



A Research on Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Exhibitions

Xuefei Zhang^(✉)

Winchester School of Art, University of Southampton, Southampton, UK
xz20u21@soton.ac.uk

Abstract. In response to the increasingly hot Chinese painting and calligraphy exhibitions, this study explores its development, the common issues and provides some insights. Nowadays, immersive exhibition has become a popular way for audience to appreciate artworks, which uses technology to give audience a unique experience. Therefore, the study suggests that curatorial process should keep with times, that is, diversifying exhibitions forms can satisfy the needs of audience and promote the development of Chinese painting and calligraphy cultures.

Keywords: Chinese painting and calligraphy · exhibitions · Curatorial process · immersive exhibition

1 Introduction

As a unit of public cultural services, Chinese art museums and museums have some commonalities in terms of collections, exhibitions, services, etc., but they also show many different characteristics. For instance, museums now employ the term “curator”, which was first coined by art museums. Curatorial exhibitions in art museums are typically distinguished by shorter cycles, more adaptable exhibition techniques, a greater emphasis on modern and contemporary times, time-sensitive narratives, stronger organic cooperation, the capacity to organize creative works according to the needs of the exhibition, and the focus on aesthetics. Long cycles, rigid display procedures, a greater emphasis on ancient and contemporary periods, retrospective narratives, in-depth research, difficulties in structuring creations to meet exhibition objectives, and a concentration on history and aesthetics are all characteristics of museum curation. Both sides always continue to exchanges and learn from one another in the field of curating painting and calligraphy exhibits as a result of the similarities and contrasts between them. On the one hand, learning from the interpretation experience of museums and assisting the public in better understanding painting exhibitions have both become crucial issues for art museums. This process of learning has inexorably resulted in a trend of “strong curation” in art museums and has been effectively applied in recent years. On the other hand, comparative exhibitions of painters, ancient and modern paintings, various special exhibitions, donor-specific special exhibitions, creative curatorial methods, and extensive collaboration with related universities and venues are all innovative ideas and practical explorations that museums can learn from from art museums.

However, with the progress of social economy and technology, people are eager to see different forms of exhibitions and displays. Therefore, traditional exhibitions can no longer meet the needs of the audience and innovation in the form of exhibitions are required [1]. Later, some people fused the concepts of “flow theory” and “immersive experience” in psychology to form the currently popular immersive exhibition. Flow Theory was first introduced by Csikszentmihalyi in 1975. He explained why people become fully engaged in certain daily activities, filter out all irrelevant perceptions, and enter a state of immersion [2]. The concept of “immersive experience” was introduced later than “flow theory”. It was proposed by Zwaan in 2003, and several scholars subsequently cross-referenced this concept with the field of design, namely “immersive exhibitions” [3]. Immersive exhibition introduces “flow theory” and “immersive experience” into art exhibitions, and presents a novel form of expression by integrating new media technology, sensory experience, interactive technology, and other elements to bring an unusual experience to the audience. Intuitively, immersive art exhibitions interact with the audience through the re-creation of artworks and art spaces with unique and novel technological means. In this process, the audience is not only the admirer of art, but also the participant and creator of the artwork. This could greatly change the relationship between the traditional exhibition artwork and the audience, strengthen the curatorial diversity, and continuously expand the depth and breadth of the painting and calligraphy exhibition.

2 Overview of the Special Exhibition of Chinese Painting and Calligraphy in the Last Twenty Years

In recent years, special exhibition is becoming common in public, and the idea of such a “strong policy exhibition” has been successfully applied to painting exhibitions in several comprehensive arts museums [4]. For example, National Art Museum of China has exhibitions of works from the painter’s hometown, comparative exhibitions of painters, comparative exhibitions of ancient and modern paintings, special exhibitions of donors, innovative exhibitions, and extensive cooperation with related universities and museums. Thus, it can be seen that accumulating innovative ideas and practical quests can be helpful in exhibitions.

In 2002, the Shanghai Museum held the “Thousand Year Treasures - Calligraphy and Painting Exhibition of Jin, Tang, Song Dynasty” (later referred to as the “72 National Treasure Exhibition”). This exhibition collected 72 pieces of Jin, Tang, Song, Yuan Dynasty from National Palace Museum, Shanghai Museum, and Liaoning Provincial Museum. During the exhibition, many visitors queued for five hours every day to see the scroll of “Qingming Shanghe Tu” from the late Northern Song Dynasty. This exhibition produced an unusual cultural effect and became a cultural phenomenon called “Cultural Pilgrimage” [5]. Thirteen years later, at the Forbidden City Shiqu Baoji Special Exhibition, this masterpiece once again became the most popular and talked-about exhibit in the exhibition, directly causing the phenomenon of “Forbidden City Running” [6]. The 72 National Treasure Exhibition has begun a tour boom. Over the last 20 years, especially for the last 10 years, heavyweight calligraphy exhibitions have been held almost every

year in the Chinese art gallery, and the scale and quality are often innovative, making it a large-scale exhibition that attracts massive audience.

Since 2002, the Shanghai Museum hold three major exhibitions, “72 National Treasures”, “Thousand Years of National Painting - Paintings of Tang, Song, Yuan Dynasty (cooperated with Japan)”, and “Ink constellation - Paintings and Calligraphy Exhibition of the Five Dynasties, Song and Yuan Dynasty (cooperated with the U.S.)”. These three exhibitions are of great significance and “opened a new page of cultural exchange at the World Museum” [7]. The Shanghai Museum also held special exhibitions, such as the 2015 “Wu Hufan - Calligraphy Collection Special Exhibition, the 2018, “Dong Qichang Calligraphy Exhibition”. “The exhibition aims to show the unification of artistry, classicism and scholarship” [8]. Throughout the special exhibitions of calligraphic works held at the Shanghai Museum since 2000, they have ranked among the top in the industry in terms of selection and planning, academic support, exhibition scale, exhibit quality, financial support, and international exchange and cooperation.

In 2015, the Forbidden City held several special exhibitions. From that time on, more and more general tourists went to the Forbidden City, not only to see the three major halls, the royal garden, and the treasures of the museum through the central axis, but went straight to Wu Ying Hall to see special exhibitions. As a result, the concept of the Forbidden City is not only more rooted as a palace among the public, but also as a public museum to illustrate its special history [9]. After that, the Forbidden City planned and held a series of special exhibitions to attract tourists.

3 The Practice of Painting and Calligraphy Exhibitions in Recent Years

National Art Museum of China is the only national art museum in China. Since Wu Taeshan became the director of in 2014, he has established the “Collection Reconstruction Series”, “National Donation and Collection Series”, and calligraphy and paintings exhibitions. Since 2015, the museum has a collection of more than 10,000 works from Japan and abroad, many of which are masterpieces, and has strongly promoted the development of the museum. With the collection at its core, National Art Museum of China explores and plans six types of exhibitions, such as donated exhibitions, traveling exhibitions, and donated works returning home. It strengthens the connection between the national art collection and donors, and has formed a virtuous cycle of social donations and academic returns. It has also promoted the development of the Chinese calligraphy exhibitions.

In 2017, “Looking back at Yunfeng - Zhao Wangyun Works Tour Exhibition from National Art Museum of China” opened at the Shanxi Province Art Museum, displaying more than 150 excellent works of Zhao Wangyun, an important pioneer painter of the Chang’an painting school. The exhibition presents the artistic achievements and art course of Mr. Zhao Wangyun in a more comprehensive and systematic manner, showing his belief that “art is for the people”. The exhibition used an epic method to return to the primitive historical context and adopted a model that combined self-references with other critiques. Each part of the exhibition began with Zhao Wangyun’s autobiography, with comments from his peers, friends and disciples. The exhibition was divided into

four parts: “Preface_Achievements and Overview”, “I’m a Countryman - Rural Sketches (1930-1940s)”, “Face to Nature-Figure - Northwestern Picture Scroll (40s-60s)”, “Returning to the Memory of Peach Garden - Dreaming of Home Mountain (60s-70s)”. The method of “returning the work” can warm the original heart, bring happiness to the masses, return the work to the birthplace of art, and deepen the internal capsule of the work. Special exhibitions of such exhibitions have short cycles and flexible methods.

For special exhibitions, large-scale exhibitions seek themes and specialization, and small-scale exhibitions attempt to refine and centralize them. “National Art Museum of China Art - Chinese Folding Fan Calligraphy Exhibition” was held at Singapore China Cultural Center. This exhibition was a collection of 57 small fan-faced works created in recent years by renowned Chinese contemporary calligraphers. The first part is 43 Chinese paintings and the second part is 14 calligraphy works. The work exhibits Chinese paintings in styles such as ink painting, light purple, and green, and calligraphy in styles such as regular script, semi-cursive script, cursive script, clerical script, and seal script, embodying the artist’s vivid artistic characteristics and spirit of exploration. The exhibition tells the story of Chinese art through the elaborate form and unique culture of the fan surface, and effectively promotes the exchange and spread of Chinese art overseas.

4 Planning and Thinking About Painting and Calligraphy Exhibitions

There must be two important elements behind a good calligraphy exhibition: people and things. In a broad sense, “people” can be understood as a plan exhibition team, and the core is academic research ability and plan exhibition planning ability. “Things” are collections that support the framework of the exhibition. The collection is the basis of the museum’s exhibition, and the quantity and quality of certain types of collection directly determine the museum’s talent stockpile, development level, and research production in the field. At the Tianjin Museum and the Nanjing Museum, which collect the paintings of the Ming and Qing dynasties, especially the Wu paintings of the middle Ming dynasty and the first Jinling paintings of the Qing dynasty. These two museums have natural advantages in terms of joint exhibition planning, interlibrary loan of collections, and academic symposiums, and have gradually formed a circle of calligraphy research and exhibitions. As a result, the good interaction between “people” and “things” in this circle can directly promote the joint improvement of the quality of calligraphic exhibitions and the level of special exhibitions.

Secondly, the selection problem of the exhibition. Regardless of the angle, the key to a successful exhibition must be the support of academic research results. For example, calligraphy has its own traditions and rules, so that the choices of calligraphy exhibitions should be based on these traditions. Therefore, in recent years, with the deepening of research and the abundance of academic achievements, an exhibition with a novel perspective, a clear theme, and solid academic achievements was selected.

Thirdly, the problems in the current exhibitions. First, there is a contradiction between the protection and use of exhibits. Recently, the number of calligraphy exhibitions and the

frequency of exhibitions are increasing. Therefore, protecting these collections, especially some “star collections” are crucial. Second, a serious homogenization trend in exhibitions, and the selected exhibits lack support for the theme. Research fields such as important nodes in the history of calligraphy and important schools are often the subjects of the first choice of calligraphy exhibitions, such as “Wu Men”, “Four Wang”, and “Four Monks”. However, there was a phenomenon in which the titles were piled up in exhibitions. This can be seen in the Women calligraphy-related exhibitions over the last 10 years: the Suzhou Museum hold special exhibitions with same theme from 2012 to 2015, and the Taipei National Palace Museum had one season in 2014. Many of the calligrapher’s exhibitions are concentrated on well-known calligraphers with abundant professional knowledge such as Wang Xizhi, Yan Zhenqing, Zhao Mengfu, Chen Dofu, Xu Wei, Chen Hongju, Choi Jichu, Dong Qichang, Ai Ying, Shan Fu, and Lujing. Over the past 10 years, the tendency for homogenization in art museums was serious. Therefore, museums need to systematically organize the results of recent academic research, fully explore the museum’s collections, and plan to organize special thematic exhibitions.

The fourth is the “misreading” problem. As calligraphy exhibitions have become more and more popular and online media has grown, some organizations have seen the business opportunity and are targeting the huge audiences for calligraphy exhibitions with a variety of for-profit activities and courses. The quality of these guided activities and courses are different, but what they have in common is that they invite some famous speakers, and at the same time strengthen the diversity of the exhibition process. The advantage of this method is that it accelerates the spread of exhibitions. The downside is that they ignore whether the speaker has the highest academic abilities and levels. That is to say, his or her careless interpretation and transmission can even mislead the audience. In the face of misinterpretation, the museum has its own view of whether to accept the flow of misleading material or stop it immediately to reduce its transmission.

5 Curating Chinese Painting and Calligraphy Using Immersive Technology

Why use immersive technology to display Chinese paintings and calligraphy? Firstly, an immersive display is distinct from a conventional show. It is quite interactive, filled with exhibition aspects, and very engaging. Additionally, to give visitors a truly immersive experience, immersive exhibitions make advantage of their sensory and cognitive abilities to create a setting in which they can indulge in a particular state of being. Holographic projections and backlighting are used in immersive exhibitions to give the spectator a sensation of presence. A sensory impact on the audience is created by some immersive exhibitions using components including music, light, electricity, and scent [10]. This increases audience enjoyment of the display and provides the viewer the impression that they are in a virtual environment. Second, immersive display is a form of appreciation that the general public can accept because they don’t need a high level of aesthetic expertise. If traditional artworks demand a thorough understanding of art history, as well as a richness of design principles and advanced aesthetic needs, then seeing an immersive display requires less aesthetics. Traditional works of art like calligraphy and painting

become less formal and esoteric because of the immersive exhibition's curatorial strategy, which puts the observer closer to the creator. Last but not least, from the curator's perspective, more immersive displays can be organized, allowing more non-art enthusiasts to appreciate the exhibitions and make it a habit to visit them. The audience will pursue the next step of demand, like traditional shows, because they have increased their aesthetic level and amassed a wealth of knowledge about art.

5.1 Restoration of Space Images: Bringing Artwork to Life

It is challenging to identify all the cutting-edge technologies that go into this immersive curating, but frequently the most striking aspects are the novel feelings that physical immersion gives the observer. In order to repair the artwork, the exhibition hall will be reconfigured. This will enable visitors to enter the art space and dismantle the conventional barriers that have existed between the public and the artist. The environment and even the sensation of the artist's period will be accessible to the observer. Even if visitors are merely standing on a primary structure that hasn't been fully repaired, a physical scene exhibition can convey a level of authenticity and enable them to have a genuine connection to the artwork. The tension between the spatial, realistic arrangement and the virtual, flat painting is another important element. The viewer can engage with the objects in the artwork physically rather than mentally, interact with them, and have a new experience of the artwork, all of which encourage the viewer to read more about the artwork and, in a sense, bridge the existential or cultural divide between the general public and the artist by the art line. The most literal sense of the word "immersion" is probably the immersive curation of spatial picture restoration. It creates an immersive experience by allowing the viewer to put oneself in the recreated physical area and experience the mood of the era firsthand. The curators suggest innovative concepts in many directions, realising the recreation of a real-life setting based on an artwork, allowing the visitor to experience rather than simply watch. The appeal of this kind of immersive curation today is largely attributable to the fact that it enables those who are not familiar with art to experience and understand art in a more direct way.

5.2 The Art of Magnification, Flow, and Scattering in Relation to Space and Vision

This immersive curatorial technique entails more actual technical engagement than spatial photo restoration. A true fusion of art curation is the utilisation of divided, overlapping spaces rather than crammed spaces. In order to create a different spatial dimension from standard curatorial exhibition, walls are used as screening and dividers for bigger areas, collaging and recreating the artwork. The curator may have purposefully regarded the scale of people, artworks, and available space in several of his designs at the same time. When people view art traditionally, the curator typically hangs the pieces on the wall at a level that is most comfortable for them to view. The intentional design employed in immersive curation, however, can compel the spectator to look up, look down, or even to adopt a personal experience. For instance, curators will utilise a gaze up to demonstrate admiration and aspiration in order to showcase the brilliance of an artist or the yearning for a piece of art.

Technology from teamwork is crucial for immersive curation in the spatial and visual arts. The curatorial space is inseparable from the detailed computational and analytical design, for example whether the installation itself generates the complete area or whether it incorporates multiple interdisciplinary methodologies through sensory technology, such as programming and interface design. The curators have made the show itself more airy by utilising a carefully planned combination of projection systems to enhance the background and gaps rather than presenting the complete picture in a consistent manner. In order to give the overall piece of work a deep impression, a portion of the dark wall or ceiling is employed as a backdrop while projectors positioned in specified positions project in separate locations. The curator is one of the writers in this type of immersive curation. Because the curator has previously recreated the work in this type of immersive curation, he or she is one of the creators. In order to satisfy the needs of the imagination, the curator must divide the image into several perspectives and portions, or even layer a collage of projections on top of the original. The original video content is transformed into a video as a result of the immersive curation, which produces a flowing rather than a static effect. The curators personal preferences appear to be very important for the animation. What sort of flowing impression is desirable? How to best create a setting where the audience can totally immerse themselves? What surface should the projector be placed on, the roof, the floor, or a corner? The curator should think about each of these issues.

5.3 The Fusion of Sound and Space: The Beauty of Music Serving the Subject

The immersive curation of the exhibition is enhanced and transformed by the use of music. The usage of several sound sources or even headphones for output enhances the musical environment overall. The curatorial needs to consider the player selection, including whether to utilise surround sound or on-demand audio and whether to employ a player with a focus on bass or treble. In this immersive curatorial approach, strategies include directing sound in a certain direction, controlling its source, and focusing on certain sound textures. The degree to which the audience feels “immersed” in the immersive curating depends on a number of factors, including the curator’s use of various production techniques, instruments, playing styles, as well as how well the music blends with the ideal visuals. The use of sound must enhance the concept of the piece, engage the audience, evoke strong emotions, and transport listeners into the world of the artwork. Therefore, the composer is also crucial to immersive sound curation.

In contrast to pictures, the presence of sound enables the spectator to experience both the present dynamics and the fusion and movement of all the senses. The intensity and frequency variations provide the viewer a completely distinct experience. There is a distinction between the dynamics that visually float to the surface and the resonance of sound that penetrates deeply into the chest. The show’s dynamics are improved by the sound and rhythm of the drums that are played throughout the exhibition hall. The observer is more likely to be surprised by the richness of the effect produced by the union of sound and space. The nuance is found in the minute variations in sound that the spectator hears from various locations across the space. The audience may experience the richness of many sorts of space as they enter with the mix of realistic sound and environment.

6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the author believes that academic research, talent development, comprehensive curatorial capacity should be further reinforced in current popular calligraphy and painting exhibitions. The audience's general knowledge, expectations, and requirements for calligraphy and painting exhibitions have been significantly raised after two decades of exhibition, market cultivation, and the distribution of a large number of publications and picture data, therefore, museum curatorial thinking should keep pace with this. Additionally, it's also crucial to combine the domestic collection resources to create a synergy of staggered curation based on in-depth academic research, which will help to protect the collections from excessive reuse while also strengthening the diversity of curation. Moreover, by combining technology and culture, immersive interactive installations with traditional Chinese art and culture can be possible. This results in a "new cultural and creative" development model that offers us a new perspective on traditional culture and enables people to shift from "being involved" to "willing to participate". The immersive interactive installation stimulates all of the viewer's senses, allowing them to feel the gentle wind of traditional Chinese culture and to learn about the best aspects of Chinese tradition. The study's findings, however, failed to concern disabled audience. Future studies on could shed light on how immersive curation affects people with disability.

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