

A Study on the Change of Exhibition Environment in Art Museum

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Abstract

This study offers a comprehensive exploration of museum evolution from the 18th century to the contemporary era in order to examine shifts in exhibition structures, viewing forms, and the historical context of museum exhibitions. The structure of the museum's exhibition has changed and the type of visitors to the museum has also changed organically. In the midst of the change, visitors were able to free themselves from limited and unilateral coercion and establish themselves as an active person who could freely demand needs. The findings highlights the fundamental role of museums in responding to visitors' needs, emphasizing their evolving role as cultural hubs catering to diverse socio-cultural demands. The study concludes by emphasizing the significance of museums reimagining their exhibitions, placing visitor interpretation and engagement at the forefront. Ultimately, modern art museums are portrayed as not merely housing artworks but as spaces rich in multifaceted meanings, fostering inclusivity and accessibility for all.

Keyword : Museum, Exhibition Environment, Visitors, Contemporary Art Museum

1. Introduction

Art museums have evolved through a process of change over time. In the past, museums functioned as exhibition and research institutions, but nowadays, they are required to accommodate socio-cultural needs as a center of the era and local culture by appreciating artworks, or to function as a complex cultural space with various cultural and educational services centered on user participation, and to become a place for lifelong education including self-learning.

According to George Ellis Burcaw in 1997, exhibitions in museums today are a form of creative communication in which the exhibition organizers reproduce art to visitors with specific production intentions and purposes. An exhibition in an art museum is a display, but it is also a display that involves the curator's interpretation of the meaning and significance of the objects on display and is intended to be shared with the audience [1].

Robert Lumley stated that in the 21st century, the meaning of art museums is constantly changing with new approaches to artworks and different ways of presenting the concept of art and culture, and

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Received(September 21, 2023), Review Result(1st: October 7, 2023), Accepted(December 8, 2023), Published(December 31, 2023)



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that the old concept of displaying the works in the collection has been replaced by the modern concept of a means for mental communication [2]. As such, exhibitions in museums have basically had the meaning of exhibiting works, and in modern times, they have additionally taken on the meaning of recreating meaning and interacting with visitors.

The history of art exhibitions is a rich and complex subject that provides critical tools to approach history. It reveals cultural debates of the past, helps trace histories of ideas, and highlights the connections between art and other realms including commerce. For example, the 1878 Exposition Universelle in Paris featured a network of distinct Islamic art installations including national initiatives and commercial undertakings, all persuasively staged with architecture. A study of art exhibitions in Singapore from the 1970s to the 1990s and a review of Australian Art Exhibitions are also part of this diverse history [3][4]. However, a diachronic approach to the exhibition environment of art museums according to the changes of the times plays a fundamental role in observing the changes in the past and predicting the changes in the future, and is expected to be the basis for realizing various possibilities that can be pursued in art museum exhibitions in the future.

In this regard, the objective of this study is to first examine the changes in the exhibition environment of museums with the main issues of changes in the history of museum exhibitions, changes in exhibition structures, and changes in viewing forms in the main text, and then to draw out the implications of these changes in the exhibition environment.

2. Changes in the museum exhibition experience

2.1 Changes in Museum Exhibition History

2.1.1 Early museum exhibition history

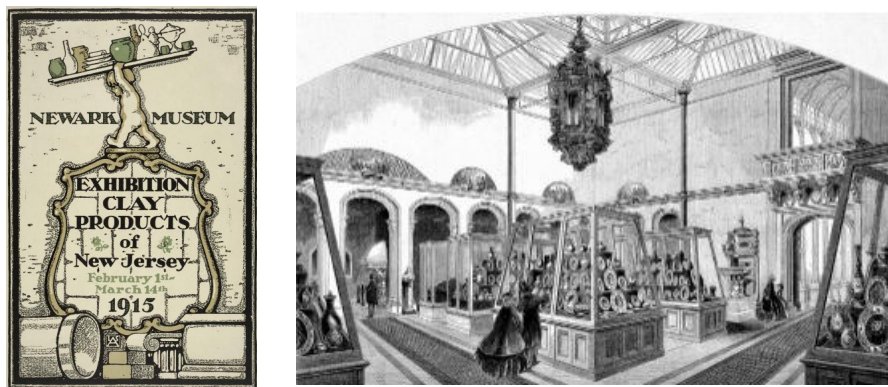
The purpose of exhibitions in the 16th and 17th centuries was to create intentional spaces. In Italy, paintings and sculptures were displayed in spaces called galleria, and rare objects or herbarium specimens were displayed in spaces called gabinetti [5]. In other words, early museums were not spaces that anyone could easily access and enjoy the pleasure of art. They were open only to a certain few people, mainly aristocrats, alchemists, painters, sculptors, architects, novelists, and scholars from a certain class, a certain background, and the subject matter was very limited. Architecturally, museums with an ornate appearance emerged. Examples include the Vatican Museums, the British Museum, and the Louvre.

2.1.2 The history of museum exhibitions in the 19th century

In the 19th century, museums were meant to be communal. With the Civil and Industrial Revolutions, 19th-century architecture and exhibition began to open up to the public.

Most museums built during this period were organized in a strictly symmetrical floor plan with a large central space that resembled an introduction, and lighting with natural light from the ceiling of the exhibition space was recognized as a common norm. The exhibits and exhibition methods at that time were mainly composed at a level that could be understood by professional connoisseurs, collectors, and scholars, and although aesthetic aspects were also considered in the organization of the exhibits, typological and chronological classification methods were prioritized. Today's curators and exhibition designers still follow this tradition to a large extent.

As shown in [Fig. 1], London's South Kensington Museum, founded in 1857 and renamed the Victoria and Albert Museum in 1899, was the literal heir to the Crystal Palace. Established to further the Exhibition's goals of making exemplary objects of craft and industrial arts available to the general public, a good part of its collection came directly from the fair [6].



[Fig. 1] Newark Museum Poster in 1915 (Right), South Kensington Museum in 1862 (Left)

The 19th century shows the most dramatic development of museum exhibitions. In response to the rapidly changing trends in museum exhibitions, many people became increasingly interested in exhibitions. It was a time when exhibitions moved away from the difficult and esoteric and strived for a higher level of public interest.

2.1.3 Museum of Modern Art Exhibition History

In the 19th century, the audience for exhibitions began to diversify from a specialized audience to the

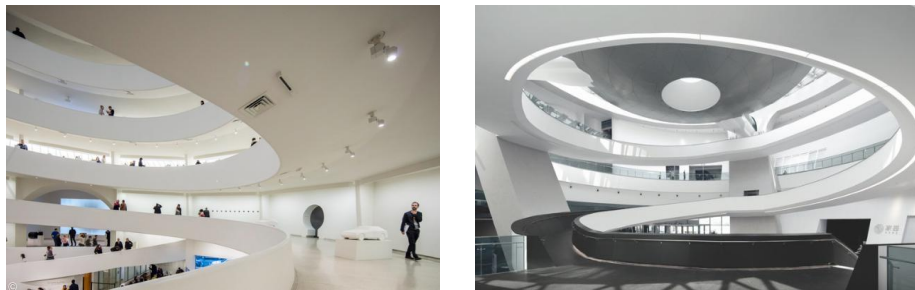
general public. Members of the public could now freely visit museums and enter the exhibition areas of museums. The difference is that while 19th-century exhibitions were mostly designed to be understood by specialized connoisseurs, collectors, and scholars, today's museum exhibitions are designed to be interpreted by people of all ages. For example, most museums organize their exhibitions according to the audience, such as adults, students, and infants, and provide explanations and programs that connect with the exhibitions according to the audience's eye level.

Modern museums are constantly changing. Art museums that host various programs, events, and events are emerging, and they tend to develop as a means of social education through multi-dimensional and multi-media exhibition methods that break away from one-dimensional exhibition methods.

2.2 Changes in Museum Exhibit Structure

2.2.1 Museum Exhibition Structure in the 1980s

In the 1980s, exhibition structures such as room to room, rooms to rooms, public to rooms, and free plan were commonly used. The room to room format refers to the direct, one-to-one connection of independent exhibition rooms to each other, with no common spaces such as corridors or halls. It has been the most typical format since the 18th century when museums began to be built. The exhibition structure in this format was also understood as a forced movement, as the exhibition rooms were not only inaccessible from the public space, but also connected in a row. Once you entered a room, you had no choice but to move on to the next one, and other visitors were forced to follow suit without choice or free will.



[Fig. 2] The Solomon R. Guggenheim museum (Right), Shanghai Astronomy Museum in Sanghai(Left)

As shown in [Fig. 2], after the war, the museum's architectural evolution was groundbreaking, ushering in a fresh concept of Modernism. Frank Lloyd Wright's design of the Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum stands as a testament to modernism, boasting unparalleled organic qualities, and distinctiveness

that sets it apart from any other museum globally. Conceived with an emphasis on creating an atmospheric experience, it embraces Modernist design elements to complement artworks. Its minimalist aesthetics and subdued color palette aim to enhance and spotlight the artwork, diverging from traditional approaches that emphasized grandeur in artifact display. The museum is conceived as an exhibition space tailored to serve the artifacts rather than merely accommodate them [7].

This period also saw the emergence of the room to room format. This is an evolution of room to room, where one room is connected to multiple rooms. The process of selecting from multiple exhibition halls was introduced as a departure from the one-sided and wireless exhibition structure of room to room. Compared to the previous exhibition structure, it became possible to move around more freely. Then, a new form of public to rooms emerged. This refers to spaces such as corridors and halls that are directly connected to each exhibition room, rather than spaces such as large spaces or lobbies that are not expected to play a role in distributing circulation, which can be called public spaces. Again, a situation of spatial choice can be seen as type of circulation.

One of the last exhibition structures that can be found in the 1980s is the free plan. It can be said to be a very different form from the exhibition structure of museums that existed before, and it has a more progressive character. In particular, the free plan format adopts a columnar structure, and the walls are separated from the structure, making the compartments unclear and enabling a more free-form floor plan than before.

2.2.2 1990s Museum Exhibit Structure

In the 1990s, the room to room format changed from simple to complex connections. The traditional format where all the rooms are connected together to form a ring-like structure is of course still present in the 1990s. However, the important thing is that some of the rooms are connected to other rooms. If the previous simple connected structure had a simple and primary meaning, in the 1990s, the exhibition structure of museums became more complex and organized, with another ring structure added to the existing ring structure.

Also, if the exhibition structure of museums in the 1980s was compulsory, in the 1990s it was transformed to allow the viewer to change the path by choice. In addition, the rooms to rooms format changes from a dependent multiple connection type to an independent multiple connection type. In the 1980s rooms to rooms, there was a master-servant relationship between the exhibition rooms and a continuous development of the exhibition space centered on the main exhibition room. However, in the 90s, this master-servant relationship disappears and changes to a more independent and selective

movement system. As such, it is characterized by the possibility of visitors' choice and systematic movement through the exhibition.

Next, the symbolic public space type of public to room changes to a functional public space type. In the 1990s, a centralized space such as a hall emerges, and selective route distribution becomes the core of the visitor's movement system. In fact, although public spaces existed before, they did not provide the opportunity for everyone to freely choose and distribute circulation in the name of exhibiting in them. The public to room of the 1990s can be said to be a spatial structure that solved the shortcomings and difficulties of such a method.

Finally, as for the free plan, it transforms from a definite form to an indeterminate form, which is a structure in which the division of space is more unclear. In particular, in the indeterminate exhibition structure, various exhibition programs can be installed in the empty space by adopting an open plan type to achieve diversity in space and exhibition [8][9].

2.2.3 Contemporary Museum Exhibition Structure

In fact, the form and nature of the exhibition structure, audience, and subject matter of the 21st century art museum is not much different from what it was in the 1990s. Compared to the 1980s, there are a greater number of museums, exhibitions, exhibition topics, and visitors. Assuming that the exhibition structure of museums today is very similar to that of museums in the 1990s, the basic characteristics can be explained as follows.

First of all, contemporary museums pursue diversity in exhibition structure. Rather than consistently insisting on a single, generalized exhibition structure, museums are trying to meet the different desires and curiosities of modern people by exhibiting in a variety of structures. However, even so, the most used exhibition structure is the functional public space type of public to room. Although there is a basic common space such as a hall, it has the advantage that visitors can freely use various structural paths. This structure, which was unthinkable in the 1980s, allows visitors to choose the topics they are interested in, the works they are interested in, and the paths they are interested in. Along with the diversity of exhibition structures, selectivity is a characteristic of the current exhibition structure of museums.

Looking at the current state of exhibition in museums, many attempts at selectivity have been realized by reflecting the diverse opinions of visitors. People want to get not only physical comfort but also mental satisfaction through exhibitions in museums. Therefore, it is inevitable that they would prefer an exhibition structure that can be freely used according to individual choice rather than a unified structure.

Therefore, it is assumed that an exhibition structure based on choice and diversity will emerge for a long time in the future, just as the current museum structure is. As smartphones and photography have become more prevalent, museums have transformed into spaces conducive to photography [10]. As described in [Fig. 3], The North Carolina Museum of Art (NCMA) launched a new mobile app that offers themed, self-guided audio tours of the Museum's permanent collection. This mobile application aims to prompt visitors at NCMA to take their time in the permanent collection galleries and encourage them to observe artworks more closely. This emphasis on deeper engagement aims to enrich their appreciation of the art in order to foster a more personalized and memorable museum visit [11].



[Fig. 3] North Carolina Museum of Art

2.3 Changes in Museum Visiting Patterns

2.3.1 Museum Visitation in the 1980s

The exhibitions of the 1980s were dominated by intensive exhibition programs that used similar detailed paths, as the one-way ring structure of the galleries made it inevitable that the same paths would be followed. Therefore, there were signs at the entrances to guide visitors, and clockwise viewing was encouraged.

In particular, in the 1980s, the common areas were not connected to each other, and each exhibition room was directly connected to the other room, so the common areas could play the role of distributing

circulation properly, so the exhibition rooms were transformed into a room-to-room format, and visitors were guided by signs that connected the exhibition rooms. In addition, although the space was freely arranged, the spatial structure was formed into a number of rings, so similar paths were often used except for the center, where spatial definiteness was weak. Therefore, a sign that could guide visitors to the right was placed to help them view the exhibition effectively.

2.3.2 Museum Visitation in the 1990s

In the 1990s, the one-way ring structure of the gallery changed to a ring structure with irregular vertical connections. Although they were irregular, they all generated different movements, so there were many exhibition programs that could make use of different detailed movements, and scattered movements occurred as the master-servant relationship between exhibition rooms disappeared and multiple ring structures began to form. This resulted in exhibition programs that did not match each other's spatial structure. In addition, as each exhibition room is connected from the common space, and the common space is connected by three vertical lines, the common space plays a role as a route distribution. Therefore, a route centered on the corridor is selected. Finally, as the definiteness of the space is further weakened, various perspectives and paths are generated. Therefore, various exhibition experiences are possible through chaotic paths.

2.3.3 Visitation in Contemporary Art Museums

Visitors to contemporary museums are not much different from those in the 1990s. First of all, there are various scattered paths. The master-servant relationship between major and minor exhibitions has long since disappeared, and all exhibitions have established a common and parallel relationship. In addition, all the pavilions are connected around a common space. As already mentioned in the exhibition history of the 1990s, the intermediate space, the hall or corridor, allows visitors to freely choose their own path.

While some people may visit museums for the sole purpose of viewing art exhibitions, there are also many people who want to take a break from their busy modern lives, and the presence or absence of various options and routes plays a large role in determining the future demand of museum visitors [12].

3. Conclusion

This study examined the changes in the exhibition environment of art museums with focus on changes in the history of art museum exhibitions, changes in exhibition structures, and changes in

viewing styles. One of the most significant implications of these changes in the exhibition environment is that the enjoyment of exhibitions has expanded from a select few to the general public.

According to Zahava Doering's metaphor, museum visitors became strangers in the 18th century, guests in the 19th century, and clients in the 20th century and beyond. This metaphor suggests that while early museums were limited and unilateral in providing exhibitions to visitors, modern museums must transform into multicultural spaces that focus on the diversified needs of visitors [13].

Visitors to museums are now an indeterminate mass of people with diverse lifestyles and needs, and are active agents who make meaning arbitrarily and selectively, from the decision to visit to the experience of viewing an exhibition. Visitors want to see, feel, and be moved by artworks, and they want to find the value and meaning of artworks. In other words, they come to museums with interest in the exhibition and expectations about the exhibition, and they expect to understand the exhibition. Therefore, it is the current mission of museums to develop ways to help visitors understand in order to meet their needs, and museums should create opportunities for a wide range of experiences other than viewing to satisfy a large number of visitors. In other words, museums have the opportunity to communicate with visitors' understanding through the basic purpose of exhibitions, and it is necessary to communicate the basic mission and intention of exhibitions to visitors in various ways [14].

This study aims to delve into the structure and visiting experiences of museums from the 18th century to the contemporary. The findings underscore the importance for museums to be responsive to visitors' needs to ensure exhibitions align with these requirements. This purpose of catering to visitors' needs stands as the core reason for museums' existence. Today, the significance and interpretation offered by visitors have emerged as pivotal benchmarks for museums. In this evolving landscape, museums are poised to reimagine significance within their exhibitions, fostering dialogue and engagement with visitors, potentially evolving into central hubs for cultural discourse. Modern art museums, rather than merely housing rare items, are capable of encapsulating multiple layers of meaning inherent in various artworks. They provide ample space for a myriad of interpretations and remain open and accessible to all.

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