

Strategy Research on the Display Design of Narrative in Intangible Cultural Heritage Venues*

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Abstract—The protection of intangible cultural heritage is an important content of current cultural development. While constantly confirming various intangible cultural heritage projects, currently how to protect these intangible cultural heritages is a crucial issue for China. Exhibition of intangible cultural heritage venues is one way of protection. But with single form of protection, incomplete concept and few relevant theoretical researches currently, the effective protection cannot yet be achieved. With Wufeng Southern Opera as the research object, this paper takes venue protection as the condition, brings in the narrative theory of the literary category and conduct a holistic analysis study from the aspects of elements, plot narration, space narration, activity narration and so on, hoping to form a set of concepts and methods of intangible cultural heritage venue exhibition. The results will serve as guidance for relevant cases and provide reference for the development of China's intangible cultural heritage protection.

Keywords—intangible cultural heritage; exhibition hall; narrative; display design

I. INTRODUCTION

Since the 1990s, the concept of international cultural heritage has been extended from tangible cultural heritage to intangible cultural heritage. It was through "the Convention for the Safeguarding of Intangible Cultural Heritage" (referred to as "the Convention" hereinafter) adopted by UNESCO in 2003 that intangible culture was defined as: various practices, performances, forms of expression, systems of knowledge and skills, as well as relevant tools, objects, handicrafts and cultural venues. According to the statistics of China Intangible Cultural Heritage Website, from 2006 to 2014, China published 4 batches of 3,154 items of 10 categories of intangible cultural heritage, including traditional music, traditional dance, traditional drama, folk art, traditional sports, entertainment and acrobatics, traditional art, traditional techniques, traditional medicine and folk customs. The transmission of these intangible cultural programs relies on oral imparting with physical instruction, and many traditional skills are in danger of disappearing. As an important protection venue of traditional material culture, museums have naturally become the

primary protection place of intangible cultural heritage. At present, the international museum community is also actively exploring the functions and ways of intangible cultural heritage museum protection from both theoretical and practical aspects.

The main functions of traditional museums are collection, research and education, and they are important places for material and cultural protection. With the protection of intangible cultural heritage being included in museums, their function has been expanded, that is, to show the material culture and to express the value system of cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is rich in types and forms. For example, the first intangible cultural project, "the Red Dowry" in Ningbo, Zhejiang province, is a marriage custom in Ningshao Plain. In ancient times, when people married off their daughters, a spectacular could be seen that the bridal sedan chair and dowries, as well as an etiquette team beating drums and gongs formed a long procession winding for miles. In this culture, there are abundant material culture — daily necessities. These artifacts show the craft methods and folk artisan works, among which the manufacture craft and process, the activity process and space of marriage customs, and the local people's aesthetic ideal of pursuing a happy life are also important contents of the culture. The comprehensive display of intangible culture and material culture can allow visitors not only to understand specific crafts, but also to deeply understand the spirit, system and social system of national traditional culture, which is the fundamental purpose and value of intangible cultural heritage protection. Currently the exhibition and expression of these abstract and intangible cultures in museums are in the exploration stage. Improper expression will lead to inaccurate value dissemination or the loss of the culture, and thus cause the failure of cultural protection. At the present stage, it is necessary to strengthen the research on the communication mode of intangible cultural museums in order to truly promote the protection of China's intangible cultural heritage in an effective way.

II. INTANGIBLE CULTURE AND NARRATOLOGY

In "the Convention", UNESCO pointed out that intangible cultural heritage includes five aspects: first, oral legends and representations, including the language of the medium of intangible cultural heritage; second, performing

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arts; third, social customs, etiquette and festivals; four, knowledge and practice related to the natural world and the universe; five, traditional craft skills. The common feature of these cultures is the participation of people, and only with the participation of people can the value of culture be realized. For example, in orally-spread legends and performing arts there are expresser and receiver. The artistry-holder is the information disseminator, which is narrator or performer, while the receiver refers to the listener and the viewer. In this way the cultural dissemination is achieved through narrative and performance activities. The essence of the intangible culture is the relationship between the expresser — the expressive behavior (oral presentation, performance) — the receiver. What is most similar to the relationship of immaterial culture is that of the nature of narratology which has been heating up in the field of literature in recent years.

Narratology originated in France in 1960s, and then developed rapidly and extended to other countries. Narratology is composed of the Latin root *narrato* (narrative, narration) and the Greek suffix *logie* (science). It can be said that narratology is the theory of narrative text. From the point of view of actual development, narratology is the study of written narrative materials dominated by myths, folk tales and novels, and the study of other narrative fields based on this. From the perspective of the relationship between human and behavior, the relationship between narrator and storyteller is presented, which is very similar to the nature of intangible culture. This similarity indicates that the research results and methods of narratology can be incorporated into the study of the display mode of intangible cultural heritage to provide corresponding guidance and reference. Narrative literary works have three aspects of description: functional, behavioral and textual aspects and the expression of intangible culture transmit information through functional space, material carrier and behavior and activity. The designer, that is the narrator, carries out the narrative by controlling space and time, and strategically story organizing, so that information can be accurately and effectively disseminated.

III. STRATEGIES OF THE DISPLAY DESIGN OF NARRATIVE IN INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE VENUES

Venue exhibition is one of the basic modes of intangible cultural heritage protection. The truth is, in over 10 years since the first intangible cultural heritage project was set up, venue exhibition institutions are still in the initial stage of accepting intangible cultural heritage culture, and do not have perfect exhibition ideas and methods in face of so many cultural heritage items. This paper takes narrate theory as the clue to seek for the display mode of intangible cultural heritage under the condition of venue space. The study starts from the analysis of cultural elements, involving space, time, structure, plot and atmosphere, trying to form a relatively complete system.

A. Narrative Elements

Narrative elements in intangible culture include three aspects: narrator (exhibition designer), narrative content

(content of intangible cultural heritage), and recipient (visitors). As the narrator of the whole exhibition, designers arrange the exhibits in the venue space through narrative; visitors walk through the scene along the designed path to feel the story content conveyed by the exhibits and space. Designers organize the material media and space through the way of literary narration, so that it can accurately convey the cultural meaning. Designers are storytellers, and they can use different techniques and strategies when editing stories. The story can be presented from two different perspectives. One is a omniscient perspective, which allows visitors to understand the overall picture of the story, be clear of the background and path of the story, and gradually feel the unfolding story while obtaining the framework. The second is partial perspective, from which the designer does not provide the overall frame information in advance in plot design, but introduces some local points, and then sets a series of turning points in the arrangement of the story, so that the story can present a certain tension, and the emotions of visitors can rise and fall with the development of the story, which makes the story more mysterious and experiential.

Participatory exhibition is more and more adopted in contemporary exhibitions. Exhibitions are no longer unilateral declaration language, in that to transmit information, even accurate and effective information, the words and feedback of the information receiver are indispensable. Visitors' voice can be realized in the exhibition. Due to their different growing environment and educational conditions, the way and logic of participation are different, so under their joint participation, the information transmission presents different depth and breadth. The inheritance of intangible culture is the basis of intangible cultural heritage's survival. Objects are the by-products of culture, and only when skills and behaviors are transmitted, can the whole culture continue.

B. Spatial Narrative

Space narrative is an important research direction of current narrative theory. Space can be divided into story space and text space in the study of literary narrative, mainly referring to the place where the story takes place. From the physical level, space has the dimension of size, location and unit. From the cultural level, spatial forms can convey different emotions. In traditional museum exhibition, a main line is designed around the theme. The main line is composed of segmented information contents that transmit and extend the hierarchy and structure of display contents in an ordered way, which from the perspective of space reflects the relationship and overall structure between spatial units. In addition, contrasts of different heights and sizes, opening and closing, concealment and exposure, degree of curvature and degree of tightness are designed to make the space atmosphere reflect the space where the story takes place so as to help readers better understand the content.

In terms of structure setting, linearity is the most common mode of expression, in which the space is designed according to the time and logical sequence of the story, and visitors follow the design route to watch. In Shengzhou Yue Opera Museum, there is a rich base of material exhibits,

including life photos and objects of celebrities in different times, on the basis of which three halls are arranged by the museum in sequence of events: origins of Yue Opera (Chinese folk rap, song team, Shaoxing opera of male singing), development of Yue Opera (Shaoxing Opera of female singing, female Yue Opera), climax of Yue Opera (after the liberation of China). The spaces are connected in a linear relationship according to time sequence.

C. Time Narrative

The research on narrative time mainly focuses on the relationship between "story" and "discourse", and the concepts of "story time" and "discourse time" are put forward. "Story time" refers to the time needed for the story to take place, while "discourse time" refers to the time spent telling the story. In his book "Narrative Discourse", Genette, a French scholar, theoretically elaborated the relationship between the two and put forward three concepts: time distance, time series and frequency.

Chronology refers to the inversion between the order of speech and the order of story, in which the narration recalls the past from the present. The chronology of the story is the usual sequence, and the sequential development of time and causality in accordance with the routine of events is the cognitive mode that readers are accustomed to. When time is out of place, it upends conventional wisdom and makes the story more appealing. In the concept of Huaguangjiao No.1 special exhibition in Hainan Museum, it is narrated first that a Chinese fisherman fished out a piece of porcelain in 2002, which serves as the beginning; then it traces back to the Song Dynasty in 1300 AD and uncovers the development of China's maritime silk road at that time; next, the course of events is narrated; finally, it goes back to 2005 and reveal the results of the event. The flashback arrangement of the whole sequence can more effectively drive the audience's emotions.

Time interval refers to the relationship between the length of a story and the length of a text. Gennett proposed the concepts of overview, scene, omission and pause. An overview is formed when the narrative time is shorter than the time span when the story proceeds. In museum exhibitions, the length of the audience's time is usually used to sum up the length of the whole story. And the scene means that the narrative time equals the story time. In literary works it can be a character dialogue, just as in the process of character's behavior, which can be represented in a museum exhibition by the scenario reduction or image media setting with the characters, actions, dialogues and circumstances. And there are differences between image media and static scene restore in an exhibition. Although both are the expression of a specific character and a story, image media is an activity of a period of time in the time dimension, which develops simultaneously with the exhibition behavior. While the fixed scene is set in a situation in which the story time stops with the watch time on. Such processing will lengthen the time of the story infinitely, and make audience subjectively construct the story by bridging the content gaps.

D. Plot Narrative

In her book "Western Narratology: Classical and Postclassical", Shen Dan states that plot refers to the arrangement of events, including "characters" and "actions" and plot refers to the change and process of a story. From this can the features of the plot be classified: first there should be the element of characters, that is, the protagonist of the story; second, there should be the course of action. The theoretical discussion of plots can be traced back to Aristotle's aesthetic book "Poetics". Plot needs to be holistic. Aristotle pointed out that the parts of a beautiful thing should have a certain arrangement in each of its parts, like a certain volume, and a certain length of the plot.

The Beijing Opera culture exhibition hall at the capital museum occupies the height of a two-storey building. Around the Beijing Opera stage lie the exhibitions in three directions where costume props and other material exhibits of Beijing Opera are displayed, and the audience is right facing the stage. The stage is both an exhibition and a performance venue. During the performance, the audience and the actors on the stage form a complete narrative plot, with the participation of characters of both sides, the development of time and the promotion of the drama. Traditional skills are included in intangible culture, such as brush making skills, gardening skills, wine making skills, printing and dyeing skills, weaving skills, etc. Craft exhibiting spot where inheritors demonstrate the craft on site is usually set up to show viewers the manufacturing process. Sometimes this process is one-way, while some projects are designed to allow visitors to experience the production process and directly participate in the plot and feel the culture. The organization of the contents of the intangible cultural heritage exhibition can be arranged according to the plot. The Exhibition of the Miao Batik Culture in Danzhai is composed of four parts: the first part "Traveling Through the Imagination of Space" tells the history of thousands of years with the clue of the whirlpool bird on Miao "wotuo" (batik clothes); the second part, "Historical Narrative of the Flourishing Miao People" finished by the female painters shows the scenes of farming, production and life of the Miao ethnic group; the third part, "The Legend in the Passage of Time" shows the Miao batik culture; the last part "The Fashion of Delicate Touch with Wax" displays the innovative design works of the fashion designers, batik inheritors. Each part is an independent and complete narrative of the object, making the whole story more three-dimensional and full, with clear levels.

IV. CONCLUSION

Museum communication of intangible culture is a hot topic in modern times. The diversity of intangible cultural heritage is the embodiment of China's long and splendid history and culture, therefore maintaining the diversity of intangible cultural heritage in the process of inheritance is the key to cultural protection. Using the techniques of sequence, rhythm, time, space and plot control in narratology theory for exhibition design can not only effectively and comprehensively show culture, but also be an effective measure to maintain cultural diversity. At present, narrative

theory has been extended to architecture, landscape, urban design and other fields, and a corresponding theoretical system has been formed. Since attempts have been made in the application of narrative theory in the field of display design, this paper focuses on the narrative theory in the exhibition mode of intangible cultural heritage venues. It is hoped to take this study as a starting point to explore the ways of inheritance and transmission of intangible cultural heritage, so as to facilitate the development of China's intangible cultural heritage protection.

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