

Research on the Intervention of Contemporary Art in Social Public Space

Xuechun Yuan*

Macau University of Science and Technology

ABSTRACT. In today's rapid economic development, consumer culture has become the main body. In this era, public life is constantly changing, and the original public space with simple physical performance can no longer meet people's demand for public space. As an original force, art intervenes in public space and public life, adding emotional links between space and the public. With the creation form of contemporary art becomes more and more open and advanced, it is increasingly free from space constraints. It has become a development trend for contemporary art to move out of art museums and into social public space and public life. This study focuses on the intervention of contemporary art in social public space in China.

1 Introduction

With the continuous creation and exploration of artistic media, the extension of art has been greatly expanded. The development of contemporary art pursues more questions and reflections on the essence of consciousness after abandoning aesthetic representation, and pays more attention to the expression of artists' self-feelings. At present, there is no clear boundary between various types of arts, and the space of art has been greatly expanded. Contemporary artists are eager to find a new experience that transcends the tradition and opens a new chapter. The creation of contemporary art is no longer bound by space and form, with features of timeliness and uncertainty. It has become a trend for contemporary art to break out of the "white box" and move from exhibition shelves to social public space and public life [1]. In this context, new art exhibition forms deserve to be explored and encouraged, and contemporary art needs new channels to expand its influence, that is, the intervention of contemporary art in public space.

In addition to the openness of public access to space, contemporary art and the environment it creates have a public spirit that attracts citizens to concern common social problems. It creates an artistic ideal that transcends social prejudices and class boundaries, and new public spaces that provide beneficial contact and communication. This new style emphasizes that public art should accept all ordinary citizens.

1.1 Research Purpose

This paper aims to explore the intervention of contemporary art in public space under the background of

commercial dominance. Wang states that it is crucial to find the correct method of "art intervention", and the most ideal development mode of public space under the commercial background [2]. Starting from the problems manifested in the current Chinese public space and the bottlenecks encountered in the development of contemporary art in China, this study focuses on several cases of art intervention in Chinese public space-street art. The study could not only contribute to the development of Chinese contemporary art, but also provide logical clues to the artistic practice of contemporary art interventions in social public space.

The purpose of contemporary art's intervention in public space is to provoke the extensive social concern and reflection through a certain scene, event or abstract concept. It explains the dual construction of materiality and immateriality of space in an artistic way, emphasizes the cultural and social characteristics of space, reflects the value of space in the public and society, gradually finds the way to reconstruct those "old lost space", and finally satisfy the public needs for space [3]. Contemporary art in public space emphasizes public participation and freedom of expression, and its public education function and reshaping function of space history and culture could help to enhance human equality, community identity, liberalism and social morality.

1.2 Research Significance

(1) Providing new ideas and development direction for the construction of public space

The intervention of contemporary art in public space often changes the shape and nature of the surrounding environment, giving space new meaning, atmosphere and possibility of public participation, thus creating more opportunities for people to meet and talk in space. Using

*Corresponding author. Email: naomikyx2020.163.com

art to emphasize the cultural and social characteristics of space reflects the value of public space in the public and society. Contemporary art fully promotes the public cognitive experience of art in rich public places.

For the traditional commercial space, the main function is to meet the public consumption demand, which is relatively single. Today, the number of commercial spaces is growing exponentially, and the competition is particularly fierce. Art has become one of the important ways of commercial space transformation. Art intervention in commercial space enriches the spiritual connotation of commercial space and infuses it with endless vitality.

(2) To meet people's space needs and emphasize individual free expression

Public space is where people gather and flow, and people's spirit is often submerged in the world made by business and capital. In such a world, people's life is regulated by capital and power, and the real individual in the crowd is submerged. Art, as an echo of spirit, always warns people in the space. Under different cultural backgrounds and ideologies, the methods, processes and results of art intervention will have different practical meanings and more possibilities. As artists understand space and construct conceptual frameworks, they can also reconnect with traditional culture, social development and social ideology. The field of art intervention is open, and its emphasis is to lead people to think.

2 Case Application and Analysis of contemporary Art intervention in public Space -- Street Art

If a city is a person, then the streets are the skeletons of that person. The streets connect every corner of the city and every public life. People there may be waiting for a traffic light, chatting on leisure chairs, or waiting for a delicious snack from the stalls. The streets are always busy and unpretentious, where every shot is a story. The large-scale art work "Floating Piers" in Lake Iseo of Italy involving spatial art is shown in figure 2.1. In figure 2.1, the street is used as a platform to express art.

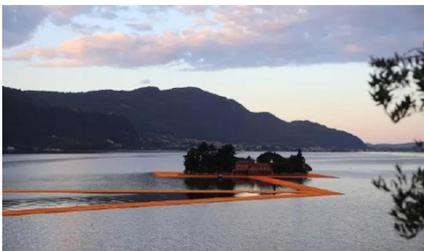


Fig. 1. FLOATING PIERS (Picture source: Google)

2.1 Art Brightens the Old Neighbourhood

When talking about the art intervention in the streets, the first thing that comes to mind is the transformation of the old streets by art, which is also a relatively popular way of neighbourhood renovation. The most classic case is the Soho Street in New York, which is now known as "artist's

paradise" and was once the most concentrated industrial warehouse area in New York. Through art intervention, it has transformed the place into a complete community with residence, commerce and art. In China, with the rapid economic development, a large number of old blocks once appeared due to the fact that they can no longer meet the spiritual needs of the modern public, therefore, the word "demolition" has become a popular word among people. However, the whole reconstruction is not suitable for every block due to its large quantity. Urban renewal is not just about renovating a block or renting space out [4]. In addition, "old street" has memories, emotions and history for the public. With the development of the times, the public consumption upgrade is obvious, and people are more willing to pay for the quality and connotation of consumption experience. Therefore, the reconstruction of old blocks must face the needs of the public, especially the construction of the spiritual world. Consequently, art has also become a major way of urban renewal. The combination of contemporary art and historical culture can not only revitalize the old street, but also provide the possibility of dialogue with contemporary art for the public to meet their needs for spiritual civilization.



Fig. 2. Tianzifang (Picture source: Wu Qiong, Hang Jinfeng. Study on the Reconstruction and Sustainable Development of Historical and Cultural Blocks: A Case study of Tianzifang, Shanghai [J]. Architecture and Culture,2015(12):178-179.)

People who have been to Shanghai must have been to the Bund and "Tianzifang". "Tianzifang", as shown in Figure 2.2, is the first creative park in Shanghai, where all the most distinctive features of this magic city are gathered. The public can feel the real scene of Shanghai's century-old streets truly, find the Shanghai most authentic flavour, and feel the Shanghai most creative art and culture. The artistic transformation of "Tianzifang" has provided an open platform for artistic creators from different countries to communicate with each other. Chinese and Western cultures have also merged and collided here, shining with artistic brilliance.

2.2 Art Intervenes in Street Thinking

Linear street space is an important connector in the community network. When contemporary art intervenes in street space, which makes street space more artistic and richer. It is also a public natural awakening to living culture. By inserting art into community life, it adds vitality to the community, promotes the integrity of the community's spatial connotation, and inspires citizens' enthusiasm for the future development of the old block

and community identity. This provides more friendly opportunities for the interaction between people and artists, and greatly improves the quality of residents' lives. Thus, street space is the closest connection platform between art and daily life.

3 Problems and solutions of contemporary art intervention in social public space

3.1 Problems Manifested in the Process When Contemporary Art Intervenes in Social Space

In the practice of Chinese art intervention in public space, a series of problems often appear, such as the conflict between artists and public aesthetics, especially the public incomprehension and unacceptable attitude toward contemporary art. In addition, art intervention in public space is concentrated in Chinese first-tier cities, so that the distribution and development of art are not balanced. Meanwhile, in the process of creating space, art fails to combine innovation with local culture, resulting in spatial homogeneity. The main reasons for these problems can be summarized as followed:

1. Since art education in China falls behind that of the developed countries, it is impossible for China to popularize art education to the public;

2. Most of the contemporary art intervention space only emphasizes the concept and it is experimental, ignoring to think from public perspective, ignoring the dialogue with the public;

3. Due to the phenomenon of experimental, avant-garde and overly decorative contemporary art, it has become normal to ignore the art intervention of local culture.

3.2 Solving Methods

(1) In the process of art intervention in public space, its role positioning should be accurate. Art is not the leading role, but "human" is the centre of the whole practice. Nowadays, it is common to see that some intervention practice of contemporary art are separable from the public. Therefore, it should be strengthened that the public is not only the source of artistic creation, but also the indispensable power to check whether the artistic works conform to the spirit of space. The significance of contemporary art intervention in public space lies in providing material and spiritual satisfaction to the public, constantly renewing the overall participation of the society and promoting the formation of comprehensive art.

(2) Contemporary art intervention in public space is not blind intervention, and it should be combined with the space feature for emphasizing the locality of art. For example, "Figure 3.1", the Flagship store of Starbucks in Tianjin Henglong Plaza, which opened in 2019, is a masterpiece of palace innovation integrating the ancient and the modern. The cafe is originally the Building of Zhejiang Industrial Bank in Tianjin, designed by Mr. Shen

Liyuan, representing one of the first overseas architects in China. It is a Renaissance building with Italian style, which is full of history and symbolizes the architectural landscape of Tianjin. It has a unique historical status in the eyes of Tianjin people and is listed as a Tianjin cultural relic protection in 1997. Starbucks adheres to the spirit of humanistic care and innovation and combines coffee culture with traditional architecture to create local space. After three years of careful construction, this historic building, being silent for many years, has been revitalized. Here, history and modernity collide and merge, coffee culture and historical architecture combine together, making it a "third space experience of Starbucks Palace".. The entry of Starbucks makes this century-old building open to the public for the first time after decades, and establishing a closer emotional connection with the public.

(3) The way in which contemporary art intervenes in social public space should be constantly innovated. New artistic creation thinking and methods should be adopted to avoid homogenization of art intervention and make contemporary art more future-oriented. In today's increasing art intervention, simple form cannot bring vitality to the space; without innovation, there is no popularity. Therefore, avoiding homogeneity has become the key to its longevity.



Fig. 3. Starbucks Zhenxuan Tianjin Henglong Plaza flagship s
(Picture source: Google)

4. CONCLUSIONS

Public space, as the third place in public life, is very important. Thus, the material and spiritual experience of social public space become crucial for people. Contemporary art intervenes in public space, bringing art into public life bit by bit, quietly changing the living environment of the public and enhancing the public spiritual level.

Contemporary art intervention in public space is a redefinition of public space: to awaken the artistic value of the space; to make the space more attractive and meaningful; and to create more opportunities for public participation [5]. Contemporary artists advocate the equality of all people and respect for the value of each individual life, which is reflected in their artworks in the public space and projected in the art public education. In the rich urban space, contemporary art fully drives the public cognitive experience of art, infuses emotions and thoughts into social public space in its own unique way, and implants infinite possibilities for the development of social public space and contemporary art. This study analyzes several cases of art intervention in public space in China. Future research can be explored in other countries to enrich the relevant studies.

REFERENCES

1. Susan Cahan, Zoya Kocur. Contemporary art and multicultural education [J]. *Art Education*, 1994, 47(2):25-33.
2. Wang M. The mechanism construction of academic exhibition—Reflection from the first Chinese contemporary art annual exhibition and its auction [J]. *Sculpture*, 2006, 99(1):163-164.
3. Tsang L W. Heritage interpretation with art: case studies of adaptive reused buildings: Oil Street Art Space, Cattle Depot, and Comix Home Base [J]. 2017.
4. Enhuber M. Art, space and technology: How the digitisation and digitalisation of art space affect the consumption of art—a critical approach [J]. *Digital Creativity*, 2015, 26(2):121-137.
5. Jan Gehl. *Cities For People*. Washington: Island Press, 2010, 153.
6. Wu Qiong, Hang Jinfeng. Study on the Reconstruction and Sustainable Development of Historical and Cultural Blocks: A Case study of Tianzifang, Shanghai [J]. *Architecture and Culture*, 2015(12): 178-179.