

A Study of the Characteristics of Public Art Practice in Community Micro-Renewal

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Abstract:

Public art, as a manifestation and carrier of public spirit, effectively promotes the construction of community culture in community micro-renewal. This paper explores the practical characteristics of public art interventions in community micro-renewal, exploring and analysing the four dimensions of public art interventions: approach, timeliness, connotation and role. The connotations of the works convey a larger vision through small themes. The role and effect of public art as a practical tool for community micro-renewal is significant. The article concludes with a summary of experiences and perspectives on the creation of this model, which will hopefully provide some lessons for the design practice of public art in community micro-renewal.

Keywords:

Community Micro-Renewal, Public Art, Community Art

1. Introduction

As the area of land available for construction in cities around the world becomes smaller and smaller, the development of urban regeneration is gradually shifting from the previous model of large-scale demolition and construction to a stock regeneration approach to improve the quality of the spatial environment and the connotation of urban development. The community, as the basic unit of urban development, has also gradually shifted from the previous concept of merely satisfying basic functional needs to one that focuses more on spatial reconstruction and community activation, with particular emphasis on the public participation model of community micro-renewal, which focuses more on the quality of space and the lifestyle of residents in the community. This public participation model of micro-renewal effectively revitalises spaces, discovers and passes on the history and culture of the community, and promotes the overall urban development from a local perspective.

2. Community Micro-Renewal and Public Art

2.1. Community Micro-Renewal

“Community” is a place where people gather and refers to a regional living environment and the multiple meanings of life, history, industry, culture and environment attached to it, and implies an emotional sense of “homeland”. [1] Since the 1990s, as the context of economic and social development in Western countries has changed, the renewal of the physical environment and social networks has entered a slower and more cautious phase, and people have come to realise that large scale regeneration can destroy the spatial texture that has been built up over a long period of time, and thus destroy the complex socio-ecological relationships attached to it. This is why the micro-renewal model, as opposed to the medium and large scale model, is increasingly accepted by the public.” [2] In recent years, urban communities have gradually adopted a small-scale, multi-functional and progressive approach to regeneration, and there have been a number of interesting models and typical cases of community micro-renewal. The microscale features of community micro-renewal are mainly manifested in the micro scale and the micro input. From the perspective of regeneration objects, it mainly starts from the quality improvement and function shaping of unused public space in the community, such as community boundaries, roads, nodes, areas and signs. In terms of practical inputs, the barriers to entry are low, allowing for multi-party cooperation and residents being able to join in well. In terms of oriented intervention points, they often start from community problems and propose effective strategies to solve community conflicts and problems through micro-renewal. [3] Today, community regeneration and development is still a common problem in cities around the world. When carrying out micro-renewal, it is necessary to take into account the specific local human background and the special situation of the community to carry out targeted regeneration and transformation, so that the community can be more adapted to the development of the city and make the community life more comfortable and better for the residents.

2.2. Public Art

Public art is literally art that is considered from the public’s point of view and is based on the public's artistic presence. Public art can take many forms, including music, dance, film, theatre, painting, sculpture and even literature. [4] exists as a cultural phenomenon that embodies the life of human society. It is precisely because public art has a wide range of possibilities that it has been embraced, crossed and applied by a wide range of disciplines. Public art focuses on humanism, expressing emotion, meeting the emotional and aesthetic needs of the public, emphasising the integration of public space and public life, and encouraging a sense of shared participation in its creation. Public art in the community is the result of a shift in the development of public art in terms of space and subject matter, and the development of “community public art” can be traced back to the American artist Suzanne Lacy, who proposed the concept of “new types of public art”, also known as “community art”. It can also be referred to as “community art”, which is oriented towards public issues, takes the public interest as its starting point, is community-based and takes the community as its venue. It seeks to solve problems in an artistic way. [5,6]

2.3. Community Micro-Renewal and Public Art

With the ageing of community space and the gradual improvement of residents’ material living standards, community residents have begun to pay more attention to the improvement of the quality of their living environment and the construction of community culture. Public art, as a manifestation and carrier of public spirit, can

effectively promote the construction of community culture in micro-renewal. The introduction of public art in community micro-renewal projects can help the comprehensive and effective implementation of micro-renewal, attract public participation in the community through interesting art activities to strengthen residents' enthusiasm for community culture construction, thus cultivating community residents' sense of belonging to the community space, beautifying the community environment, enhancing community It can be said that public art is an important part of community micro-renewal. It can be said that public art is one of the best practical tools for community micro-renewal.

3. Characteristics of Public Art Practice in Community Micro-Renewal

3.1. The Level of Approach: Diversity and Ease of Operation

It can be traditional music, performance, painting, film, sculpture and architecture, or it can be performance art, experimental art or art that incorporates technology. Public art in community micro-renewal is not a platform for artists to showcase their work, but rather a less difficult and community-led mode of public art creation that can accommodate and inspire more residents to participate. Public art in the community has a variety of practices, but in general terms, the types of public art in community micro-renewal can be divided into six categories, and the targeted use of specific types can achieve different effects according to the community's situation. The use of wall paintings and murals can fully demonstrate the good spirit of the community through patterns and colour expressions; sculptural installations can create a dialogue between the work and the residents, turning the work into a warm bridge that links the community; public facilities can provide convenient services for community residents while enhancing the sense of identity and community cohesion; the use of digital media can be used to inject new energy and vitality into the community through the intervention of computer technology. The use of digital media, with the intervention of computer technology, can inject new energy and vitality into the community; and through art activities, community communication platforms can be built to promote neighbourhood relations.

The use of digital media and computer technology can help breathe new life into a community. Through diversified and easy-to-use art forms, it attracts the participation of residents while effectively strengthening the close ties between people and space, enriching the daily lives of residents and better promoting the transformation and micro-renewal of community spaces.

3.2. Time-Sensitive Dimension: More Flexible Options Available

The timeliness of public art in community micro-renewal can be divided into two categories: temporary and permanent. Temporary public art works reflect the lifestyles of current community residents in a convenient and effective way, meeting the aesthetic needs of life and responding positively to the complex and changing social patterns of today. For example, the Fire Sculpture Festival in the Gyeongwon area of Gangwon, Korea, was originally held at the site of a coal mine on a plateau 1,000 metres above sea level, and was part of a coal mining community. In the 1960s and 1970s, a thriving coal mining industry was the backbone of the local economy. Later, as coal ceased to be a major resource for Korea, Gangwon Gyeongseon gradually lost its identity and vitality as a mining community. The government of

Jongseon, in an effort to remember the way of life of the people who lived in the community in the past and to revive the community through art, held a fire carving festival, inviting eight artists from Korea and China to create wooden sculptures. The sculptures were displayed to the public for a month. The exhibition ended with an invitation to burn the works, which was the highlight of the project. Although short-lived, the temporary public art was an effective and timely response to the current situation and reaction of the community. (Figure 1)



Figure 1. A temporary community public artwork - Korean Fire Sculpture Festival.

Whereas permanent community public art presents the relative permanence of the material, this type of artwork is fixed and singular, reflecting the time period in which it was created, rather than the present moment. This constant form of art therefore lacks immediacy of expression, but the benefits are also more obvious in that the effect it can have on a community is more continuous and readily visible. With the decline of goods, services and entertainment in the small town of Lyons, Nebraska, many communities have been affected, and shops that once housed bowling alleys, francs, bars, theatres and restaurants have been unable to operate and have closed their doors. The local community wanted to breathe new life into the declining space with an artistic intervention and invited Mazzotta to come and create art in the community. (Figure 2)



Figure 2. Little Theatre on the Street, Canton, USA.

The artist used an empty shopfront in the community as the venue. The building was creatively adapted so that when closed it resembles a normal shopfront, but can be folded downwards on the pavement at the push of a button, with the seats and screen retracting or disappearing when not in use, and transforming into an open-air cinema that can seat 100 people when needed. The artist's idea generated a lot of interest from the community when he came up with it. The artist invited residents of the community to join in the discussion of the 'little street theatre' and to capture their thoughts on the work. The residents and the artist worked together to build the retractable theatre. Since its opening the theatre has hosted many events including film screenings, video game nights and concerts. The creative transformation of the venue has brought new energy to the community. Residents who saw the success of the small theatre sparked an interest in the venue and purchased the empty building next to the theatre and turned it into a permanent community gallery. More local people were willing to donate money and time to work together to build this creative space, and on the opening night of the amphitheatre the cinema played a documentary

film made by the residents themselves and attracted many residents from the neighbourhood, revitalising the community. (Figure 3)



Figure 3. Little Theatre on the Street, Canton, USA.

This permanent type of public art opens up new channels of community communication. The intersection of community and sustainability is achieved between people and the environment, between people, and through the intervention of art brings life back to the residents of Lyon, restoring the vitality of a once thriving community. This type of community public art is more sustainable than the Korean Fire Sculpture Festival in terms of time and effect. Through the analysis of practical examples of community micro-renewal the interventions of public art are mainly temporary and permanent in duration, while the existing examples of public art in the community are more temporary in nature.

3.3. Contextual Level: Small Themes with Big Visions

The themes of public art in community micro-renewal are diverse and are used as stand-alone works or multiple works of public art to engage the public and give them a sense of the true meaning behind the work over time. In 1963 the US General Services Administration enacted the Federal Building Percentages Regulations, which set aside 1% of the cost of renovating and constructing buildings for the arts, in some cases as much as 5% of the total cost. The regulations encouraged the creation of funds and other projects to use community funds to support public art. [7] Since then community art and other related art forms have begun to flourish with the support of the policy context, and although the subject matter of the artworks is simple, it is possible to see in them the important contextual policy advances and changes in urban society behind the works. This also proves that public art in the community can carry rich social connotations and deep political ideas as well as the humanistic spirit of the works. (Figure 4)



Figure 4. Little Theatre on the Street, Canton, USA.

Other public art practices have emerged in the hope of promoting the idea of green and healthy living in communities. For example, in the Community Meals project in São Paulo, USA, artist Seitu Jones, who lives and works in the Frogtown neighbourhood of São Paulo, Eastern Europe, often sees residents buying not-so-fresh

food from the neighbourhood mini-markets and is concerned about the health of their diet. Jones decided to engage in a multi-layered discussion with residents about healthy food choices through an artistic intervention, with an in-depth conversation about real food access, food justice and healthy eating. The artist then curated a public art event in the community. Gathering 2,000 residents around a table that stretched half a mile long to eat and talk about and critique ‘food justice’ issues in their community, such as “How do we change the food system?” Setu Jones spent a year collecting local stories about food to create the menu, incorporating elements of performance, poetry and visual art, and The ingredients chosen are also locally grown and organic by the farmers. The artist brings the community together through a simple meal event, and through reflection on the theme of the event, provokes the residents to think about the content of the event, thus promoting a healthy attitude towards life and providing a real community service through community public art. (Figure 5)



Figure 5. Community Meals, St. Paul, USA.

There are also cases where public art in the community is used to activate public space, such as the Living Room project in Tokyo, Japan. This is a public art creation that intervenes in community places, using the original spaces around the community to collect furniture and household items and create an open ‘Living Room’ in the empty shops around the town community in the form of barter, creating a new relationship between ‘people and people’, ‘people and places’ and ‘places and places’, exploring the public space and behavioural interactions between communities in community renewal. It explores public space and behavioural interactions between communities in the context of community renewal. The artist, Jun Kitazawa, creates opportunities for participatory communities and births them into society through a unique approach to building a place in the community that provokes questions of everyday life. And by infiltrating continuous project activities into the daily lives of the residents and conducting them as a local living culture. To activate community spaces through artistic interventions and create new spaces for community exchange. (Figure 6)



Figure 6. The Living Room, Tokyo, Japan.

Others aim at forms of public art in the community in order to promote cultural equality and community solidarity, as in the case of The Seesaw Wall, The border

wall between the US and Mexico is one of Trump's main political ideas and attempts to block illegal immigrants from entering the US with a wall or iron fence. The tall wall prevents people from travelling between the two communities, so two artists, Ronald Rael and Virginia San Fratello, used the gap in the wall between the US and Mexican border to build a public artwork called 'seesaw' between the two communities, using tongue-in-cheek language to make the viewer reflect on the fact that the wall does not prevent the relationship between the two communities or even the people in the two regions. The seesaw brings joy and solidarity to both sides of the border, connecting children and adults from both countries in a fun and meaningful way. (Figure 7)



Figure 7. 'Teeter-totter Wall', US-Mexico border.

There are also projects aimed at community healing, such as the Rwanda Healing Project, which is based on a horrific massacre that occurred in 1994. Artist Lily Yeh worked with the local community to create a memorial to the Rugliero massacre, a blue and white sculptural composite memorial through the integration of public art, the launch of an art, health, community and economic programme in the surviving community, a children's education programme, a support group for young women, a basic health education programme, the improvement of sanitation infrastructure, the installation of rainwater harvesting bins and the launch of a microfinance programme and small businesses such as sunflower oil production and sewing workshops. Public artworks in community spaces create platforms that heal the hearts of the region's inhabitants and encourage people to use broken things to create beauty, thereby improving the natural environment, promoting economic development, preserving indigenous art and culture, and empowering damaged and impoverished communities to heal and revitalise. (Figure 8)



Figure 8. The Rwanda Healing Project, Africa.

Finally there are community art projects that are based on asserting the sovereignty of the community, such as *Between the Door and the Street*, which succeeded in bringing together a large number of different women to discuss feminist issues. Dressed in black and bright yellow cashmere sweaters, the 400 participants used performance art in front of 2,500 spectators to discuss issues of livelihood and feminism, in the hope that women would be able to assert and enjoy their rights and thus bring about a profound reflection on the issue of sovereignty. (Figure 9)



Figure 9. *Between the Door and the Street, New York, USA*

Thus, based on a summary of the existing cases, it can be seen that public art in communities is a way to stimulate the audience's reactions and feelings through small themes, thus experiencing the profound connotations behind the works. Through the analysis of the cases, the connotations of public art in communities can be categorised into six main categories: community sovereignty and livelihood issues; social change and policy promotion; national unity and cultural equality; green health and public services; spatial activation and cultural reinvention; and art therapy and public cohesion. (Figure 10)



Figure 10. *The connotation of public art in the context of community micro-renewal.*

3.4. Role Level: Micro-Renewals Show Results

Public art under micro-renewal is not the sole creator of the community space, but the participation of the residents becomes the source of the outcome of the work, allowing them to participate in the integration of the local culture in a real way. In practice, [8,9] can effectively raise residents' public awareness and public spirit, and fully mobilise their own initiative and participation in public affairs. Diversified forms of community public art intervention can also effectively enhance the overall quality of the community space, beautifying the spatial environment while also strengthening and exploring the characteristics of the community, and therefore playing an important role in the transmission of regional culture. When completed, the artwork creates a new community at the centre of the work, invariably creating a platform for communication and discussion in the community, and the practice of community public art makes the space not just a place to rest or watch, but a place for residents to communicate and share interesting stories. When residents participate in co-creation, it effectively strengthens their sense of belonging and identity to the community space, and promotes communication between residents in the community. In addition, public art as a micro-renewal catalytic element can activate or rejuvenate the community, attracting popularity through public art in the community while to a certain extent

promoting the development of community industries and enhancing the community economy.

4. Conclusions

As Japanese spatial designer Ryo Yamazaki says, “More important than designing spaces is connecting people to each other.” [10] focuses on the idea of people and public participation in both community micro-renewal and public art. The deeper connotation of the work and the creative process are often more important than the quality and professionalism of the work. As a designer, you should put down your identity as a resident from the very beginning of your community research, and get the most realistic picture of the community through communication with residents and in-depth local research. As far as possible, choose art forms that are simple and fun to use, which tend to be more attractive to residents and easier for them to use, ensuring the quality of the work in a relaxed and enjoyable creative process. As far as possible, the artwork should be considered from a sustainable point of view, such as maintaining the ecology of the community and saving community resources, and avoiding consumer art. The work should be displayed in front of the residents when it is completed so that they can see the complete work, thus increasing their sense of achievement and identification with the community. However, when intervening, it is important not to pursue a huge scale and material show-off, but rather to experience and think about it attentively, to make rational use of handcrafted creative public participation production methods, and to provide the public with works in line with local memories and cultural colours through continuous communication and interaction, bringing more innovative and distinctive art forms for the transformation and renewal of the community space environment. In addition, public art under micro-renewal should connect the community and its surrounding resources as much as possible, bringing more opportunities and creating new possibilities for the community.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest regarding the publication of this article.

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