Intervention and Negotiation

—The intervention of inter-media art in public space

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Abstract: Inter-media art is an art form that involves and combines multiple fields of expertise, like, digital art, biological art, interactive installations, artificial intelligence, etc. Because of its particularity of multi-domain collaboration, it has inevitably become a favorable choice to apply in public spaces that involve complicated social relations for those who work in the area. Interference and negotiation methods that depict the relationship between humans and (public) space, have gradually become the chosen work methods for inter-media art in public space.

Strictly speaking, inter-media art is not a conventional art form. Unlike art forms with more or less precise definitions such as oil painting, printing, sculpture and land art, inter-media art appears in the form of adjectives, which describe creative ways of working across multiple media relationships. The word media referred to, is not only limited in the artistic category but also points to the boundaries of other disciplines, such as, interactive installations, artificial intelligence and other forms of media that have developed rapidly in recent years. As inter-media art itself creates collaborations between various fields and contexts, the variety of its audiences has been literally and virtually expanded. Therefore, to create and display art within the complex relationships of the public space, inter-media art is more frequently used by relevant parties in recent decades.

1. Public space -- the playground of inter-media art.

First of all, it is essential to understand the definition of public space. To begin with, not all open spaces can be called public spaces, and the degree of each space's commonality is not always on the same level. Taking airports and railway stations as an example, we have to go through severe security checks before entering, which means the accessibility is limited. However, the street is a relatively open public space, but the situation is not immutable. Some museums require entrance tickets, which is also a public space with limitation. In modern cities, public spaces like commercial centres, libraries, city squares, parks and other public spaces have already been immersed in our daily life, which is hard to avoid. In terms of dealing with spaces with different degrees of openness and commonality, it is important for the artists to consider the form and approach of the intervention in order to achieve the ideal effect.

Except for the physical public spaces mentioned above, we should also take virtual spaces that involve mental and spiritual dimensions into account, such as the internet and other types of digital and virtual networks. In short, the definition of public space is very broad, but no matter whether it

is physical or virtual, the most important factor of intervening in the public space is to create a space that facilitates communication between individuals and space itself. The public space is a domain that connects millions of individuals randomly, a system that includes visual sense, auditory sense, tactile sense, gustation and all the senses that humans can perceive. The German philosopher and sociologist Jürgen Habermas believed that in a private area, people can be parents, couples and friends. While in the public sphere, the role is transformed into a citizen with more rights and obligations. 1 Although Habermas stated the concept in a more political matter, the complexity and comprehensiveness of the relationship of networks in the public space are undoubtedly revealed as well. From this perspective, as a starting point for art, it is obvious that inter-media art is more conducive to apply in the public space than in private space. Its comprehensiveness provides a promising prospect for the application of inter-media art, yet its complicated inner relationships also challenges the process of creation. It leads to the question of the characteristics of public space, which will be discussed below.

The openness of public space is an endless topic to discuss within the creative fields since the capacity of the space determines the foundation of the viewing experience. For public art, no other affirmations are greater than viewers' reactions and applause. Bulgarian artists Christo and Jeanne-Claude's works have a reputation of public attention and approval. In their professional life, many impressive works were presented to the public and some required years of work to be completed. A general characteristic of their work is their choice of location, that have enough physical space. For instance, the project of wrapping up the German parliament building (name) attracted 5 million people to visit.

Admittedly, the openness referred to here is not only about the size of the physical space, but also about the inclusivity of the conversational platform that the space created. When we are allowed to think and express ourselves freely in the space, art grows and thrives subsequently. Apparently, such inclusivity and openness are vital to inter-art making.

Furthermore, working in the public space requires social participation. Different levels sociality of individuals from groups with certain underlying rules, followed by a transformation of the way they acknowledge problems, self-cognition, and the world. This kind of sociality virtually weaves a solid foundation for delivering artistic ideas. Take television as an example; it's a private entertainment device and transmits in a relatively private way at home. However, the influence it has is far more energetic when it appears in Times Square in New York. Similarly, artworks placed in a qualified public space reach a maximum audience.

Last but not least, public space is constantly developing. With the development of society and technology, the concept of public space has extended and changed. Nowadays, the methods of information dissemination in cities such as Tokyo, New York, London, or Beijing are completely covered by digital technology. Information is no longer just a simple physical form that we perceive by means of visual, audio and tactile senses, it becomes an invisible interwoven grid. Especially at present, the intangible flow of information and data is dominating our living space to the maximum extent. Some of the public spaces have now been transformed into non-physical spaces, which is neither located in the architecture nor in the city. There is no fixed point or so-called address, but in the communication network and digital online dimension! 2

In conclusion, based on Lev Manovich's views of art theory, we have solid reasons to believe that openness, interactivity, democratization, entertainment, freedom and sociality are the main characters of inter-media art, which is essentially formed by the transformation of the public space. Vice versa, the diversified social relations and cultural spirit that the public space enjoys also make the inter-media application the best carrier of new media technology.3

2. Interference? Negotiation? The Way Artists Involve in Public Space

As mentioned before, public space has become the key to the application of inter-media art. It can reach diverse social groups and creates more connections, which creates a field where participation and democracy coexist. With the growth of the economy today, large-scale public spaces are facing the problem of commercialization. A mass of indistinguishable carriers of information is challenging the judgement ability of the public. In other words, public space is gradually losing its unique sociality and independence. Under these circumstances, contemporary artists begin to find a way to intervene in society in a more critical and effective way.

Therefore, even though we perceived space through interference, art intervention cannot be forced in public space. Through the subjective entry into a certain field of public space, artists achieve the goal of influencing the spatial form and the feeling of the participants. More specifically, the intervention was permeated in the creating process. Joseph Beuys presented us with an art concept such as "everyone is an artist" and "social sculpture" which aimed to apply art intervention into social revolution, to change the world. The public artwork he made In Castle Literature Exhibition(year), where he planted 7,000 Oaks in the city in order to welcome the public to take part in the act of art. Today, evidence of Beuys' work is rooted in the city Castle, which connects art and the public directly. For intermedia artists, the way they interact with spaces is multi-dimensional. They intervene in public spaces by exhibiting video works. The work 'Hand From Above'5 is displayed on a public LED screen. If anyone passes by, the image will capture the image and project it onto the screen. Passerby's will see their photo tickled, violated, and moved by a giant hand. Different participants react differently when they see the screen, some walk away and some recoil, but most of them wave back. Another artwork: 'Hungry Hungry Eat Head' 6 is an interactive game installed in a public place. Participants will be given large cardboard or cards, which will convert into 3D animation by using video tracking technology and play in real time on large LED screens. This technology turns participants into strange animals, grinning monsters and alien creatures in an instant.

Apart from direct interference, negotiation is another way that artists like to use to control the space. Compared to interference, negotiation is a much more moderate way that depicts the democratic characteristics of contemporary society to some degree. By deconstructing the levels of the public space, artists integrate their creative concepts into the field's rules, thus participations are in harmony with the space. The most prominent example is seen in the artwork: 'A Spring in New York' (Fred Lebain), where the artist is using the city as a canvas. Different from painting on canvas, the artist uses his body and movement to paint. It creates new connections with space, which also show the compromise that the artist made to the urban space. We used to redefine a space with paint, shapes and themes, now we have the honor of looking at an artist working on the reconstruction based on the actual built space.

'In Pulse Park' 7, the artist made an installation of programming an acousto-optic work in a public park. When people hold the device rod, their pulse will trigger the installation's light, which also follows the degree of the pulse. This kind of interactive communication is a way of negotiation between artists and audiences. In 2016, I had the honor to participate in the CAFAM Biennale Space Negotiation: 'I didn't expect you to be like this' held by the Central Academy of Fine Arts Art Museum. For the sake of the experimental and communicative quality of the exhibition, negotiations and 16 seminars were held to choose over 300 works. Museum space was deconstructed in a democratic way. During the negotiation process, artists expanded the concept of the public space in art museums. With grounded communications and discussions, the artwork has the tendency of democratization in the creative process. As Habermas points out: "Relevant parties communicate with each other to improve their understanding of something. Coordinate their actions

to reach agreements to some extent, and the individual tends to develop to a higher level in the process." 4

Undoubtedly, public art is not only technology, a certain style or a school of culture, but a method of constructing daily life for the masses by questioning, interaction and guidance. Within the context of globalization, how should we deal with the citizens' growing needs of public space and public awareness of it? How to understand the changing role of public art in the construction of contemporary art and how to level art creation to the height of the present characteristic. It is important for us to sort out and distinguish these propositions.

3. Challenges from New Public Space

Since the 1960s, many changes have taken place in the art world. From Marcel Duchamp and Joseph Beuys to the emerging digital and media art age that Nam June Paik brought. Art is undergoing a functional transformation from elite aesthetics to public serving. As a result, a great variety of art trends appeared in this period. After the appearance of Postmodernism, represented by Andy Warhol, people began to emphasize the connection between art and society. Boundaries between art and tradition, art and non-art and boundaries of media art have been challenged in this period. All of these verified Beuys's saying: "everyone is an artist, life is art".

At the same time, the construction of modern urban culture is mostly based on the irresistible logic of pragmatism. It is submerged in the large-scale spatial structures and dense infrastructures. It is unlikely to achieve democratic life when ndividuals and society were separated through the traditional public space only. On the one hand, urban construction accelerates the economic and cultural separation of ethnic groups. The traditional mechanisms of public interaction are rapidly eroding; on the other hand, we are now experiencing a new type of public space brought by our highly economized society. To face this new trend of public space, artists usually think and try to intervene in public space in various new ways.

The emergence of new space type depends largely on the development of digital media technology. Mobile Internet provides ways to sharing art theory in worldwide. The achievements of globalization are constantly changing ways how people coexist with themselves, others, and the world, which is an excellent opportunity for inter-media art. It only took 20 years for the Internet to expand the application and practice area of contemporary art. For example, social media software WeChat has largely changed the intensity of communication. In WeChat, information is transmitted through numerical reproduction technology. Engineers formed one digital module after another through " 0101" coding rules, and these modules are exactly the pattern that constructs our new public space today.

In short, the construction of public space is in constantly changing. Both the expansion of networks or the spread of globalization changes the public space. Study of this expanding spatial trend in the context of globalization may lead us in a new way to understand the inter-media art and other public artwork.

It is not aimed to change today's public art creation in a certain urban spaces, but to promote the emergence and communication possibilities of the 'new' public space. In the future, inter-media art in the public space will be an art form that emphasizes the commonness, the popularization, the interaction and the equal exchange. This kind of creative process should be done through intervention and negotiation rather than forced insertion. Artworks will show the tendencies of the democratic, the openness, the expansionary and pluralistic qualities of society.

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