area, and outdoor seating area.

- **Service area**

  The service area is located at the right side of the entrance, which can be viewed directly from the front windows and can be seen upon entering the teashop. This area consists of two parts: one is for selling tea, tea drinks, snack food and servicing customers’ orders (see Figure 42); the other is a bar area (see Figure 43). Considering that university students are on a limited financial income, both counter and table service is offered. A large display case based on the
traditional BuoGuJia (antique display) is standing against the back wall for holding different kinds of tea and tea sets. The counter in the service area is used for storing tea sets, preparing tea and food, and displaying different kinds of snack food and tea. It includes: one glass counter for holding snack food and two wooden counters contain a cashier unit, a glass shelf for displaying tea and a small box for holding menus and tea brewing instructions. Opposite this main counter is the self-service counter, which provides sugar, cream, hot water, ice water and other small items.

• Kitchen area

The kitchen is located at the right back corner of the store in order to be connected with both the interior service area and the outdoor courtyard. The kitchen space is limited, but adequate for providing hot water, cooking part of the snack foods, and cleaning tea sets. In addition, space has been allowed for storing, preparing, and cooking food. Commercial kitchen equipment is used to serve each function.

• Seating area

The seating area occupies the major portion of the interior area, and serves both individual and group activities. The middle section of the teashop is more open, while along the side wall the seating area is divided by interior partitions, and the ceiling is lowered to create a more private feeling (see Figure 44). The kitchen and service area are conveniently connected with this area for serving purposes. A door opens to the outdoor seating area. Two windows are added to the back wall for more natural light and also to connect the indoor and outdoor seating areas visually.

The color palette for this area combines historical red color and natural earth tone colors from teapots. In addition, to reflect the contemporary image, the complementary color green of tea is used.

Contemporary designs for tables and chairs are used in these areas. This furniture is designed to be movable and for easy of maintenance. Based on the data from local coffee shops, a table for two was chosen as the basic form. These tables can be rearranged to a larger size according to the requirements of a group.
Figure 42. Perspective view of service area
Figure 43. Perspective view of bar area
Outdoor seating area

An outdoor seating area of about 1500 square ft. is located behind the store area. Two doors open to connect this area with the indoor area: one from the seating area, the other from the kitchen. This area is designed to accommodate both individual and group activities similar to the indoor seating area. Two awnings are attached above the doors to achieve a consistent exterior appearance. Besides the original trees, bamboo is planted around the wall. Contemporary designs for outdoor lighting fixtures, exterior wooden tables and chairs with natural wood color, have been selected (see Figure 45).
Lighting design:

Lighting for the interior space is designed to both illuminate the functional areas and to complement the design concept. Contemporary lighting techniques and fixtures are used. Each functional area is designed with different lighting levels. The service area is highlighted to attract the customers’ attention and the bar area and tea drinking area have lower lighting levels. In the service area, compact fluorescent downlighting illuminates the counter top. In the tea drinking area, compact fluorescent downlighting illuminates each tabletop. Wall lamps detailed with traditional motifs provide illumination for the paintings on the wall. Track lighting is used to provide illumination for the display case and screen partition. The traditional palace lamps found in the historic teahouses led to the selection of a contemporary hanging lighting fixture. This fixture is composed of two cylinders hanging on a steel frame. Design of this fixture is the inspiration for the selection of other materials, furnishings, and the design of the wall lamp. The wall lamp is designed as a half-circle shape. Its semi-transparent glass used the same materials as the lower part of hanging fixture, is decorated with the same motif as the interior partition, and is supported by a steel frame. Compact fluorescent lamps are used in the lighting fixtures (see Figure 46).

Interior design features:

Design features reported on historic and contemporary teahouses provided a rich resource for design inspiration for the interior of the teashop. Selection of materials, colors, and art items was based on Chinese tradition, but with a contemporary interpretation. The color palette for this teashop combines the natural earth tone colors from teapots, green colors from tea, and traditional Chinese red color. Natural wood material combined with contemporary material, such as aluminum and glass are used. Calligraphy and paintings of historical tea producing processes were selected. The interior design features can be organized into three parts, which are interior furnishings, furniture, and interior partitions.

- Interior furnishings

The interior furnishings include all the interior surfaces of the teashop, which are interior walls, ceiling, floor, and window treatments. The designs of these elements were all inspired by historical Chinese teahouses, traditional architecture, and tea sets. Figures 47 show the section and elevation of interior walls.
Figure 45. Perspective view of outdoor seating
Figure 46. Ceiling plan of the proposed teashop
Figure 47. Section and elevation of the proposed teashop

- A-A Section
- Elevation of the east wall
- B-B Section
- Elevation of the south wall

Figure 47. Section and elevation of the proposed
The surrounding walls have 30” high natural cherry wood panels and are painted above. Photos and paintings relating to tea and tea culture, such as historical tea preparation utensils or the tea production process, are selected and used to decorate the wall in the seating area. Students’ artwork can also be displayed in this area. The ceiling of the central seating area is higher and all ceiling is of acoustic tiles. Cherry wood was selected for the flooring for the central seating area. Carpet was used in the tea drinking area along the walls for increased comfort and absorbing background noise.

On the front window, sliding window treatments and a bench inspired from Meirenkao (chair back) were designed. Each window has six panels of window treatment which can stack back to both sides. Semi-translucent glass is used on the aluminum frame of each piece. The teashop logo is printed on the central part of the window treatment that serves as advertisement (see Figure 48).

- Furniture

The furniture used in the contemporary teashop serves the functions of tea drinking, tea servicing, and individual and group communication. The selection and design of the furniture for this project were based on typical pieces found in historic Chinese teahouse and local coffee shops, which includes tables, chairs, bar and display case.

Two sizes of small, movable tables with laminate tops were selected. One is 24"x24" suitable for one or two persons, and the other is 30"x30" suitable for two to four persons. These tables can be rearranged for different requirements. The laminate table tops are framed with natural cherry wood borders. The same wood is also used in the display case design (see Figure 50).

Fan-shaped traditional stools found in the historical teahouses influenced the choice of chairs for the interior. Chairs with subtle fan-shaped backs and upholstered seats were chosen. A similar stool design is used in the bar area. A chair with manufacture title of “Tea Chairs” is chosen from outdoor furniture were used on the deck.

The bar area is designed to accommodate tea preparation and tea drinking. The bar counter has two levels; the upper level is for customers drinking tea and the lower one is for employees serving tea and preparing food. Facing inward and below the inside counters are cabinets for storage. Working surfaces are finished with a laminate material. A built-in display case, which screens the seating area, is designed as a focal point. Four historical paintings, which
are of tea planting, tea picking, tea producing, and tea drinking (see Figure 49), are attached to the wall of this display case as the background. Several tea sets are display on the cabinet and glass shelves. The cabinets are the same cherry wood as the wall panels to keep a uniform appearance (see Figure 50, 51).

The design of the large storage and display case on the wall behind the bar and service area is based on historical "Bogujia" (antique display case). The case will be used for storing and displaying different kinds of tea and tea sets. The lower part of the case is for storage cabinets (see Figure 50).

- **Interior art items**

  The screen partitions found in the traditional Chinese teahouses were the basis for designing the interior partition for the contemporary teashop. The interior partition, which is placed in front of the entrance, helps to lead the customers to the service area and reinforces the visual image upon entering the teashop. Five screen partitions are used along the interior walls in the seating area and bar area. Glass is used between the aluminum frames. Instead of paintings, a transparent Chinese character Cha (tea) is used against frosted glass (see Figure 44).

  The types of tea sets chosen for use in this teashop vary from porcelain, pottery, and glass. One tea set includes a tea plate, a teapot for brewing tea, and teacups.

Figure 48. Sliding window treatment
Figure 49. Tea painting
Figure 50: Display case and display area
Figure 51. Perspective view of display case
Façade and signage

The façade was designed to project the design concept, and the entire corporate identity of the teashop through using the same motif, materials and color scheme. It includes attached awnings, windows, exterior lighting fixtures, and a logo. The entrance is kept at its original location and is designed as an integral part of the façade (see Figure 52, 53).

The name "ChaMo Ge" (tea art) for this teashop is derived from the traditional Chinese idiom "ChaMo JuXiang". "Mo" (traditional ink) refers to the art of Chinese traditional painting and calligraphy. This name is chosen not only because the teashop is located in a university town, but because the teashop is designed as a place for introducing the Chinese tea culture and the art of tea drinking. The teashop logo, which contains both Chinese and English characters, hangs on the façade near the entrance. The logo is intended to communicate that tea drinking is an art form and has close cultural ties with China (see Figure 54).

Two white awnings are attached above each window to the façade. The motif that was used in the interior of this teahouse is printed in red along with the logo on these awnings. Window frames were painted in dark brown. Two abstract lighting fixtures similar to the interior wall fixtures hang on each side of the windows to achieve a uniform appearance (see Figure 55).

The entrance is located in a recessed area on the right side of the façade and forms a transition space between the street and the teashop. The entrance door is designed with the same pattern as the interior partition to create a uniform image. The wall and ceiling of the entrance area are painted.

BOCA codes and ADA guidelines:

The Building Officials and Code Administrators (BOCA) code and ADA guidelines were followed in developing plans for this teashop. All materials applied directly to exposed surfaces used for interior finish and trim are classified in accordance with ASTM-E84 flames spread rating (Class I, 0-25; Class II, 26-75; Class III, 76-200) (code 803.2, 804.2.1). All interior screens, hangings and other decorative materials suspended from walls or the ceiling are noncombustible or flame resistant (code 807.2). Egress lighting is also provided in the teashop. The design and construction of facilities are accessible to physically disabled persons (code 1101.1). The Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) guidelines have been considered in the design of the interior space and selection of materials. Accessible routes, without steps, are at least 3’ wide and provide access to all interior and outdoor seating areas. All tables and chairs are
Figure 52. Exterior façade of the proposed teashop
Figure 53. Perspective view of facade
Figure 54. Logo of the proposed teashop
Figure 55. Interior and exterior lighting fixtures
movable and can be rearranged for different purposes. Accessible tables are provided for wheel chair users. Two accessible restrooms are provided within the teashop.

A consistent general lighting level is provided. Natural light from windows is controlled by the window treatment to avoid excessive glare during sunny periods of the day. Task lighting is provided to the tabletops, service counter, self-service counter, and bar counter for activities, such as reading and writing.

Summary

Tea is the world's oldest and today's most popular beverage in the world. Tea drinking has long been an important aspect of the Chinese culture, which has evolved as an art form called “tea ceremony”. Teahouses in ancient China played an important role in the social life and accommodated many activities in addition to tea drinking. The custom of tea drinking spread to many adjacent countries, and by 1644 AD, it was introduced into Europe and America.

Recently, the U.S. tea market has increased dramatically due to growing interest in Asian culture, ethnic food, and the health benefits of tea. The growth in tea drinking and the success of coffeehouses/shops indicates a potential demand for teashops, which led to the purpose of this study.

Specifically, the purpose for this project was to design a contemporary teashop deriving design inspirations from traditional Chinese culture and design. The initial step for the study was to gather information on the history of Chinese tea, tea drinking in Europe and America, and the development and the design of Chinese traditional teahouses. This process helped to get a complete understanding of the thousand year old tea drinking culture and determine the historical design features. Data collected from four local coffee shops helped to determine the activities, services, and functional considerations that were needed to design a contemporary teashop.

The design concept was developed based on these findings. The space plan for this teashop has combined the traditional tea serving needs and the most successful features of local coffee shops, and adapted them for a specific site. The resulting design for the teashop has integrated Chinese teahouse traditions and functions in many subtle ways into a contemporary setting. Selection of finishes, furnishings, and the original design of interior partitions, window treatments, lighting fixtures, logo, and display areas serve to create a teashop with an aesthetically pleasing contemporary interior.