

Restoration and Cultural Revitalization: Culture Station Seoul 284 as a Historical Landmark and Cultural Hub

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Abstract

Trains have historical significance and train stations are transportation centers that symbolize an era so architects built buildings with the dreams of the times. In this regard, Culture Station Seoul 284 as the former Seoul Station is a historic landmark that has undergone restoration and transformation into a complex cultural space. The purpose of this paper is to explore the background and restoration process of Culture Station Seoul 284 that revitalized the former Seoul Station as an iconic landmark in South Korea's modern history and a gateway for exchange. Culture Station Seoul 284 represents a successful restoration and transformation of a historic railway station into a vibrant cultural space. Its fusion of the past and present as well as its commitment to preserving heritage while embracing contemporary art forms makes it a valuable cultural asset for the city of Seoul.

Keyword : Train station, Culture Station Seoul 284, Cultural revitalization, Historical landmark

1. Introduction

Train stations hold a special place in the realm of transportation with historical significance and architectural marvels. These iconic hubs bear witness to the dreams and aspirations of their times. Many of the old train stations have been converted into restaurants and commercial spaces with the intention of preserving the aesthetic beauty of the old train stations. For example, the Musée d'Orsay was the first electrified railway station in Paris designed in the Art Nouveau style by Victor Laloux for the World's Fair of July 14, 1900. When advances in railroad technology led to the creation of electric trains, the station lost its historical value and was abruptly closed. The renovation of the Art Nouveau-style former Orsay station began in 1977 and the museum opened in 1986. A neglected train station was transformed into a sturdy art venue and a vibrant space bustling with contemporary French and international visitors. It is the result of a Parisian initiative that transformed an iconic building into an art museum [1].

Another example is Guggenheim Museum Bilbao, Spain was a major shipping hub for the steel

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industry and a center for shipbuilding and enjoyed prosperity as the fourth largest city in Spain until the early 20th century. However, the decline of the steel industry after World War II led to the closure of many of the ports and factories along the river. In 1980, the Basque government of Spain initiated a plan to transform the city into a cultural center that included the construction of a modern museum. This plan led to the construction of the Guggenheim Museum. A shimmering mass of titanium panels, glass curtain walls and lime stone on a twisting and curving exterior, the Guggenheim is a work of sculptural art and has been called the avant-garde of 20th-century architecture. It has transformed a declining city into a world-class tourist destination that attracts one million visitors a year. The well-planned architecture has given the city a distinctive competitive edge and created the Bilbao Phenomenon, a thriving culture that has stimulated the local economy [2].

In South Korea, one such remarkable example is Culture Station Seoul 284 as a bridgehead for diverse cultures and a preserver of the historical value of Seoul Station in South Korea. Serving as a crucial stage in Korea's modern and contemporary history and a gateway for cultural exchange, Seoul Station embodies the spirit of a bygone era. In this regard, much research revolving around Seoul station can be easily found with its historical significance and functions [3][4] as a space-mediated communication of railway, city and border but few studies have been conducted with the focus on its transformation and renovation of the Culture Station Seoul 284 [5]. The purpose of this paper is to examine the founding and restoration of Culture Station Seoul 284 and analyze its current programs and initiatives in order to delve into the future prospects of this cultural gem.

2. Background and restoration of Culture Station Seoul 284

2.1 Background of Culture Station Seoul 284

On July 5, 1900, the first bridge over the Han River, the Han River Railroad Bridge opened and connected Seodaemun in Seoul to Jemulpo in Incheon, the opening port. Built at this time, the Namdaemun Station was the beginning of today's Seoul Station. After the Eulsa Wolf Pact of 1905, the growth of Namdaemun Station became prominent and the Gyeongui-line was re-routed to Namdaemun Station. Then, Namdaemun Station was renamed Gyeongseong Station in 1923 that made Seoul Station the gateway to Seoul. The current Seoul Station was designed and constructed during the period when the railroads of colonial Korea were entrusted to the Manchurian Railway Company, a Japanese state-owned company but when the building was completed in 1925, the railroad management rights were returned to the Korean Governorate.

After recovering from the pain of the Korean War and driving economic development, Seoul Station reached its peak with the opening of Subway Line 1 in 1974. The convergence of the railroad, a nationwide transportation network and the subway as the grandchild of public transportation in Seoul further strengthened the centrality of Seoul Station. With the development of Gangnam in earnest in the 1970s and the Gangnam Express Bus Terminal built to support it, Seoul Station's role was quickly diminished and the era of the 1990s when individual owns their own cars weakened the railroad's status [6].

The opening of the high-speed rail line in 2004 revived Seoul Station and restored its role as a transportation hub but the old Seoul Station lost its function as a train station. Over the years, a large part of the building has been vacated to deepen the deterioration of the cultural property and undermine the value of the historic architecture. As a result, the need for restoring the value of the old Seoul Station as a cultural property and establishing a new status as a cultural spatialization project began to be raised [7].

The former Seoul Station is significant as the center of modern urban culture. It opened the modern era of Korea and is a symbol of national suffering and a site of Korea's modern history that overcame the hardships of the Korean War and achieved economic growth. Also, it symbolizes a historical city and a gateway to the world. The former Seoul Station, the center of Korea's modern and contemporary history, has been reborn from a historical city to a gateway to a world city and a central space for history and culture with the opening of KTX in 2004 and the opening of the airport railway. In particular, inter-Korean relations that have been steadily improving since the end of the Cold War are expected to be connected to continental railroads in the near future and when the former Seoul Station is connected to continental railroads, it would become another face of Korea to the world as the starting and ending point of the Eurasian Railway. In addition, the former Seoul Station has meaning as a cultural space that embraces history and moves forward into the future. The former Seoul Station, the center of colonial domination and the shadow of colonial capitalism during the Japanese occupation, was also the center of colonial modern culture. It appears in renowned Korean writer Lee Sang's *Wings*, Park Tae-won's *Daily Life of Novelist Kubo* and the post-liberation movie *Mabu*. In particular, as economic development accelerated after liberation, the Seoul Station Square was a place that contained the lamentations and dreams of ordinary small citizens who took their first steps in Seoul with dreams of prosperity during the era of casual commerce.

2.2 Restoration of Culture Station Seoul 284

The former Seoul Station was reborn in 2011 as a complex cultural space where various arts and culture are created and exchanged after its original restoration. Therefore, the need for a name that can imply the function of a cultural space rather than a railway station was raised. In response, the Ministry of Culture, Sports and Tourism and the Korea Creative Arts Council held a name contest for all citizens from April 27 to May 20, 2011 to develop a new name through the public's novel ideas. As a result, a total of 1490 submissions were received, of which 'Culture Station 284' was selected as the best.

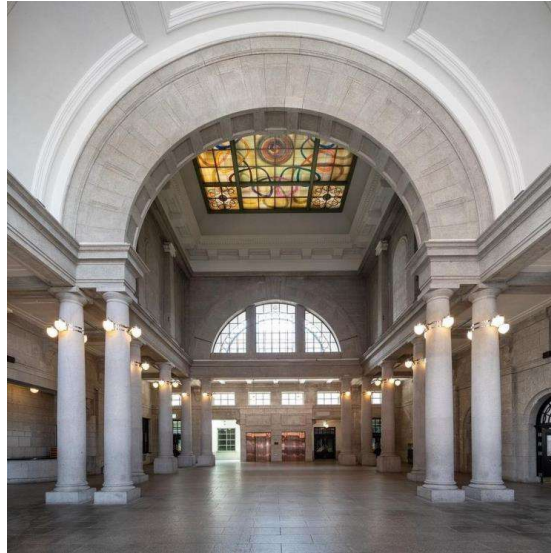
After the contest, with the intention of combining the historic number 284 of the former Seoul Station with the concept of a cultural space to preserve its appearance and value as a historic site and at the same time to inherit its meaning as a station where various cultures intersect, 'Culture Station 284' was changed to Korean. Thus, as shown in [Fig. 1], the Culture Station Seoul 284 means the historical, spatial and urban symbolism of the place name of Seoul.



[Fig. 1] Culture Station Seoul 284 after restoration

The basic principle of reconstruction was to keep the possibility open for the Seoul 284 to fulfill its function as a train station, preserve its architectural value along with its historical value and share that value with the citizens. Furthermore, the potential value of the new Seoul Station, which will grow from a historical city to a gateway to a global city, was to be realized through cultural spatialization. The cultural and artistic genres to be accommodated in the Station are not traditional Western cultural and artistic genres but rather spaces that embrace contemporary cultural and artistic genres that combine high-tech industries and cultural capabilities. This led to the presentation of a new model in which the historical architectural value of the former Seoul Station and contemporary cultural genres coexisted. To

illustrate this, the concourse is filled with stained glass ceiling paintings that convey the meaning of the restoration and cultural spatialization of the former Seoul Station as shown in [Fig. 2] and it plays the role of ‘emptying out’ the value of the restoration and cultural spatialization that the Culture Station Seoul 284 aims to achieve.



[Fig. 2] The glass ceiling of the Culture Station Seoul 284

[Table 1] Restoration classification of former Seoul Station

Class	Details
Hight	-Major spaces with high architectural value and meaning for the function, historical significance and social role of the former Seoul Station -Restoration of the original 1925 style and entire change of interior
	-Concourse, First and Second Waiting Rooms, Ladies' Waiting Room, Guest Room, Reserve Room, main staircase, dining hall and related facilities
Middle	-Spaces that can be restored with its original form but change the overall use and utilization of the rooms -Restoration of the original 1925 style and minor change of interior
	-3 Lighthouse Waiting Room, Passenger Passage, Baggage Handling, Ticket Office, Information Center Stairs, Dining Facility, Barber Shop
Low	-Spaces that do not significantly affect the value of station's history as a cultural asset -Entire change that is suitable for the proposed use of each room
	→ Restrooms, office areas and restrooms, basement level

The original restoration was differentiated into high, medium and low grades based on the importance

and historical significance of each space of the former Seoul Station as well as the physical situation of each part and its current and potential value. [Table 1] lists the classification of the original restoration of the former Seoul Station.

2.3 Culture Station Seoul 284 programs

Culture Station Seoul 284 first opened in 2011 with the opening exhibition of Old Future and the opening project of Countdown and it has been conducting various programs covering all genres such as art, music and dance as a complex cultural space.

The Countdown took place between the official launch of Culture Station Seoul 284 in March 2012. It was organized by Professor Kim Sung-won of the Seoul National University of Science and Technology and artistic director Kim Sung-won. Over the course of six months, Countdown featured installations, sculptures and videos by more than 30 artists reinterpreting the Seoul Station while simultaneously filling the space with a total of 60 different cultural contents including performances and films. In the concourse on the first floor, The Secret Sharer, a quilt of crystals and acrylics, and Fountain by Kim Hong-seok, which looks like a gushing column of water, were installed to mark the birth of a new cultural space. In the guest room where the president waited for his train, Woo Soon-ok's installation Waiting Room reconsidered the meaning of Seoul Station as a place where people gathered, left and returned, and Lee Bul's spatial sound simulation Bunker reexamined the modern history through the life of the last of the Joseon dynasty, Hwang Son Igu (1931-2005).

On the second floor, the artists reconstructed the Seoul Station Grill, one of the best stylized halls in Joseon, into an exhibition space. The restrooms and barber shop have been transformed into a restoration exhibition room where visitors can see architectural materials collected during the restoration work and the original chandelier. Outside the station, works were installed to reflect on the meaning of Seoul Station, and Kim Sooja's Baggage Truck was screened on the Seoul Square Media Canvas across from Seoul Station, encountering the history of protests, rallies, homelessness, immigrants, movement and encounters in Seoul Station Square.

The transformation of the railway station into a cultural complex revitalizes the surrounding area by attracting visitors, artists and cultural enthusiasts. It injects new life into the neighborhood to create economic opportunities and contribute to urban regeneration. The presence of cultural events, exhibitions and performances stimulates creativity and fosters a vibrant cultural scene. Also, by repurposing the former central railway station, it contributes to the preservation of historical and architectural heritage. It allows visitors to experience and appreciate the city's past and the significance of the railway station in

Seoul's development. This preservation effort helps maintain a connection to the cultural and historical roots of the city to foster a sense of identity and continuity.

3. Future directions of Culture Station Seoul 284

Culture Station Seoul 284 is a place where the story of South Korea and the stories of many Koreans have passed through. The renovated former Seoul Station was a major stage in Korea's modern and contemporary history and it has been transformed from a transportation hub into a cultural and artistic hub. Thus, Culture Station Seoul 284 needs to be developed as a cultural space that helps to revitalize culture and develop the local economy by combining history and culture.

Culture Station Seoul 284 could continue to expand its cultural programming by offering a diverse range of exhibitions, performances and events. This could include collaborations with local and international artists, thematic exhibitions, interdisciplinary performances and innovative cultural experiences that engage visitors in new and exciting ways. For instance, with the advancement of technology, cultural spaces may explore incorporating digital and virtual experiences to enhance visitor engagement. Incorporating interactive elements and technology-driven experiences can provide visitors with immersive and participatory encounters. This could involve interactive installations, digital art, virtual tours and multimedia experiences that encourage visitors to engage with art and culture in unique ways.

As sustainability becomes an increasingly important aspect of society, cultural spaces like Culture Station Seoul 284 may incorporate environmentally friendly practices and promote awareness through their programming. This could involve exhibitions and events centered around sustainability, eco-friendly practices in operations and design and collaborations with environmental organizations.

Culture Station Seoul 284 could strengthen its ties with the local community by expanding its community outreach initiatives. This could include partnerships with local schools, community organizations and artists to develop programs that cater to the specific needs and interests of the community. The cultural programs and activities offer educational opportunities for people of all ages. Workshops, lectures and exhibitions promote learning, creativity and cultural understanding so that the Culture Seoul 284 becomes a platform for cultural exchange and dialogue to encourage people to explore new ideas, perspectives and artistic expressions.

4. Conclusion

Culture Station Seoul 284 holds significant historical and cultural value as the former Seoul Station and has played a pivotal role in the city's development and modernization. The restoration of the old station into a complex cultural space aimed to preserve its architectural and historical significance while embracing contemporary cultural genres and fostering artistic exchange. The restoration process categorized the spaces within Seoul Station based on their historical importance and current potential value to ensure the preservation of its architectural heritage. The integration of original restoration with modern cultural genres as exemplified by the stained glass ceiling paintings creates a unique blend of historical and contemporary elements within the venue.

Culture Station Seoul 284 serves as a symbol of historical and cultural significance to promote the preservation of heritage while embracing contemporary artistic expression. It represents a bridge between the past, present and future to foster a sense of identity, creativity and community within the city of Seoul.

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