

# The Social Implication of Public Art Dialogue Taking the 2019 Urban Space Art Season as an Example

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## ABSTRACT

Public art plays an obvious role in promoting urban renewal and urban sustainable development in the process of intervening in urban public spaces. It is a cultural event with the characteristics of "publicity". In addition, public art can trigger social dialogue with multiple meanings, which include the dialogue between public art and the city, the dialogue with the environment, the dialogue with the historical context, and the dialogue with the community and the public. Taking the Shanghai Urban Space Art Season in 2019 as an example, this paper explores the relationship between public art and urban development through public art activities.

**Keywords:** Public art dialogue, Society, Urban Space Art Season.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The word "Public Art", which is composed of "public" and "art", has the experience of space and the acquisition of aesthetics. From the very beginning, it has the experience of space and the acquisition of aesthetics, including the personal experience of forms and images, and the meaning of aesthetic activities in the city with the communication needs of people as the core.[1] The "public" in public art refers to a public space, as well as public issues, activities and public discourse. "Art" is different from the art works that were placed in urban public spaces in the form of "goods" in the past. It pays more attention to its cultural attributes. The biggest difference between it and traditional art is that it triggers the most extensive dialogue between the public and art, Communication and participation. [2] Therefore, public art dialogue has multiple social meanings due to its "publicity", which includes the dialogue between public art and city, the dialogue with environment, the dialogue with historical context, and the dialogue with community and the public.

## 2. SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF PUBLIC ART DIALOGUE

### 2.1 Dialogue with Cities

Without exception, urban public space art projects go hand in hand with urban development. An open and mature urban system is the prerequisite for public art projects. Long-term high-quality public art projects are an indispensable driving force in the process of urban renewal. The two complement each other to form an organic whole. The cultural level and cultural atmosphere of a city have become an important basis for evaluating a city, and public art, as an important carrier of urban culture, undeniably shoulders a major mission in the construction of urban culture. On the one hand, the urban construction of large-scale demolition and construction destroys the tranquil coordination of the original urban space. On the other hand, it also prompts people to think about the creation of urban image and urban characteristics in the new era. Therefore, in a sense, it is precisely this kind of large-scale demolition and construction that destroys the urban context and characteristics, that prompts public art to begin to take root in the urban space. The city is a dynamic and constantly evolving process, and public art also changes with the change of the city. In this interactive development process, if public art can

not communicate with the city, listen to and grasp the pulse of the complex urban ecosystem, public art will inevitably lose its charm and vitality. [3] This urges that there should always be a dialogue relationship between public art and the city.

## 2.2 Dialogue with the Environment

At present, people pay more and more attention to the construction of ecological low-carbon environment and humanistic significance. Some artists began to examine their social responsibility, and started walking towards the outdoor pavilion. They make use of natural conditions and local materials in the process of creation. Their artistic language is based on the warnings issued by mankind to the increasingly fragile natural ecology. It also integrates the public's consciousness into art, pursues a new concept of cooperating with nature, and at the same time guides the public to understand the relationship between himself and nature with his own works. [4]

The Triennial of Echigo Tsubasa in Japan is to use the local rich natural landscape resources and rich cultural resources to create an opportunity for the exchange and integration of people, art, and nature on the premise of respecting the natural ecology. On November 24, 2019, a cross-border art exhibition on sustainable art was held at Shangsheng New Institute in Shanghai, which took art as a medium to participate in the issue of natural environment and created works with local waste, garbage and other materials. Among them, the works of Brazilian artist Nele Azevedo have been displayed in 24 cities in 17 countries. One of her works is "Reduction of Monuments" ("Figure 1"), which is made from the most primitive material ice into little ice men. When thousands of small ice men are placed in the urban public space, the public watching the small ice man began to drip water, slowly melting off legs, arms, body, and finally fell in the space ("Figure 2"). Although this is just a small ice man, it has sounded the alarm of global climate change. It is in dialogue with our nature. In such a way, it tells us that while consuming nature, it is also consuming mankind.



Figure 1 "Reduction of Monument". (Source: Néle Azevedo).



Figure 2 "Reduction of Monument". (Source: Néle Azevedo).

## 2.3 Dialogue with Historical Context

In the process of public art intervening in urban public space, there are still two problems. One is the rapid expansion of urban modernization, and the other is the lack of urban historical context. Under this situation, the important role of public art naturally emerges, that is, cultural rescue-solving the contradiction between urban modernization and historical and cultural construction. Its mission is to lead us to history and the future in the spatial present. [5]

If we lack the thinking of historical context and neglect the dialogue and communication with historical context, it is difficult for public art to highlight the cultural spirit of the city as a carrier of urban culture, and it is also difficult to obtain the cultural identity of the citizens. The 2019 Shanghai Urban Space Art Season digs deep into Shanghai's century-old industrial history. Based on the dialogue with historical context, a grand public art project is carried out, where the public can revisit the long-lost century-old industrial civilization and has a cordial dialogue with it. At the same time, the urban space art season saved the industrial history that will be forgotten by the public, and let the past civilization meet with modern civilization, enhanced the cultural identity, consciousness and

cohesion of the city, and became a window for Shanghai to show to the world.

## 2.4 Dialogue with the Community and the Public

When engaging in artistic creation in public places, we must attach great importance to dialogue with the community and the public. In his book "Community Design", the well-known expert on community building, Yamazaki Ryo pointed out that "more important than designing space is the connection between people." [6] Nowadays, many community public art works are no longer stick to the shaping and beautification of space, but are beginning to explore the relationship between people. In the process of creating works, the public has become part of the process of "occurrence" of public art. Each of them retains only a small part of the content. The curator or artist is responsible for guiding and coordinating, connecting the public's ideas and inspirations. And make it reflect the culture of the community. When the final works are presented, the public is often surprised that the works they have participated in are enlarged in the public view, which invisibly enriches the daily life of the public, establishes the relationship between people, and stimulates the emotional resonance of the community. The American artist Michael Clegg and Martin Guttmann created an outdoor installation art project called "Open Library" with the purpose of providing an open book for local residents with the help of the center. The artist spent three months building a collection of outdoor bookcases in three different residential areas, and wrote letters to local residents inviting them to contribute to the collection. The operation of this public library takes community residents as participants and attracts a large number of residents to participate in it. Artists communicate with residents by writing letters, so that their art can be integrated into residents' lives and become part of the community.

## 3. "ENCOUNTER": DIVERSIFIED DIALOGUE OPENED IN THE 2019 URBAN SPACE ART SEASON

On the basis of inheriting the century-old industrial relics of Yangpu Riverside, the Shanghai Urban Space Art Season in 2019 presents the richness and diversity of the combination of contemporary art and public space "encounter". Mr. Beichuan Furang, the chief curator, uses the theme "encounter" to mean the encounter between people,

water and shore, art and urban space, history and future presented in this art season. "Encounter" means the opening of dialogue. Because an environment of encounter is created, public art and city, man and nature, industrial civilization and ecological civilization begin to present a dialogue posture.

### 3.1 Dialogue Between Art and the City

Both banks of the Pujiang River are positioned as Shanghai's urban living rooms. The government departments hope that the public space will not only be used by surrounding residents, but also serve as a platform for a larger group of people to communicate and communicate. Therefore, the 2019 Urban Space Art Season is planned to land on Yangpu Riverside. The form of outdoor public art forms a 5.5-kilometer waterfront display belt and communication platform.

The renewal and transformation of the old industrial area of Yangpu Binjiang provides a stage for the creation of public art in the art season, and industrial history has become the source of public art creation. If the public art creation of Shanghai Urban Space Art Season is separated from the dialogue with the industrial zone, it will lose its due vitality. In the process of investigation, the author found that Yangpu Binjiang Park has a stronger artistic and cultural atmosphere than the surrounding areas. While walking and watching the exhibition, there is a public art work every few hundred meters ("Figure 3"). standing on the bank of the riverside. A brief introduction of the artist and the work is posted next to the work for visitors to interpret. Artists use their own artistic language to interpret the site, with the help of industrial relics to micro-update the site. Public art has created a unique regional image for it ("Figure 4").



Figure 3 Public art work "The Carry of Time". (Source: Self-photographed by the author).



Figure 4 Public art work "Hill". (Source: Self-photographed by the author).

### 3.2 Dialogue Between Man and Nature

The openness and comfort of Yangpu Riverside Park itself can attract a large number of people, coupled with the opening of the art season, a large number of tourists come, once again, the split water and people are re-linked, let people meet water, let people meet nature. The artist Yusuke Asai's work Wild City ("Figure 5") constructs a platform for dialogue between man and nature. By inviting the public to create together, a large number of residents gathered here, using the material of zebra crossing and white line symbolizing artifacts, making flowers symbolizing plants, moving birds symbolizing biological symbols, through which to explore the existence of nature in the city, and jointly explore the relationship between man and nature. Public art has become a communication between man and nature of the special language, through this language, people can feel the charm of nature.



Figure 5 Public art work "Urban Land Wild". (Source: Photographed by Tian Fangfang).

In addition, native plants such as reeds, miscanthus sinensis and fendai lianzicao grow wantonly in Yangpu Riverside Park, all revealing an ecological nature. Through these plants, the public can feel the sense of vastness in the industrial age and the sustainability of native plants.

The re-planted plants continue to have a dialogue with modern society and modern civilization on this land.

### 3.3 Dialogue Between Industrial Civilization and Ecological Civilization

Take the Green Hill as an example. From a distance, the building looks like an industrial wind steel forest. The exposed reinforced concrete covered with a variety of flowers and trees, ecological abundance. The Green Hill was originally a tobacco warehouse with a six-story reinforced concrete frame slab building. The craft value and architectural characteristics are not worth studying. In addition, its huge volume not only severely obstructs the riverside landscape visually, but also becomes an obstacle to new roads in this area in terms of traffic. Under the transformation of architect Zhang Ming, the seemingly irreconcilable contradiction were transformed into a bridge connecting the city and the river bank, making it a city riverside complex integrating municipal infrastructure, public green space and public supporting services. From the outside, the two sides of the building are gradually reduced after the volume is reduced. The building is gradually approaching the hinterland of the riverside and getting closer to the river. The originally cold and inaccessible industrial buildings are now gradually lowering their posture and beginning to dialogue with the ecological environment. From an internal point of view, the ground floor is connected to public transportation, and the internal double spiral staircase also plays a role in communicating the various floors. The greening platform at each level ensures the growth of various plants, and the depth of the soil is increased by the falling board treatment, in order to realize the green industrial building and the transformation of ecological architecture. [7]

This proposal respects the existing facilities in situ, takes the existing elements as the starting point of the new design, retains this unique industrial site and structures, and recycles them to achieve sustainable use of the buildings. The traces of former factory buildings in Yangpu Binjiang Park have become its unique personality. The work "Green Hill" is also nostalgia for Shanghai's century-old industrial civilization and a concern for the ecological environment.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

The implementation of Shanghai Urban Space Art Season, a large-scale urban public art project, has promoted the revival of the old industrial areas. As an important part of the Huangpu River, Yangpu Waterfront is of great strategic significance in stimulating the vitality of waterfront and improving the quality of life in Shanghai's waterfront space. The successful renewal of Yangpu Binjiang Old Industrial Zone has made the public realize the important role of public art in urban renewal. At present, Yangpu Riverside has become one of the important cultural cards of Shanghai, a national metropolis, and the economic benefits brought by public art to Yangpu Riverside area are obvious to all, which can provide valuable reference for the renewal of other old industrial areas in Chinese cities.

#### **AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS**

This paper is independently completed by Kexin Liu.

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