

Curation as a method of cultural inquiry

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ABSTRACT. *The emergence of the term 'curation' was related with the changes in art history. Besides, the role of the curator was not limited to preserving the art works of the art museum, selecting works of art and holding exhibitions, but also included some emerging cultural fields of thought and avant-garde ideas in contemporary society. Specifically, the purpose of this article is to analyze how the curator adapts the semiotic approach to explain cultural phenomena and to accurately grasp the exhibition theme. This mainly shows the possibility that Curation could be a way of cultural inquiry to explore the current cultural phenomenon.*

KEYWORDS: *curation, cultural inquiry, semiotics theory*

1. Introduction

The main purpose of this essay is to analyze curation as a method and feasibility of cultural inquiry in the current cultural context. This essay is mainly divided into the following five parts. The first part is to explain the term concept of curatorial, and to clarify the process of its transformation in the specific development of art history. The second part is to introduce a feasible art research method to understand art works and conduct exhibition planning. The third part focuses on the role and importance of the role of the curator in specific art exhibitions. The fourth part is to analyze the specific work of the curator in combination with the specific exhibition. The last part summarizes the research methods of semiotics mentioned in the article from a critical and relatively neutral perspective, and analyzes the areas for improvement.

2. The definition of curatorial

Firstly, the term curatorial is not a process that goes hand in hand with the development of art history, but has a certain connection with social change and progress. Obrist pointed out that professional curators have the following four core missions: one is to properly preserve the collection in a fixed place, and the other is to select the collection with a unique vision. Third, this is similar to the mission of university faculty and staff, to establish their own right to speak and contribute to

the historical development of art history. The last one is closely related to the practice of contemporary art, that is, to effectively arrange the museum space, and to communicate effectively with the artist in the process, sometimes it may be a compromise process [1]. From his definition of the curator's identity, it can be seen that the change of the curator's identity has a certain connection with the social change, because contemporary art is a dynamic history that is changing every day. For instance, the classical art such as Rembrandt, Van Gogh, and Cezanne and other well-known painters, and subsequent management have become the main responsibilities of many art curators and related art museum staff in the early 20th century. It can be seen from the original intention and expansion history of the Tate Modern Art Museum that the early art exhibitions did not present works of art in the current public view, such as oil paintings, watercolors, and other works on the shelf. Art exhibition. Early exhibitions were more of an exhibition format. The early art products were rich in variety, covering plants, animal specimens, porcelain, jewellery, and many other artistic appreciations. These collections on the one hand show the financial resources of the owner of the collection, as well as its unique cultural taste. Many of these art products, especially the early 17th and 18th centuries and art collections, can be found in the current permanent exhibitions of the British Museum.

Apart from that, Obrist insisted that cultural phenomena are closely related to the generation and enrichment of visual arts, so that is the emergence of an important concept which is public [2]. He also listed an important exhibition in the history of art exhibitions, which was the French Louvre Exhibition in 1793. It also shows that from the late 18th century, the main duties of art museums and the main mission of curators are to popularize art to the general public, forming an art exhibition that is easy for the public to accept. These changes have some connection with social change, because in the late 18th century the theme of these national exhibition halls and the choice of works of art were usually related to the specific presentation of mainstream ideology and art history, because what the curators intend to express was visual Art is no longer the exclusive power of the original aristocracy and church forces, but is directed to the general public.

3. The concept of the curator

Secondly, the concept of a curator has also undergone a corresponding change in the contemporary cultural context. That is, the organizers of the theme arrangement and exhibition activities that originally followed the social changes, and turned to higher-level critics of cultural phenomena. It should be noted that the cultural critique here is not a derogatory term but a neutral concept. Because it is important for the curator not to blindly criticize and criticize the current cultural phenomena and cultural issues, but to maintain a relatively objective and sober mind to look at many aspects of things. Balzer believed that the curator's role is not only the decision maker of the content of the exhibition, but also a certain cultural critique and mission. Specifically, it has a sense of current cultural phenomena and a sense of social responsibility and mission. He also particularly emphasized that the role of

curators is not just to effectively classify the exhibits, but more importantly, to be brave to break the inherent concepts and to make continuous breakthroughs and innovations in the form and content of art exhibitions. Promote new art exhibitions and thinking models. At this point the identity of the curator is given the role of cultural inquiry [3]. Meanwhile, according to Smith the role of the curator in the late 20th century not only expanded the meaningfulness of the museum space, but also assisted artists in organizing biennials and undertook related art fairs and other activities [4]. These events show that the roles of curators today and early curators have changed. They are not only the providers of art exhibition content, but also personal participants.

4. The research methods of semiotics

Therefore, after explaining the definition of curation, what needs to be discussed is to adopt a corresponding and effective way for cultural interpenetration. This essay uses a semiotic approach to explain cultural phenomena.

First, the definition of semiotics theory is needed to be explained. Semiotics focuses on the nature behind the signs and the laws of continuous development and change. Semiotics not only includes literature and art the products of mental activity are included in the study, and various objects that people encounter in consumption are also used as carriers of meaning. Key and Pfeiffer Noble believed that Saussure put forward the basic paradigm of semiotic theory, and put forward that the essential attribute of the world lies in the structural constitutive relationship between various language symbols and symbols, forming a variety of collective world [5].

Alleva indicated that the theory of semiotics shows that symbols can represent multiple forms. He took the linguistic meaning of trees as an example to analyze the meaning of semiotics. On the one hand, trees have the concept of biological meaning on the surface, and at the same time, he pointed out that behind the meaning of the nouns of trees, there are hidden semiotic meanings. Because there is a certain relationship between the function of symbols and objects, people usually ignore the meaning behind the appearance and form of symbols, but this study of art history is some of the specific implementation of curation [6]. Need to be sensitive to the details of art works, such as colors, gestures, movements, textures, and other subtleties. Attention should be paid to the use of semiotic research methods to perceive the ideology and hidden meaning behind these tiny details. Therefore, semiotic studies would be helpful for researchers analyze cultural phenomena such as previously ignored ideology and unconscious consciousness in the art world. These would be helpful for curators to understand the sociological significance behind the artwork. For example, one can be found that some inspiration from Roland Barthes's analysis of fashion pop culture. Admittedly, such as Roland Barthes's sociological significance inquiring into the fashion phenomenon. Barthes believed that the first code element is for walks in the country. On top of that, there are redundant and repeated metaphor descriptions. On the one hand, it is a matter of purpose, and the farm replaces the concept village. On the other hand, it means the social situation of virtual image [7].

However, the shortcomings of research methods of semiotics are obviously. In particular, the interpretation of certain works of art in the appreciation of works of art is too vague, which is not conducive to the general public's clear grasp of the meaning behind works of art. Alleva insisted that there is an asymmetry between words and images. Text interpretation sometimes cannot rely entirely on words, but let the public understand the social meaning and deep meaning behind a clear and comprehensive image [8]. This shows that although some researchers in art history have used semiotics to appreciate works of art, such as Rosco's oil paintings, Picasso's oil paintings, Michelangelo's Moses statue, and Da Vinci's Mona Lisa, etc. Successful examples. But this is also limited to the interpretation of a small number of works of art. For the development of an open, comprehensive and dynamic art history, it lacks a certain comprehensive understanding.

In addition, in the context of specific art exhibitions, the central duties of the curator are mainly in the following three aspects. The first aspect is the irrational grasp of the theme of the art exhibition. The second aspect is the specific exhibition setting. The third aspect of removing certain prejudice and authority is to maintain an open perspective on the final social effects of the exhibition, because the contemporary art exhibition can be found to be more closely connected with the public from the following research. This shows that the curator is showing a diverse and open role. Beryl, G and Sarah, C also pointed out in the article that the current technological change determines that the ecology of the culture and art industry is changing. These changes require the curator to grasp the cutting-edge technology, and at the same time grasp the many changes brought about by the transformation of science and technology to a series of exhibitions in the art world [9]. These changes indicate that curators need to pay attention not only to the communication between the museum team and the artists in the specific exhibition decision, but also to pay attention to interact with the public, to increase their interest in exhibitions and to establish the quality of art. Critical thinking is thinking about art, and maintaining an open perspective on art and a certain curiosity about new things.

Researchers regard the contemporary art museum space as a platform for social communication and personal cultural taste. Some researchers have explored the public's experience needs in the contemporary art museum space, and correspondingly how the art museum should make decisions to meet the cultural needs of the audience. These researchers include Mason, D. D. M. and McCarthy (2006), Goulding (2012) and Sarah Harvey Richardson (2018). For example, Mason and McCarthy focused on the individual release of young people's needs for contemporary art museums and the pursuit of uniqueness in experience [10]. Goulding focuses on the perception of contemporary art museums and the impact of museum visits on their lives [11].

5. The example of the curatorial exhibition

Moreover, this essay combined with the author's personal participation in a curatorial exhibition of Chinese folk art works in December 2016 for detailed analysis. First of all, this exhibition is held in central China, Wuhan City, Hubei

Province. The main theme of this exhibition is to summarize and review the local folk art. The training program for non-hereditary people in China is organized by the Ministry of Culture in conjunction with the Ministry of Education and commissioned by universities and other relevant units to organize training, study and training. The aim is to help the inheritance crowd to improve cultural and artistic literacy, aesthetic ability, innovation ability, and improve the design, production and development of traditional Chinese crafts, and ultimately promote the traditional craftsmanship into modern life and revitalize traditional craftsmen.

Hubei is located in the middle, where the North and South cultures meet, and it has given birth to the magnificent Chu culture. Therefore, the Hubei sculpture has a distinct regional culture. Hubei's sculpture art carries a deep cultural heritage and distinctive regional characteristics, condensing the wisdom of the people of Jingchu. In the sculptural art of Hubei, sculpture categories such as wood carving, clay sculpture, stone carving, and so on all have a clear and excessive style. However, from the final art exhibition, the sculpture works are mainly based on traditional styles and themes. Modern design awareness is weak, and market awareness is lagging behind. Therefore, during the implementation of the specific exhibition, the curator focused on the ideas of the participating folk artists on the theme of the exhibition. Because the curator originally wanted to borrow semiotics to allow the participating artists to interpret the meaning behind the work, but found that there were some difficulties in the specific implementation. Because according to the data of this training course, the traditional sculpture inheritors are mainly junior and senior high schools, accounting for 68.3%. However, from the small data of 60 students this time, there are also 18 students with a bachelor's degree, accounting for 30%, to a certain extent reflecting the reality that the education level of the successors has improved. Therefore, the method of the exhibition adopted a method of combining text field images, and the curator made a text record of the theme of the works of the participating artists and gathered the ideas of these fragments into a guide for the exhibition.

As one of the assistants of the curator of the exhibition, I participated in the theme planning and implementation of the exhibition. A direct feeling is that the curator needs to face the concerns of all parties and consider the exhibitors' concerns Educational level and public artistic acceptance. Specifically, because folk art as an ancient hand-made product is different from the current large-scale mechanized crafts. Therefore, the curators mainly want to highlight the semiotic meaning behind the works of art, emphasize such cultural phenomena of handmade products that are gradually missing in modern industrial civilization, and highlight the originality and preciousness of folk art. In order to grasp the understanding of the origin of folk art that these participating folk artists mainly want to express. However, in the specific funding process, it was found that many exhibitors could not effectively explain the creative intentions of the works and the symbolic art behind them. The curator initially wanted to use a semiotic approach to conduct a sociological analysis of the origin of these works, but found that there were some difficulties in the later implementation process. Therefore, in the course of many consultations with the participating artists, the curators have found that how to effectively communicate

with folk art needs to start from their perspective and return the right of artistic interpretation to the public. In the final presentation process, redundant textual explanations were removed, and the form of visual images and video voices in the exhibition space were used to directly convey the participants' ideas.

Paula stated in the article that the curator's current work is not only to explain the meaning behind the art work, but also to integrate his own insights into cultural exhibitions into the art exhibition on the basis of this, and he states that In the process, it is necessary not only to have a clear understanding of the grasp of cultural phenomena, but also not to explain too much about text matters, but to return the right to interpret the art information to the public [12]. Therefore, it also shows that the cultural inquiry and intervention of the curator should hold a proper degree and leave the right of artistic interpretation to the general public.

6. Conclusion

Overall, it is important that narrative subjects would subvert the authority which means that leaving the decision of aesthetic standards to the audiences. In other words, their interpretations about the spaces contribute to the diverse display in the art gallery. In short, curating as a method of cultural inquiry, on the one hand, has witnessed the change of curator status as a cultural heritage defender to a cultural phenomenon inquirer. On the other hand effective art research methods would help curate People effectively arrange art spaces, for example, the research method of semiotics is concerned with the deep meaning of works of art, and the interpretation of works of art does not simply stay at the level of formal language.

The conclusions of this article are mainly the following three aspects. The first aspect is the art research method of semiotics. For the curator, it has reference meaning in the deep sociological meaning of cultural phenomena, which can be seen from Roland Barthes' analysis of popular cultural phenomena such as fashion. In the second aspect, semiotic research methods have a constructive effect on expanding the significance of research, but based on the limitations and difficulty of understanding of the research object, it is not conducive to public understanding. In the third aspect, this article combines the planning of Chinese folk art exhibitions that personally participated in. During the implementation process, I found that the role of the curator in the specific transfer process should be controlled within a certain range degree. The participating artists of the exhibition need to maintain an inclusive attitude and communicate with them from an equal perspective, so that they can more effectively grasp the artistic ideas they want to express, and help the public to explore the meaning behind art works together.

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