

New Trends in Fine Arts Education in the Post-epidemic and the Implications for China-Guangzhou

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Abstract. Guangzhou is an economically developed city in southern China. Its art education philosophy has always been innovative and able to blend the best of East and West, but it is also in need of a breakthrough in the COVID-19 post-epidemic. This thesis looks at the current state of art education in Guangzhou's kindergarten through twelfth grade (K12) level and universities. It compares art education in and out of K12 schools in Guangzhou and points out that teaching children's collages by turning waste into treasure can build environmental awareness while increasing students' interest in learning. In addition, the teaching of environmental design in Guangzhou's universities is constantly innovating, but it suffers from problems such as inadequate teacher deployment. Each university at different levels has its talent training objectives, and issues such as its ranking and reputation in the industry affect the employment of graduates. In the face of the sudden COVID-19 epidemic, teachers also consider whether a biophilic teaching philosophy can be embedded in teaching art at all levels in Guangzhou in the post-epidemic. While Guangzhou K12 schools and out-of-school institutions are also trying to attract parents' and students' attention to the art curriculum through waste to treasure and outdoor excursions, it is more important that students understand how to harmonize with nature than before the epidemic.

1 Introduction

Art education is one of the five disciplines of modern education: moral, intellectual, physical, social, and aesthetic. It develops students' observation and aesthetic skills, thus guiding them to transform what they see, hear and think into works of art and to improve their hands-on skills. As one of the first cities to develop art education, Guangzhou is located in the south of China, close to Hong Kong and Macau, and the opening up of the country has allowed it to communicate with the rest of the world. Art education is a fusion of Eastern and Western educational philosophies and has a group of daring art education seniors who are constantly innovating the art education model, making Guangzhou a leader in art education reform in China. In recent years, Guangzhou art education, especially art education in primary and secondary schools outside of school, is constantly exploring new educational methods to engage students. Guangzhou's university art education is also pushing the boundaries, with design education, while retaining its original form of education starting from the basics, looking to gradually screen appropriate design courses and improve the university design teaching system, taking into account the issues of today's society's demand for design talents.

As an important subject in design education, environmental design is responsible for training design talents who can improve the living environment. In the past two years, the COVID-19 epidemic has affected human life,

work, and study to varying degrees, while making the teaching of environmental design face new challenges. The trend of environmental design has also changed with the sudden onslaught of the epidemic, tending to pay more attention to the harmony and unity of man and nature, and biophilic design has gradually become a new trend in environmental design. In the face of the changing trend in environmental design, art education in Guangzhou universities, such as design education, also needs to be innovated around the new trend of biophilic, to enable students to keep pace with the development of design in their future employment, and to gradually guide the conception of how to permeate the new trend in the teaching of art education in Guangzhou primary and secondary schools, to encourage students to respect nature, to become good friends with nature, and to promote Guangzhou and even Guangdong arts education in keeping with the times. Guangzhou arts education will continue to be the former of art education in China.

This thesis talks about the advantage and disadvantages of art education in Guangzhou today. It proposes the introduction of a biophilic teaching concept through art education at different age levels and also summarizes the development trends of environmental design in the post-epidemic.

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2 The Current Situation of Fine Arts Education in Guangzhou, China

2.1 K12

In Guangzhou, China today, many children are introduced to art education from the age of three or so. They start with what appears to be scribble to be able to use dots, lines, and even surfaces to unconsciously organize their pictures. This is a common initial state of art education for this age group. A survey shows that in some Guangzhou kindergartens the teaching of art was more likely to be in the form of direct coloring on printed paper, lacking the initial development of their modeling skills. However, a previous study found that a kindergarten teacher at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts about her art teaching in kindergarten. She mentioned that she encouraged her students to collect discarded objects to create children's collages so that they could develop an awareness of environmental protection and at the same time learn how to turn waste into treasure and make collage materials out of discarded paper, bottles, and cans. The study also shows the correlation between children's collages and collage children's illustrations, suggesting that children's visual and tactile responses interact with each other and that students when looking at collage children's illustrations, because the illustrations use a variety of three-dimensional materials that appeal to the reader, thus makes the reader want to touch the illustrations as a way of increasing their interest in reading [1]. The study shows that it is more effective than simply coloring to guide students to use a variety of materials to create attractive artwork.

Today, many of Guangzhou's out-of-school art institutions also use various materials as a guide. After deciding on a painting theme, teachers use various forms (e.g., videos, PPTs, etc.) to vividly introduce students to artists and their works that are relevant to the topic and it gives students a visual overview of the artist and their style. After that, students begin to use a variety of materials (not just brushes and paints, but also materials that require tearing, printing, pasting, etc.) to make their artwork. This stimulates their interest and teaches them art-related skills, while it is not simply a mechanical process of coloring, but also a way of teaching them about art. The mode of teaching is used to a greater or lesser extent by some teachers in Guangzhou's out-of-school art institutions. However, except in Guangzhou's professional art secondary schools, which provide students with more comprehensive, professional, and progressive training in their artistic abilities to guide them to become professional art talents, the teaching of art in Guangzhou's ordinary primary and secondary schools is more focused on the cognition and appreciation of art, but simply theoretical teaching methods are difficult to raise the interest of students.

2.2 Higher Education

2.2.1 Fine Arts Education

The previous study shows that students begin their arts education very early, which is indispensably related to parental guidance. Parents who enroll in off-campus art training courses attach great importance to the artistic cultivation of their children, while some parents expect their children to engage in art-related careers in the future, such as artists, designers including architects, etc. It requires a solid foundation in art from a young age, leading to a large number of off-campus art institutions in Guangzhou at the K12 stage. In recent years, as the popularity of study abroad continues to grow, art education-related preparatory teaching is also being implemented to deliver high-quality art talents to foreign art colleges and universities. Another part of students who are admitted to Guangzhou colleges and universities through the Chinese domestic college entrance examination route, when they are satisfied with their college entrance examination results, they consider more about the setting of art-related majors in colleges and universities, its faculty configuration, and the popularity in the industry. Thus, different batches of colleges and universities in Guangzhou (including comprehensive colleges and universities) set up art-related majors, even reaching a situation close to saturation.

In the face of the more difficult employment for college graduates in recent years, Guangzhou colleges and universities are constantly adjusting to the setting of art-related majors. For example, some Guangzhou colleges and universities retain traditional art majors (two major categories of fine arts and design, including Environmental Design, Industrial Design, Graphic Design, etc.). The universities integrate the resources of other departments to create new art-related majors such as art and cultural management. In addition to the change of specialization, the universities also consider improving the art appreciation ability of students (including non-art majors) on campus, so that art exhibitions (including lectures by design masters), concerts, and school tours by the Guangzhou Ballet are carried out in Guangzhou universities. This is a way of bringing art to campus as an after-school activity, enriching students' after-school lives and enhancing their artistic literacy. From the perspective of aesthetic education in colleges and universities, it has indeed played a role. At the same time, student societies in Guangzhou's colleges and universities also organize art-related activities such as making handbills and handmade ornaments under the guidance of their teachers. The annual flea market at Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts in the past allowed students to display and sell their handmade artworks, and they exchanged ideas on how to make them in the process, making a mini art exchange.

2.2.2 Environmental Design

Environmental design, as the name implies, refers to the design of indoor and outdoor spaces through the integration of art, scientific and technical knowledge related to the discipline, which generally comprises three major

components: architecture, landscape, and interior design, including professional courses (hand-drawn thematic design, computer graphic, manual modeling, etc.). Some art colleges are also exploring the previous teaching model of "teaching, learning, research, and production", and through the integration of resources from other disciplines in universities, encourage students to participate in joint workshops and be overseas exchange students [2].

Throughout Guangzhou, universities will adjust the curriculum of environmental design courses according to their teaching characteristics and talent training objectives [3]. Some professional courses are not carried out in some universities because the university has problems in equipping professional teachers and believes that the teachers are not competent to teach the relevant professional courses, so they choose to offer only a few important professional courses in environmental design. In addition, some universities in Guangzhou employ external teachers to make up for the lack of full-time teachers in teaching environmental design, which has both advantages and disadvantages for the teaching of environmental design. The advantage is that more professional courses can be carried out smoothly, but the disadvantage is that the instability of the teachers may lead to differences in the curriculum of each year, which will not enable the established talent training objectives to be implemented.

In terms of talent training goals, Guangzhou universities are based on training more versatile environmental design professionals, expecting students to be able to perform jobs related to environmental design (e.g., draughtsman, space designer, display artist, architect, landscape designer, etc.) after graduation. Post-Secondary colleges that offer environmental design courses focus more on the development of students' professional skills (e.g., computer graphics, hand-drawing skills, etc.) and less on theoretical courses such as design history than undergraduate colleges. The institutions' visibility, ranking, and professionalism are significant for graduates' employment. If environmental design graduates graduate from undergraduate institutions with high visibility, ranking, and professionalism, they may work in well-known design firms, real estate development companies, architectural research institutes, etc. In contrast, graduates from institutions with average popularity and ranking, and with a relatively short period in environmental design, may not be able to get hired even if their graduates professionalism can compete with 211 and 985 projects and Academic of Fine Arts [10]. Guangzhou's universities are becoming saturated with environmental design majors, and it may be necessary to consider how to consolidate or reduce the number of universities offering environmental design majors in the future based on research trends in the discipline.

3 the Impact of the Epidemic on Fine Arts Education in Guangzhou at All Levels

3.1 K12 Fine Arts Education in Guangzhou

In the last two years, the COVID-19 epidemic has suddenly swept across the world, not only posing a threat to human life but also disrupting the old face-to-face teaching model. Schools at all levels in Guangzhou had to adopt an online teaching model when the epidemic struck. Teachers transmit their knowledge to students through any kind of online conferencing software or teaching platform [4,5]. Students answer questions posed by teachers online, sometimes in group discussions and assignment reports, while teachers answer students' questions and make appropriate comments simultaneously in the online classroom, and communicate with parents on time through online meetings or social media. However, art education has its specialized characteristics, with students working hands-on while the teacher provides guidance. In particular, some students in K12 art education in Guangzhou are still in the passive learning stage, resistant to subjects they are not interested in, and even more bored by the single online mode of delivery.

Apart from K12 schools which could not stop teaching online without permission during the epidemic, some offline off-campus art education institutions in Guangzhou were also forced to stop classes. The reason for this is that, from an art teaching perspective, teachers can show their students classroom materials (photos, videos, etc. of artists and their works related to the subject) online and use computer brushes for demonstrations. However, as far as K12 students are concerned, the atmosphere of online learning is not as strong as that of offline learning. In particular, during the free creative time after the teacher has covered the main points, students may not appreciate the work and thus are unable to create their work across the screen. Moreover, in today's K12 out-of-school art institutions in Guangzhou, each face-to-face lesson is usually no less than one hour. If a 1-hour online lesson is used instead, preschoolers sit in front of a screen for 1 hour, affecting their eyesight, while their concentration is not able to focus, thus making the lesson much less effective. In addition, one of the more important aspects of art teaching is that the teacher personally directs the students' current work. Sometimes, if the students have a lot of doubts after the teacher has verbalized them, the teacher will revert to explaining them in other vivid forms, demonstrating as he or she does so - how to create a work of art. This is what makes the subject of art different from other subjects. As can be seen, K12 out-of-school art education in Guangzhou, where the face-to-face format is preferred, faced the dilemma of not being able to carry out teaching activities smoothly and effectively during the epidemic.

In the face of the epidemic, K12 in-school art education uses online teaching mode to complete their teaching tasks. However, some off-campus art education institutions that do not wish to suspend classes have to consider how to carry out their online teaching work. As a result, online K12 out-of-school art education will also become a

trend. It attracts the attention of parents by being cheaper and not having to worry about suspensions. In Guangzhou, more online K12 art education is recruiting a large number of art-related graduates from universities to teach online because of the need to control operating costs. This new development trend will solve the employment problem of some graduates of art-related majors. However, from the perspective of art teaching does not meet some teaching needs well.

Secondly, K12 out-of-school art education in Guangzhou is also promoting students to participate in their own organized and different forms of outdoor excursions [12]. This form of outdoor sketching art education is highly sought after in Guangzhou during the epidemic's remission period. From the parent's perspective, they may choose to accompany their young children on outdoor activities, which provide better one-to-one security for their children and a meaningful opportunity to march outdoors. They believe that while learning artistic expertise, their children can play in nature with their partners, experience nature, and appreciate the need for harmony between man and nature. From the perspective of the out-of-school art education providers, they hope to involve parents and students through various teaching methods. During an epidemic, outdoor sketching activities may be rescheduled or canceled due to the sudden onslaught of the epidemic, and organizers have to take certain risks. However, outdoor sketching close to nature is gradually replacing teachers' self-organized outdoor sketching sessions as the new trend for school trips of a certain scale and with the cooperation of many parties.

3.2 Fine Arts Education in Higher Education

Art education in Guangzhou universities under the COVID-19 epidemic is struggling to move forward. As in section 3.1, art education has a special character. Teachers need students to constantly visit various art exhibitions and to examine and study different practical design projects. However, due to sporadic outbreaks of the epidemic, these very important aspects of art education are often not implemented as scheduled, which has had varying degrees of impact on the smooth running of art education programs. At the same time, art education, especially some professional foundation courses in universities (e.g., drawing, coloring, life drawing courses for younger students) require on-site life drawing to discuss with students the accuracy of form perspective, color coordination, etc., making it more difficult for such courses to be successfully delivered via online delivery.

The same problem is faced in the teaching of environmental design in Guangzhou universities. Previous studies have shown that in a combined course on the renovation of landscape architecture and commercial design of the four famous gardens in Lingnan, students are required to make a field trip to the four famous gardens in Lingnan, followed by drawing and model making. However, the four famous gardens in Lingnan will not be open to the public due to epidemic prevention and control, which will affect the curriculum, resulting in the need to change the original teaching plan and sometimes forcing the abandonment of some teaching methods used for intensive teaching. Similarly, in some universities in Guangzhou, such as the on-site display of art installations (or architectural models of environmental design) before the epidemic, teachers instruct teams of students to make hand-made models or art installations of a certain scale and then find suitable venues on or off campus for on-site display [6]. Handmade models cannot be made online, and even if they are first handmade and then displayed online the results are not comparable to those offline. After all, architectural models are affected by light and wind when displayed on site, and students can collect relevant data for statistics and analysis to facilitate understanding of the relevant expertise in architecture. There are also outdoor installations by experimental art students that want people to experience the creators' designs live, some of which require people to enter them to experience their function as a concentrated human activity. This will be forced to be suspended in the event of an outbreak.

As the epidemic continues today, and as people continue to battle new coronaviruses, they are also thinking: that in the past they have taken too much from nature without giving much thought to the relationship between man and nature. It is at this point that the idea of getting closer to nature arises. Today's environmental design, especially in the interior space design sector (e.g., As shown in Fig.2, office spaces, shopping malls, etc.) is also adopting a biophilic design philosophy that leads users to think about the relationship between nature and humans [9]. For example, Professor Marcus Berger of the Rhode Island School of Design focuses on interventional design and the reuse of old objects [11]. Combined with the current situation of teaching environmental design in Guangzhou universities, under the guidance of their professional teachers, students consider adding green plants to the indoor and outdoor environment, as shown in Fig.3, using recycled waste items or environmentally friendly materials to decorate the space, and creating a living environment in harmony and unity with nature (as shown in Fig. 1), which is the responsibility of future designers, architects and other professionals in the post-epidemic period [7, 8, 13].



Fig. 1. Biophilic design concept part of the mind map (Photo credit: Original)



Fig. 2. NION office building in Frankfurt, Germany (Photo credit: <https://www.unstudio.com/zh/page/16495/nion>)



Fig. 3. Part of a bottle temple built from bottles led by temple abbot Phra Khru Vivek Dharmajahn, Sisakul Province, Thailand (Photo credit: <https://stickybee.blogspot.com/2012/06/beer-bottle-temple.html>)

4 Conclusion

In the face of the COVID-19 epidemic that has swept the world, teachers have had to resort to online teaching, question, and answer, and feedback modes to complete their teaching tasks, but not as effective as face-to-face teaching. This has led to a reflection on the issue of harmony between man and nature. Art education in Guangzhou should also continue to change to respond to this new environment. The teaching of environmental design in colleges and universities should not only cover the theory of the relationship between design and the human habitat but also increase the number of design courses aimed at pro-life design (e.g. classes on the design of spaces with pro-life themes such as housing and offices), to echo the world trend in this subject area and lead the way for art education in colleges and universities in Guangdong Province and other cities across China to continue to be at the vanguard of their reform. At the same time, as a form of enlightenment, K12 art education in Guangzhou should also cater to the future trend of demand for talents in the art discipline and further consider how to guide students to develop an ongoing interest in nature from an early age (e.g., recording the growth and changes of a plant in the form of a picture book, etc.), based on the existing pro-life teaching concept.

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