An Analysis of International Curation from an Intercultural Perspective

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Abstract: It is the advantage of Chinese cultural diplomacy to enrich foreign cultural exchange forms and enhance international influence, communication power, and attractiveness through international museum exhibitions. The international exhibition is an important platform for cultural exchanges with other countries. In the case that the traditional communication forms of Chinese theatre art no longer adapt to the development of modern society, this study will analyze how to curate international exhibitions on the theme of Chinese theatre art from the intercultural perspective so as to achieve the purpose of Chinese culture communication. By analyzing the current situation and problems of international curation, this study explores the cultural significance of international exhibitions from an intercultural perspective, selects Chinese theatre art as the curation theme, analyzes the special narrative expression in theatre art exhibitions, and puts forward some suggestions on the virtual and digital applications in exhibitions. The research shows the mutual compatibility between international exhibition and Chinese theatre art and the importance and necessity of realizing intercultural communication through exhibition as the medium and constructing a new cultural exchange mechanism for the communication of Chinese theatre art through curating exhibitions.

Keywords: exhibition, international curation, intercultural perspective, Chinese theatre art

1. Introduction

Under the strategy of building cultural power, the intercultural communication between China and other countries has become increasingly close, and the interaction and integration between diverse cultures have become increasingly frequent. International exhibition, as a tool to realize effective communication of foreign cultures in different cultural contexts through systematic interpretation, is committed to promoting mutual understanding and communication of international cultures. Intercultural interpretation plays an important role in helping the public build a new cognitive model, arousing the audience's emotional resonance and enhancing the public's cultural identity and self-confidence.

As a platform for cultural communications, international exhibitions promote the comprehensive image of institutions, cities, and even countries through attractive cultural symbols. However, in recent years, homogenization has also occurred in international exhibitions. The same works appear in chaotic theme exhibitions, while exhibitions with clear cultural themes tend to have greater

influence. Chinese theatre art is the treasure of Chinese culture, but its traditional communication mode has been unable to adapt to the impact of multi-culture. In order to make traditional Chinese theatre art more compatible with the public vision, many creators of traditional Chinese theatre art try to integrate art forms such as film, television, animation, and musicals under the premise of respecting the original artistic aesthetics of traditional Chinese theatre art, and make it an organic combination with modern artistic aesthetics, thus enriching the expression forms of traditional Chinese theatre art. At the same time, overseas performances of Chinese theatre art also promote cultural communication and dissemination. However, the research on Chinese theatre art communication is limited to the stage performance at present, and there are few quality exhibitions on the related theme. Therefore, this study explores effective international curation through thinking transformation, context construction, and interactive communication.

By analyzing the current situation and problems of international exhibitions, this study aims to deeply study the cultural communication significance of international exhibitions from the perspective of intercultural communication, and finally choose Chinese theatre art as the theme of international cultural curation so as to explore the realization of intercultural broadcasting of Chinese theatre art in the form of exhibitions. This study hopes to achieve the research significance of using curation to construct a new cultural exchange mechanism for the dissemination of Chinese theatre art.

2. Current Situation and Problems of International Exhibition

2.1. Development Status of International Exhibitions in China

Intercultural communication is a process in which subjects from different cultural backgrounds communicate with each other, the main purpose of which is to obtain sufficient information and reduce cultural conflicts. It is also the main approach for the international community to reach a cultural consensus. The Chinese national strategy of intercultural communication has put forward new requirements for the cultural mission of contemporary museums, especially the provincial- and city-level museums, which need to be more open in terms of promoting international cultural exchange and understanding; the need to actively construct the discourse system of "Chinese story, the international expression", and enhance the communication efficiency of international museum exhibitions. Promote the global expression of Chinese culture according to the cultural cognitive habits and psychological characteristics of audiences in different regions and countries [1]. As an important way of international cultural exchange, international exhibitions provide a better platform for the core business of museums, such as academic research, public education, and international cooperation. At the national level, international exhibitions covering various regions and disciplines have been introduced, fully reflecting the diversity of cultural exchange themes [2]. International exhibitions allow not only Chinese audiences to appreciate cultural relics from different cultural backgrounds but also have exploratory significance for domestic museums to plan themed exhibitions representing Chinese culture. For example, the exhibition "Ancient Chinese Bronze Culture" held by the Shanghai Museum at the National Museum of Korea from September to November 2021 demonstrates the international influence of Chinese culture. Therefore, the international exhibition is a new engine to improve the overseas dissemination of national culture.

2.2. Problems and Challenges of International Exhibitions

International exhibitions provide museums with more curatorial choices and curatorial ideas. Their significance includes promoting national cultural strategies, promoting international cultural exchanges, and cultivating visitors' international vision. However, the homogeneity of international exhibitions cannot be ignored. The bottleneck appears and is faced by mass communication after

the influx of international exhibitions. A problem that most museums still face and resolve is how to establish exhibitions with a clear cultural theme and unique works, how to effectively communicate foreign culture through the systematic interpretation method in different exhibition contexts, and how to effectively transport Chinese culture to overseas cultural context through the systematic interpretation method [3].

Firstly, the exhibition fails to help the audience to build background knowledge. Because of the inconvenient communication between Chinese and foreign museums and the immature information-sharing mechanism, it is difficult for the curators to conduct in-depth information interpretation of foreign cultures and establish a systematic framework of cultural background knowledge for the audience. For example, the exhibition of Chinese Terracotta Warriors in the Bowers Museum in the United States presents the Warriors through sculptural performance art, which brings visitors a surprising experience visually. However, there are still many visitors who cannot understand the exhibition because of their lack of knowledge of Chinese history.

Secondly, it is difficult for exhibitions to construct a cultural context conducive to audience cognition. Some museums mainly rely on direct interpretation of translation in the process of intercultural curation, which leads to the incorrect expression and understanding of culture that is difficult to be transmitted from an intercultural perspective. For example, professional terms such as "cloud hands" and "water sleeves" in Chinese theatre art cannot be translated literally to convey their correct meanings. As a unique costume in theatre art performance, "water sleeves" get this name because the sleeves swing and wave-like water flow during the performance. However, the translation will make foreign audiences feel confused because they think the material of the sleeves is water. This is the information difference in different cultural contexts.

In addition, the exhibition fails to stimulate the audience's interest in learning. The period of temporary international exhibitions is relatively short. Exhibition cases, plates, and documentaries constitute the communication channels of most exhibitions. Due to the lack of interpretive media and environmental design, the audience's sense of the experience of the exhibition declines, and their interest in intercultural communication declines accordingly.

According to the existing major defects, the main target of international exhibition information interpretation is to reduce the cultural barriers between the exhibition and the audience. Intercultural interpretation is to enable the museum audience to transform the contents of the exhibition across the context. Whenever introducing or launching international exhibitions, the differences among cultures shouldn't be ignored in order to choose the best cultural interpretation perspective. Intercultural interpretation in the context of museums is also a process of interaction between museum curators and audiences. Within limited space and separated from the original environment, the story context of cultural relics is reconstructed and integrated into the new context for effective communication so as to generate recognition, understanding, and resonance with the audience.

3. Significance of International Exhibitions

3.1. Intercultural Thinking Transformation and Context Construction

Intercultural communication is the effective communication and exchange of social information under different cultural backgrounds. Edward T. Hall said culture is those deep, common, unstated experiences that members of a given culture share, which they communicate without knowing, and which form the backdrop against which all other events are judged. Intercultural communication should aim at eliminating cultural barriers and promoting communication and understanding between cultures, appreciating the world's cultural diversity from a multicultural perspective, and respecting the cultures of all regions of the world equally. Based on the correlation between foreign culture and local culture, cultural relics that attract the most attention in international exhibitions

can reflect the exchange and integration of Chinese and foreign cultures. The curator is responsible for building a bridge of resonance between the audience and cultural relics. In the context of the museum, the audience also needs to integrate their own life experience into cultural relics so as to arouse deeper thoughts and understandings.

The context of museum exhibitions can be divided into two aspects: the first is the macro cultural background, that is, what cultural framework the curators hope to interpret the exhibition in so as to create a more interactive and communicative space for the audience; The second is the exhibition scene, that is, to create a new cultural context through scene restoration and exhibits combination [4].

In the exhibition "Carved Splendor" held by Beijing Meet Museum in 2023, the curators focus on the etchings in the Louvre Museum, describing the art born in the early Renaissance based on the time sequence and technical characteristics so that the audience can see the various gestures of the development of today's printmaking. In this exhibition, there are a large number of texts in each exhibition hall, which tells the development of etchings since the Renaissance and the artistic achievements of French Kings. Visitors can learn the history of etchings and understand Versailles from the perspective of "the Glory of Kings", which is a successful intercultural thinking transformation.

3.2. Social Significance of International Exhibitions

The international exhibition breaks through the traditional mainline station method, endows museums with more possibilities, and the exhibition experiences tend to be diversified. Intercultural interpretation can also promote the comprehensive strength of the museum, conducive to our public cultural identity and the establishment of cultural confidence. Intercultural interpretation methods will help audiences build cognitive thinking patterns. For example, Imagine Holland is a special cultural project conducted by the Dutch Embassy in China for the 50th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and the Netherlands in 2022. Photographers in different contexts jointly present a visual dialogue about the Netherlands. The exhibition includes artists' timely responses to Dutch historical, social, and cultural issues while challenging the paradigms and techniques inherent in the Dutch photographic tradition and reflecting the artists' efforts to reshape contemporary Dutch photography. It provides visitors with new perspectives and ideas and inspires the desire to explore the ongoing dialogue between the Chinese and Dutch photographic arts.

From the perspective of international cultural exchange, exhibitions that can break through regional restrictions and eliminate cultural barriers and prejudices are more likely to be recognized by audiences and arouse emotional resonance, which requires curators to have a deeper understanding and research of cultural context. International exhibition, as a key way of dialogue between self and others, should be based on the principle of maintaining and respecting cultural diversity. Some ordinary artworks can also form the narrative framework of the exhibition.

4.   The Practice Path of Intercultural Communication-Taking Chinese Theatre Art Curation as an Example

4.1. Significance of Chinese Theatre Art

Chinese theatre art is a treasure of Chinese culture, and choosing it as the theme of the exhibition is a sign of cultural confidence, integrity, and innovation, however, under the impact of diverse cultures. Traditional Chinese theatre art can no longer adapt to the development of modern society. The audience is limited to a great extent, and the lack of appreciation and entertainment makes it difficult to fulfill cultural communication. The complex visual elements of theatre art match the

exhibition, and the international exhibition matches the overseas dissemination goal of theatre art [5]. While Chinese theatre art is integrated into the museum for scientific and technological innovation, the digital protection of this gradually lost traditional culture is also underway. The advantage of transferring theatre art from the stage to the museum is that it increases the artistic atmosphere and cultural influence. People walk into the museum to enjoy the exhibition on theatre art, with the purpose of appreciating the excellent traditional Chinese culture. In this process, the opera culture obtains its overseas dissemination, and its cultural value gets enhanced [6]. The exhibition based on the theme of Chinese theatre art is an immersive cultural theme exhibition with installation, lighting, color, and other artistic modification effects, which tells the story of the dynamic development of Chinese theatre art and different interpretations from an intercultural perspective.

4.2. Narration of Exhibition Media in Chinese Theatre Art Exhibition

Curation is the exhibition planning, which is the overall design of the whole exhibition. The purpose of curating exhibitions is to communicate the contents of exhibitions more effectively so that viewers can accept the exhibition information and trigger emotional resonance. The curator needs to design the exhibition content and determine the exhibition form and layout plan according to the exhibition theme and exhibits.

The basic requirements of theatre art performance are freehand brushwork and stylization. The opera script contains elements of opera lyrics, time, place, and character features, which form a complete framework. It is necessary to focus on the freehand narration of the theatre art text and pay attention to the narrative logic of the exhibition, including the narrative route and the naming of each part of the chapter, in order to achieve the effect of watching the theatre art exhibition during the exhibition. The narrative exhibition presents the cause, the process, the climax, and the result, which accords with the primary and secondary logic of the drama script.

Narrative context is the formal language and space environment in the exhibition, which is composed of architecture, space, color and material [7]. The visual presentation of theatre art stage design is mainly abstract, and the transition points, such as conflicts and contradictions in the plot, are often expressed through the three-dimensional rendering of color and lighting to assist in narrating the exhibition story. In the planning of the exhibition space, the expressive tension of the opera stage and the freehand artistic characteristics of Chinese theatre art are used to show the visual elements of different chapter Spaces. For example, in the historical tales exhibition area of the Chinese Kunqu Museum, the narrative tension of the exhibition is highlighted through screen design to divide the exhibition space by using two spatial aesthetic laws of symmetry and balance, repetition and gradual change.

Curating, from text narration, exhibition route, space scale, and atmosphere creation to exhibition design, all affect the final exhibition effect. Chinese theatre art pays attention to visual presentation. For example, the color of Peking Opera's facial makeup represents the characteristics of different characters, black represents honesty and strength, and blue represents unruliness. The typical representative of stylized theatre art is one table and two chairs, and the stage props are changed according to the narrative background and aesthetic design. When curating the exhibition, the theatre art exhibits and exhibition tools are displayed individually, and the exhibition design is combined with the narrative of the theatre story, which creates empathy among visitors.

The visual factors in Chinese theatre art exhibitions include space color parameters, lighting parameters, craft material, and display decoration. The theme of the exhibition determines the selection of techniques and materials for the exhibition space. For example, the overall space of the first exhibition area of the National Opera Museum establishes a heavy historical environment of Chinese theatre art through the architectural techniques of tile and wooden brackets. The materials

of the exhibition cases are mainly glass and solid wood, and the traditional wooden screen technology divides the exhibition space. The exhibition of theatre art in the National Museum, limited by the space, using gypsum board, concrete, and glass as main materials, fails to build the historical environment of theatre culture and causes the absence of the sense of exhibition and experience of Chinese theatre art. Therefore, the application of materials and techniques in the design of theatre culture exhibitions should be combined with the rich material elements in theatre art, such as the water sleeves in the theatre art performance. Soft materials can be selected as the exhibition design to highlight its aesthetic feeling. In the museums with limited space, in addition to gypsum board and concrete exhibition walls, wood and bluish-gray masonry are added to enrich the interior and enhance the charm of traditional theatre art. The luminous soft film is used at the top of the exhibition space to create an unshaded indoor light feeling; The gauze screen is used to divide the exhibition space, reflecting the virtuality of Chinese theatre art.

4.3. Application of Digital Devices in Chinese Theatre Art Exhibition

The media used in traditional exhibitions can no longer meet the needs of modern curators. The application of interactive exhibition items focuses on creativity and interactive experience, which influences the visitors' visiting behavior and experience [8]. For example, at the entrance of the opera literature exhibition area of the National Theatre Arts Museum, visitors can play a crossword game on the digital touch screen and choose the content they are interested in so as to enhance the efficiency of exhibition learning and cultural transmission through interesting selection and interaction. This application is located in the center of the exhibition area, and the surrounding empty environment can avoid space congestion caused by interaction.

The theatre art musical instrument wall is presented in the form of a display board. The induction device behind the display board makes sounds according to the audience's movements in front of the theatre art musical instrument, which is a somatosensory interactive device with a stronger sense of experience [9]. Under the current situation of scientific and technological development, the interactive application that can spread Chinese theatre art overseas should be combined with curatorial themes and space design.

In addition, Augmented Reality (AR) is a kind of comprehensive information interactive processing and presentation technology, which can calculate the existing spatial materials in real-time and present virtual information. The 3D state presented is perfectly integrated with the real world, generating an immersive sense of interaction. For example, the digital AR map jointly created by Huawei and Dunhuang Academy in 2020 enables users to truly feel historical and cultural scenes and deepen the impression of cultural retention.

As a traditional performing art, Chinese theatre art has rich visual elements, which can be identified and calculated by AR technology [10]. Virtual opera characters' blind boxes with AR technology can also be added to the exhibition, and viewers can match the elements of makeup, clothing, and even self-design of theatre art creative products so as to enhance the entertainment of Chinese theatre art spread overseas. The combination of AR interactive technology and performance space enables viewers to watch every movement of the performance from multiple angles in the exhibition, and the artistic value of Chinese theatre art can be displayed from a comprehensive perspective.

Virtual exhibits, namely the 3D display of digital cultural relics, are also an important means of Chinese theatre art exhibition. Virtual exhibits make up for the viewing angle of traditional objects, and viewers can observe the details of the material of clothing and the color of makeup from multiple angles, improving the completeness of Chinese theatre art output and giving viewers a feast for their eyes.

5.   Conclusion

International exhibitions with cultural communication significance are developing rapidly. From an intercultural perspective, international exhibitions have high cultural value and social significance. The traditional Chinese theatre art of the stage space seems to be limited in the fast-paced society; thus, exploring the combination of theatre art and museum can be a better way to spread and protect Chinese theatre art. As the representative of Chinese excellent traditional culture, theatre art also shoulders the important task of Chinese culture intercultural communication. It is necessary to study how to realize the overseas communication of theatre art through exhibitions. The narrative expression of theatre art is in line with the idea of curating and telling stories, and the integration of theatre-art-theme exhibition with interactive devices, AR technology, 3D projection, and other modern technologies can tell Chinese stories well in the intercultural context, spread Chinese theatre art, and build a new cultural exchange mechanism for the communication. At the same time, the exchanges and cooperation among museums should also be gradually promoted, and the theme pavilions of theatre art exhibitions should be held around the world to create iconic exhibitions of Chinese theatre art so as to enhance the depth of Chinese culture in the global cultural landscape.

This study also has some shortcomings. First of all, the audience of Chinese theatre art is limited, and theatre art curation needs a complete theoretical framework. Secondly, the translation problem of opera is particularly serious, which affects the intercultural expression of the meaning of opera. The curatorial exhibition with theatre art as the theme is bound to encounter difficulties in translation and cannot be solved. Thirdly, this study does not investigate the situation of foreign theater culture museums. Further research could focus on highlighting the positive effect of cultural differences in the intercultural context to maximize the purpose of Chinese theatre art communication. At the same time, it is necessary to explore and innovate the integration of theatre culture and technology in the future curatorial strategy.

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