

Research on Hand-Knitted Art in Public Space

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Abstract: With the development of urbanization, public art is more and more popular and common in the whole world as a city of culture symbol. It should be fully considered the public space in the realization of its functions, decorative and local culture and the material. Meanwhile, the public space has been shown to provide a stage for the handmade art, the combination of public space and crochet or knitted ignite the artist's creative spark. In terms of the regional expression and effect of public space, the knitted art has shown great potential. Thus, this essay explores how to apply the crochet into public space, and also including some examples about knitted arts.

1. Introduction

Yarn bombing is already part of our daily environment. Especially with the acceleration of industrialization and the pace of life, People began to pay attention to the and gradually like making handmade products. The hard wearing metals and synthetics are cold and rejecting, handmade textiles in bright colour would be warm and accepting. In addition, many people are learning to use sewing machines, but are forgetting the huge enjoyment and relaxation that can be found in hand knitting. Therefore, it is more able to show people's emotions and stories as well as more flexible compared with the knitting machine.

For art works of the public environment, it emphasizes the combination of environmental features and color, local aesthetic and the overall coordination of the local environment, and also emphasizing people to experience the material style and culture art in the environment, which can achieve an extraordinary decorative effect. Based on this theory, hand knitting as a continuation of the traditional art, is selected to be researched because it is can happen to play a very good role from the decoration to practicability in public space.

2. Application of Yarn Art

2.1 Yarn Bombing

Yarn bombing, a form of street art, involves covering an object with knitting, crocheting, or simply just a bunch of yarn, it through creativity makes people's voice stronger, and people express their statement from this from. Besides, for a number of yarn bombers are good opportunity to beautify public spaces by those "good" form of street art. My understanding is that yarn bombing facilitates the beauty of a space by adding colors. Like an Australian female yarn bomber said: 'I mainly do it to beautify an area, especially if there is a lot of graffiti, I like

to show that not all “tagging” is bad’. This is not grandma’s knitting, but a powerful and new form of creative activism that we can do.



Fig.1 Magda Sayeg, 2010

The textile artist Sayeg is known for “yarn bombing” and was being called the mother of yarn bombing. She likes to cover objects such as street signs, stairs, gates, and pipes with colorful knit and crochet work. At the beginning, she just wrapped the door handle and traffic signs near her house. The reaction of the works was welcomed. People tend to park their cars in order to get out for a closer look at these works. Some even take pictures with these works. All the reactions of her works from the passerby that was really exciting to her. She wanted the stronger reaction with this material, then she did something unprecedented. So the bus with knitting was debuted. People recognized her work with small items before, while nothing as large as a bus. The bus also represents the first city bus which wrapped by knitting.

From her description and artworks, many artists have the same or stronger reaction. Artists with similar aspirations began to think how to draw people’s attention and why people reacted strongly with Sayeg’s works. These artists realized that they like to do something special or different compared from traditional arts.

2.2 Graffiti Knitting

Yarn bombing grew into a worldwide movement in recent years. People use knitted or crocheted material to decorate urban areas, somehow as graffiti to decorate urban walls. It’s unexpected that knitting keeps covering something in public space. It becomes popular globally, since people from all over the world start doing this.

The artist Lauren O’Farrell also known as Deadly Knitshade is attributed with creating the ‘stitched story’ style of graffiti knitting, and creating the Stitch London craft community. She is a storyteller at heart so it made sense to her to tell a story with her stitching.



Fig.2 Lorna & Jill Watt, San Francisco Ferry Plaza, Ca, April 2014

Lorna and Jill, from Claremont Art Studios in San Mateo, California, are self taught knitters and crocheters, they dedicated in selecting right tools for knitting. Micro crocheting and vintage knitting machines are mostly used by them. Their works are mainly patterns and yarnbombing. This whimsical green monster chair was inspired by the most common question we got about our “Buttmunches” yarn bomb in San Francisco. This colorful knitted wooden chair was exhibited at a gallery and is now available for the playroom, nursery, or playful office. To construct a crisp, flat panel, they knit on one of our vintage knitting machines, which they hand operate much like a loom. They design each element according to precise measurements based on hand made swatches using the perfect yarn and color from our huge palette. Finally, they painstakingly seam each element together on the chair with one of two different hand stitching methods to achieve an invisible seam. This research also need to consider how to cover the surface using the yarn and put together each element.

Those with animal figures make common chairs more interesting and fun. And what’s more, not only the visualization amuse people, but also the comfort looking makes people want to sit on it. Artist utilize these knits to grant souls to those chairs which supposed to be no more than a static staff, which make them unexpectedly popular. This is what this paper to research when those knitting stuff happend in public space.

3. Site Selection



Fig.3 Melbourne Central Station, Melbourne, 2016

The tram stops is a quite suitable place for this survey and research in Bourke street and Swanston street. In terms of those tram stops, some people waiting or having a rest here can be a little boring while standing or seating in tram stop with nothing to do. Some people even

stand rather than the seat, because the iron chairs are uncomfortable at a tram stop, especially at winter, people think it is too cold and hard. This artwork provides something warm and human to the cold steel. Hand-knitting cushions, therefore are considered to integrate into tram stop since these productions may be useful in the comforting anxiety of waiting for a tram.

There is a large flow of people who have different backgrounds and cultures in this site every day, and some people may feel boring or anxious while they are waiting at the tram station, besides, those tram stops is a little bit monotonous compare with the surrounds. Thus, it is a perfect location to use this 'art' to catch those people's eyes and make the tram stops more beautiful and colorful. Not only for spreading the concepts and information of this special kind of art form, but also it is a great way of killing time and put those people in a good mood while they are waiting for the trams. Decorating normal tram station in a unique way can also attract pedestrians' attentions.

4. Artwork Producing

Some productions of hand knitting cushions were to be finished at different tram stops. Showing those knitting cushions to attract people's attention, chatting with them when they are interested in those artworks, and then collect their advice and opinions towards those cushions, such as color and shapes, as well as their feelings. In terms of color, the relationship between color and emotion is closely tied to color preferences. In particular, color preferences are associated with whether a color elicits positive or negative feelings. This is why this research spends lots of time to analyze the colour selections. It is widely recognized that colors have also a strong impact on our emotions and feelings. For instance, the color red has been associated with excitement, orange has been perceived as distressing and upsetting, purple as dignified and stately, yellow as cheerful, and blue has been associated with comfort and security (Ballast 2002 & Wexner 1982). Red, symbolically known as a dominant and dynamic color, has an exciting and stimulating hue effect. It has both positive and negative impressions such as active, strong, passionate, warm, but on the other hand aggressive, bloody, raging and intense. Green has been found to have a retiring and relaxing effect. It too has both positive and negative impressions such as refreshment, quietness, naturalness, and conversely tiredness and guilt. The relationship between color and emotion is closely tied to color preferences. In particular, color preferences are associated with whether a color elicits positive or negative feelings.

In order to record people's reactions to the artwork by using a hidden camera. these cushions was put on the chair, hiding on the opposite side of the tram station, recording the whole process using the hidden camera. "You Can Play Them, Sit on Them, Touch Them! But, don't take them" on the paper with both English and Chinese version in order to inform passengers that these cushions can be played with rather than personal belongings. In the beginning, passengers was just curious about that paper; after a while, they begun to touch with it and sit on it, talking with other passenger about those cushions.

From the rest of the observation, some passenger was quite friendly because they invited other passengers to sit and chatted with them about those knitting stuff. They also talked how to make those cushions. It's can be seen they are enjoyably chatting with each other while sitting on these cushions, especially when soft artwork meets hard infrastructure makes them feel more comfortable. Those colorful cushions make gray infrastructure more energetic, as well as warmth to passengers. This research records the reaction of people invisibly when surroundings at tram stop shelters usually regarded as traditional, normal, simple or even boring place, changes a little bit adding some soft and colorful cushions in this hard and gray

surfaces of chair. As a result, there are several beautifully crocheted cushions in bright colour on benches in various tram shelters. The users of tram shelters equipped touch those cushions are positive and good humor.

5. Conclusion

From ancient times to modern times, the ancient hand-made art has accompanied people through a long process. This unique sense of temperature and humanized hand-made art has incomparable advantages over mechanized production from the initial knot with rope to the present design. In recent years, with the progress of society and the continuous improvement of living standards, people more and more yearn for the natural and soft living environment, and return to the original state of life and the nostalgic and warm way of life, especially in the fast-paced lifestyle. The traditional hand-knitted works are popular with people because of their unique art form. The application of traditional hand-made artworks to public space can not only inherit the traditional and ancient crafts, but also provide a new design direction for modern public space design to a certain extent.

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