

## An Analysis on the Theory of Public Art Design

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### ABSTRACT

Public art plays an essential role in improving the urban environment aesthetically, and thus some advanced countries have established institutional guarantees for it. Due to public nature and intrusiveness of this type of art, social authorities and civic organizations have adopted a system of deliberation and approval for it. Public art design is based on the relationship between the public, art, and the environment, embodying a humanistic concern and a collective spirit. At the same time, its aesthetic function resonates with the public and contributes to the improvement of social and cultural quality. This paper explains its theory from four aspects: artistic modelling in the public environment, publicness and intrusiveness of public art design and institutional guarantee, modelling expression determined by the nature of public art design, and aesthetics and concept of public art design, and made analysis on the ideas, forms, and methods of public art design through specific examples.

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## 1. Introduction

Public art design is a creative activity that involves artistic modelling in public spaces. It aims to enhance the aesthetic and cultural quality of urban environments, reflecting the social, economic, and cultural progress of a city. Public art design is an important aspect of public affairs that requires interdisciplinary collaboration and public participation. This paper is based on representative public art and design works in the world today, as well as research results on public theory and public art ideas and methods. It provides an in-depth analysis of the characteristics of public art and design, as well as their relationship with traditional art forms.

Public art design is not limited to a specific type or style of art, as it can take on any form of artistic expression. It reflects not only the artists' ideas, techniques, and style, but also considers the impact on society in terms of politics, economy, culture, and ecology, as well as its subtle influence on the public. Therefore, public art design should adhere to aesthetic standards while strictly adhering to social norms and public guidelines. It should establish harmonious relationships with people and the environment, considering the aesthetic needs of diverse groups and possessing artistic and practical functions that prioritise humanity.

The contemporary methods, forms, and materials provide conditions for the modelling expression of public art design, creating harmony with modern architectural environments. Therefore, public art design involves the rational planning of space and order. Its form, practical functions, and other aspects need to be unified within an open and organic entity. It represents the combination of the artist's individuality and the societal collective consciousness, merging art design and artistic creation. It also serves as an artistic expression of social life and public awareness in the context of modern industrial and technological developments.

## 2. Artistic Modelling in Public Environments

Public art design represents a form of artistic creation in public environments. Without public environments, there would be no public art design. It emerges as a result of urbanisation and embodies the characteristics of public art design behaviour and works. It reflects the unique aesthetic sensibilities and cultural demands of modern society.

### 2.1 *Plastic art and artistic modelling*

Modelling primarily involves shaping the external form and internal structure of objects. Plastic art, "as a broad concept, encompasses various art forms that utilise modelling techniques to shape visual images" (Wang, 2004). It refers to artists using creative ideas and techniques, primarily through visual and media, to represent objects or create concrete or abstract artistic images. Through artistic language, plastic art reflects the external form and internal thoughts, spirit, psychology, and emotions of objects. It expresses the artist's perception of the objective world, evoking emotional pleasure and intellectual resonance in viewers through visual, tactile, and psychological experiences. It generally includes painting, sculpture, architecture, design, and photography, using both industrial and natural materials.

Initially, the scope of plastic art was relatively limited. The German literary theorist Gotthold Ephraim Lessing, in the 18th century, first introduced the concept of "Bilden" (in German), which primarily referred to painting and sculpture. Similarly, the concept of "Plastic Art" often referred specifically to sculpture. Plastic Art uses artistic modelling to create a sense of spatial presence, utilising the viewer's visual perception to depict the instantaneous state of objects. The artistic forms created in Plastic Art are typically fixed and unchanging, characterised by their sculptural nature, spatiality, visuality, stillness, transience, and permanence.

The concept of artistic form encompasses various art forms, including painting, sculpture, architecture, design, and photography. It represents not only the entire spectrum of artistic expression but also specific categories within the realm of form art. It enables the creation of images through specific forms of representation and combines various techniques from different forms of form art to express artistic imagery in a novel way, thus serving as a concrete means of artistic representation. The concept of artistic form encompasses almost all forms of artistic activities and works aimed at artistic expression. It facilitates the integration of diverse types and forms of plastic art and

promotes the advancement and transformation of plastic art.

## *2.2 Public environment and public art*

The term “Gong Gong” (Public in Chinese, which means “public and shared” literally) refers to objects “that belong to society, are publicly owned, and are used for the common good” (Contemporary Chinese Dictionary, 2012). The word “public” (The first Gong) implies equality, while “shared” (The second Gong) implies collective effort. On the other hand, the term “Huan Jing” (Environment) refers to the living space of human beings and the various natural factors that directly or indirectly influence human life and development. “Environment, the complex of physical, chemical, and biotic factors that act upon an organism or an ecological community and ultimately determine its form and survival” (Encyclopaedia Britannica of Great Britain, 1985). The environment consists of the surrounding elements around a subject and encompasses the living environments of humans and other organisms, as well as the external world with which they interact. This includes material elements (urban and rural areas, and natural landscapes), as well as social factors (politics, economy, and culture).

The public environment refers to the social space distinct from any private space. It encompasses open public spaces such as public venues, public buildings, public squares, public road systems (streets, alleys and roads), public facilities, and public welfare areas in urban settings. The public environment serves the daily affairs and lives of all citizens, making it accessible and shared by society as a whole. The public has the right to freely enter and reasonably use these basic public areas. Generally, the national and local governments own public environments, and the national and local finances typically bear the expenses for their construction and maintenance.

Public art refers to the design and creation activities of artistic forms in the public environment, as well as the installation of artworks in public spaces. It encompasses all humanistic elements within public areas that provide people with aesthetic experiences, reflecting a cultural phenomenon of art activities that are “public” and “citizen oriented.” Over the past century, with the rapid advancement of industry and technology, developed countries have witnessed the flourishing of civil engineering in urban areas and increasing social welfare. At the same time, developing nations have also experienced a rise in urbanisation levels, and the popularisation of culture has led to a widespread pursuit of environmental improvement aesthetically. As a burgeoning aspect of urban development, public art has attracted increasing attention.

In a broad sense, any art in a public environment can be considered public art. This understanding dates back to ancient public life where various forms of artistic activities existed in public spaces, all of which can be defined form of design work that integrates ideas, culture, art, industry, and technology into artistic creations. Therefore, in a narrower sense, public art is a new form of artistic expression that is associated with modern public environments. It emerged as a result of the global processes of industrialisation, technological advancements, and urbanisation. With the application of new technological methods and materials, traditional forms of art such as painting and sculpture have transformed, giving rise to new design philosophies and artistic forms. This has allowed artistic expressions to move beyond specific settings such as art galleries and become integral parts of open spaces, contributing to the overall urban environment.

### 3. Public and Intrusive Natures and Institutional Guarantees of Public Art

Public art, distinguished from traditional art in specific venues such as art galleries and museums, and from privately owned spaces, establishes a relationship with the flow of people in public environments, inevitably influencing and impacting social ecology. The characteristics of its public nature and intrusiveness necessitate careful consideration, scrutiny, and approval in the design process, requiring the consensus and recognition of government agencies and the majority of society.

#### 3.1 Public nature

The concept of public nature implies serving society and the public, formed through mechanisms that facilitate social and public coordination, distribute interests, and make political decisions. The exercise and role of administrative powers at international institutions, national, and local governments determine the realization of public nature. It has a nature of “having widespread interests and impacts on society at large, not limited to specific groups, but open to the entire society” (Daijirin, 2006). Therefore, public nature encompasses characteristics such as generality, fairness, openness, commonality, diversity, and deliberation, defining it as “social” and “public.”

With the development of the world, various countries have undergone the process of rural urbanisation and urban modernisation. As a result, public relations have become more mature, and public environment has become a key factor for social development. Both the government and the public pay more attention to urban construction and environmental beautification. In this context, public art has gained social recognition and support, enhancing the role of artistic modelling in urban architecture. Public art integrates artistic elements in architectural design and architectural elements in artistic design, creating a modern art category that is based on design as a premise, concept as a core, and material as a medium.

Public art has experienced significant changes compared to traditional figurative art. Paintings in art galleries and sculptures in museums are typically presented within frames and placed on pedestals, to isolate the works from environmental interference and ensure their independence. In contrast, public art requires a close relationship with the environment and needs to blend into its surroundings. Therefore, in public environments, the “frame” is removed from “paintings,” and the “pedestal” is removed from “sculptures.” Furthermore, the use of new materials has brought about major changes in the production methods and visual styles of these artworks. “Murals” are no longer limited to brush strokes, and “sculptures” may not necessarily involve carving or moulding. Instead, a wide range of natural and industrial materials are employed in their creation. As a result, “Murals” are now referred to as “Wall-based Modelling” and “Sculptures” have become known as “Contemporary Modelling,” collectively categorized as “Public Modelling.”

For example, “Surrounded Islands” (Figure 1) inspired by Claude Monet’s (1840-1926) painting “Water Lilies”, utilised 600,000 m<sup>2</sup> of pink fabric to surround 11 islands in Biscayne Bay, Miami, with abstracted forms resembling water lilies. Such art projects, when placed in outdoor spaces, establish a relationship with the environment, creating a harmonious effect, known as “Environmental Art Modelling.” However, when these artworks are situated in public spaces, they not only interact

with the environment but also engage with the public. At this point, the nature of the artwork changes, acquiring characteristics of public art. Due to its inherent public nature, the installation of public art requires artists to submit design proposals encompassing the sculptural form, production, and installation for governmental and council review. As a result, artistic creation evolves into a form of art design that incorporates public considerations, thus referred to as “Public Art Design.”

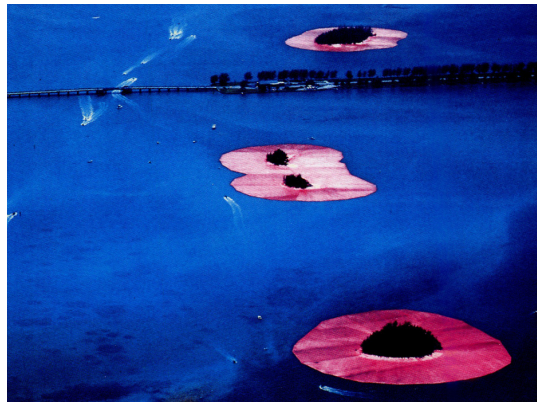


Figure 1: *Surrounded Islands* by Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Christo and Jeanne-Claude of the United States of America went through 26 years of preparation to realise the production of the large-scale work “The Gates” (Figure 2) in Central Park, New York. During that time, they persistently communicated with the New York City Government and went through several terms of New York mayors before finally obtaining approval. The work was displayed for 16 days, and it was the largest public art event ever held in New York City, stimulating local economic and cultural development. New York Mayor Bloomberg, who approved the project, called the work a timeless masterpiece, comparable to the Sistine Chapel in the Vatican and Ludwig van Beethoven’s (1770-1827) Ninth Symphony. This example illustrates the complexity of public art design, where in addition to design and production, other public relations endeavours consume more of the artist’s energy.



Figure 2: *The Gates* by Christo and Jeanne-Claude

Many public art designs choose to be placed in iconic landmarks, highlighting the public nature of the artwork. One of the most famous works by Christo and Jeanne-Claude is “Wrapped Reichstag” (Figure 3). They planned to wrap the Reichstag Building, Berlin with 100,000 m<sup>2</sup> of silver-white acrylic fabric and 15,000 meters of blue ropes. Due to the symbolic significance of the Reichstag building, as well as its central location in Berlin, the German officials approached their proposal with caution. Starting from 1971, Christo and Jeanne-Claude tirelessly lobbied the German parliament, engaging with over 190 members of parliament and repeatedly modifying their design proposal. After numerous evaluations and arguments, the project finally obtained approval in 1995 with 292 votes in favour and 223 votes against. This public art masterpiece, which cost \$13 million, made waves globally and attracted five million visitors from around the world during its two-week exhibition in Berlin.



Figure 3: *Wrapped Reichstag* by Christo and Jeanne-Claude

As such, the public nature of public art design imposes restrictions on a societal level. Public art must respect the emotions and feelings of the public and gain their recognition. Therefore, the entire design process must take into account and incorporate social opinions, carefully revising the proposals to avoid any negative impact on the ecological environment. This is crucial in obtaining understanding from the majority of society and approval from public authorities. Moreover, the public nature of public art expands its cultural influence on society. It allows the public to freely appreciate and enjoy artistic creations in public spaces, enabling them to rediscover the value of the city through the charm of art. This contributes to the establishment of a healthy and stable modern urban cultural ecosystem and plays a positive role in promoting economic development.

### 3.2 *Intrusive nature*

Intrusion refers to the act of one thing entering the interior of another, exerting a certain degree of force. The intrusive nature of public art refers to the placement of artistic modelling as visual objects in open public spaces. Whether or not the public has a subjective intention to observe, the mere presence of these artistic installations intrudes upon their field of vision, resulting in a passive act of observation. The intrusiveness of public art design is a force derived from its public

nature, capable of eliciting mental, emotional, behavioural, and even physical responses from the public. These responses can influence the public's mental state, their thoughts and perceptions of the surrounding environment.

A notable example of the intrusiveness of public art design can be seen in the artwork by Pablo Picasso (1881-1973) installed on the plaza of the Chicago Civic Centre (Figure 4). The Chicago Civic Centre is a modern public office building constructed in 1963, with a granite-paved plaza in front. Back then, the architect, Richard Bennett, approached Picasso to design an artistic sculpture for the public plaza. Picasso accepted the task but refused to accept the \$100,000 payment, declaring the artwork a gift to the city. Picasso began the design in 1965, finalized it in 1966, and completed the installation in 1967. The construction cost was approximately \$3.25 million. This abstract sculpture, inspired by the image of an Afghan Hound, created a stir in the city of Chicago upon its unveiling.



Figure 4: The statue before the Chicago Civic Centre Building by Picasso

It is a steel sculpture, weighing 162 tons and standing at a height of 15.2 meters. It was built by the American Bridge Company of United States Steel Corporation, located in Gary, Indiana, using COR-TEN steel. When this abstract, unconventional, and massive metal artwork came into public view, it did not receive widespread admiration and understanding. Its long and clumsy face, coupled with cold and emotionless eyes, startled the citizens, and sparked continuous controversy. Some described it as a giant insect about to devour smaller, weaker insects, while others likened it to an extra-terrestrial beast. It has also been compared to a baboon, a flying nun, or a cow sticking out its tongue. These interpretations have led to various psychological reactions from the public.

During its unveiling, Picasso's artwork faced reluctant acceptance from the citizens, but due to the absence of copyrights, it was often reproduced on various goods and souvenirs. Over time, the attitude of the citizens gradually changed, and they came to understand the significance of its existence. Now, the artwork is regarded as a symbol of the spirit of Chicago, free from any controversy. This three-dimensional, Cubist-style abstract sculpture became the first significant milestone in public art design in downtown Chicago, turning into a renowned landmark of the city. "The work precipitated an aesthetic shift in civic and urban planning, broadening the idea of public art beyond the commemorative." As a result, the public became more open and curious about the city's environment and art. In August 2017, the Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events

organised a commemorative event to celebrate its 50th anniversary.

Therefore, an excellent public art design lies in its ability to create a connection with the public through its personalized artistic expression. It reflects the artist's perspective on the world and things, and it highlights certain qualities to provoke public reflection and understanding of relevant issues. At the same time, an innovative, pioneering, and conceptual public art form can transform the landscape of its location, change the face of a city, shape its character, and showcase its value, becoming a significant identity symbol for the city.

### *3.3 Institutional guarantees*

As early as 1880, Barcelona enacted the "Proyecto Baixeras", which established that buildings represent political interests from a national perspective, and all public buildings represent the image of the nation and the locality. This idea gave rise to various cultural policies throughout Europe, promoting substantial cultural development to shape the city's image. One important approach was the installation of artworks in public spaces, defining the city's character through public art. Although public art, as a crucial cultural vehicle for the city, is subject to varying interpretations in different countries and regions and at different times, developed countries have taken the lead in establishing institutional guarantees for public art to address the societal, political, economic, and cultural challenges they face.

The United States is the birthplace of the "Percent for Art Program," where over a hundred years ago it learned from Europe's experience of integrating public art with urban construction and governance. The country initiated urban aesthetics movements and explored methods of funding public art development in important public construction projects. With administrative intervention at the national level, the growth of public art was facilitated, yielding positive outcomes. In the 1930s, President Roosevelt directed the Works Progress Administration to organise the creation of large-scale mural paintings for urban buildings. In the 1960s, President Kennedy established the "Guiding Principles for Sustainable Federal Buildings", which provided specific regulations for incorporating excellent design to represent contemporary architectural ideas in the United States and emphasized the need for urban development to align with the environment (Huang, 1992).

In 1933, the United States government implemented various public art-related policies such as the "Public Works of Art Project" and the "Treasury Relief Art Project". Through these initiatives, the government employed artists to create artworks for the public spaces of federal public buildings, aiming to revitalize the public art sector, alleviate economic depression, and stimulate economic development. In 1935, the U.S. government introduced the "Federal Art Project", which provided funding for artists to engage in public art creation. Over eight years until 1943, this project generated over 200,000 job opportunities and produced more than 100,000 art pieces. This undertaking transformed a series of cities including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Philadelphia, embedding public art into airports, train stations, docks, parks, public schools, and hospitals.

In the mid-20th century, Philadelphia passed the first "Percent for Art Program" in the United States, requiring one per cent of the budget for municipal construction projects funded by the Philadelphia government to be allocated for public art that is complementary to the construction. This initiative provided important guarantees for making the local environment nicer. The success of this program

inspired dozens of states, counties, and city governments to follow suit. Over three hundred cities in the United States have enacted legislation to support public art initiatives, leading to sustained development in the field of public art and improving the quality of services provided by public institutions. This, in turn, has directly or indirectly stimulated economic growth potential in various regions. Today, an average of five million Americans are exposed to public art daily, which is a thousand times more than the total number of visitors entering art galleries, museums, and theatres.

Other Western countries have gradually implemented “Percent for Art” programs as well, wherein legislation mandates that a certain percentage of the total budget for public construction projects is allocated as an art fund for the design and production of public art. Special government agencies have been established to ensure and supervise the implementation of these programs, thereby providing long-term stability to the funding for public art projects. Additionally, regulations require the inclusion of architects, artists, municipal engineers, and community representatives in the jury organisations responsible for evaluating public art proposals. This ensures transparency, fairness, and inclusiveness in the evaluation process. Moreover, comprehensive surveys and public consultations are conducted to gather opinions from the public, facilitating a dialogue between the audience and the artwork. It is through this interaction that the significance and value of public art are objectively assessed, establishing a unique connection between the public and the realm of art.

According to the National Endowment for Public Art in the United States, investment in public art can generate a 12-fold economic return. In the late 20th century, South Korea introduced the concept of becoming a “Cultural Nation through Art Creation”, while Australia implemented five-year plans for culture and arts. Many emerging nations now view public art as a new driver for innovative economic development, integrating it into their national strategies. The intention behind this integration is to enhance the quality of cities and promote social cohesion. Consequently, the institutionalisation of regulations has strengthened the recognition and public interest in public art, making it an essential component of national and urban planning. By utilising public art as a tool, cities can shape their urban spaces, stimulate economic development, and showcase their unique charms. This transformative approach aims to shift cities from functional spaces to humanistic environments, generating positive effects and achieving the desired goals.

#### **4. Modelling Expression of Public Art Design Determined by Its Nature**

Due to the importance of public art in aesthetics for urban environment and its inherent public and invasive characteristics, some Western countries have implemented institutional safeguards to ensure its quality. Additionally, social scrutiny measures are employed to guarantee its effectiveness. The nature of public art design establishes an inseparable relationship between the artwork, the public, and the surrounding environment.

##### *4.1 Inducive influence on the public*

Induction refers to a conscious guidance method that directs individuals to think and act according

to a predetermined mindset. It involves effectively using non-coercive means to encourage people to accept guidance automatically, consciously, and voluntarily. Guiding the public to change their perception and attitudes towards the socio-cultural environment is one of the tasks of public art design. Inductive functionality, as a hallmark of public art, utilises the psychological and behavioural characteristics of individuals to provide subtle, suggestive cues to the public. by carefully designing and arranging the content and form of artworks, public spaces are imbued with profound connotations from a humanistic perspective. They convey social concepts and dominant ideas, creating a space for healthy interaction between individuals, society, and the environment.

The Inductive functionality of public art design does not aim to provide conceptual explanations of an object. Instead, it organises shapes such as lines and planes according to the law of modelling. By utilising the form, materials, colours, textures, and other sensory elements of the artwork, it establishes a connection with the surrounding environment. Through abstract language, it interprets the world, society, history, and civilisation, offering an exposition in a unique form. This artistic expression guides and inspires individuals to understand the inherent relationship between artistic imagery and the urban environment, allowing them to perceive the significance of the artwork within its historical context. This inductive influence represents the externalisation of the artist's creative thoughts, enabling the establishment of a contrasting, interconnected, and integrated relationship between the artwork and the environment. In resonating with the public, this inductive effect serves to inspire and leave a lasting impact.

French American artist Bernard Venet is indeed an adept creator of spatial experiences who skillfully utilises lines to generate within the environment, guiding the viewer's gaze and evoking associations. Using steel, he crafts straight or curved forms that alter the surrounding environment, transforming simple lines into symbolic shapes that harmoniously coexist with their surroundings. Bernar Venet's "Arcs" (Figure 5) series evokes fascinating associations within the environment of Palace of Versailles. The minimalist and "indeterminate linear structures" create a striking contrast and juxtaposition with the complex classical architectural structures of the palace. The juxtaposition of modernity and antiquity, the weathered steel surfaces, and the historical sedimentation of the Palace of Versailles, establishes a visual relationship that stirs thoughts and contemplation. Simultaneously, the semi-circle arcs direct the viewer's gaze towards the sky, opening up a new visual space.



Figure 5: *Arcs* by Bernar Venet

The use of steel and the textured rust on its surface enhance the weight and presence of the artwork. It contains an interpretation of the artistic spirit, forming Bernar Venet's language and style in public art design. He portrays a concept that expands the definition of modelling and guides the public's gaze towards the contours of a new space, creating a sense of wonder and illusion. In the "Points" series (Figure 6) installed in Shanghai Jing'an Sculpture Park, Venet deviates from his usual abstract style and adopts a more representational form. The truncated wooden stump shapes, placed within a green lawn and tree-filled environment, replace his customary conceptual forms with tangible objects. The purpose of this shift is to provoke strong contemplation among the public about the Earth's environment. Venet describes his sculpture-making as a confrontation with metal, a test of strength, and a personal struggle between himself and the material.



Figure 6: *Points* by Bernar Venet

#### *4.2 Enhancing practical functionality through universal design*

The universality of public art design is typified by the traffic signals design at a major road intersection in Shinjuku, Tokyo, Japan, a high-rise building complex (Figure 7). The towering buildings in this area create a sense of oppression when navigating through them. Therefore, the traffic signal device employs a horizontal, smooth, and broad circular design, alleviating the congestion and feelings of suppression caused by the surrounding architecture. It creates an open visual space. The soft lighting on the upper end of the cylindrical supports that hold the circular shape also acts as a relieving factor for the negative psychological reactions induced by the high-rise buildings. It serves as a rest sign, allowing the city's melody to breathe. The clean lines of the design lighten up the streets and make the attention of vehicles and pedestrians on the traffic lights. Besides, the pedestrian crossing signal devices in Tokyo commonly include a delayed audio signal button, providing convenience for visually impaired individuals when crossing the road.



Figure 7: Design of traffic signals at an intersection of high-rise buildings in Shinjuku, Tokyo

After the improvement of social welfare in developed countries, attention has been given to the needs of disabled and vulnerable groups, leading to a greater emphasis on designs and facilities that cater to them. In the 1950s, the concept of “Barrier-Free Design” emerged in the United States, Europe, and Japan, focusing on creating spaces that facilitate the lives and movements of disabled individuals. In the 1970s, the promotion of “Accessible Design” in Europe and America aimed to optimise living environments for specific populations. In the 1980s, American designer Ronald L. Mace developed the concept of “Universal Design” based on the principles of Barrier-Free Design and Accessible Design.

“Universal Design” is not a new discipline or style but a comprehensive understanding of human and market needs, aiming to maximize the usability of designed and manufactured products for everyone, known as “Design for All”. Therefore, Universal Design is a design for public use, also known as comprehensive design and inclusive design, which means that environments or products should be accessible to everyone without the need for special modifications. It takes into account the usage by both the general population and disabled or vulnerable groups, considering not only their physical needs but also their psychology during usage.

Universal Design has been widely applied in the field of the public art design. A perfect public art piece should emphasize the principle of human-centredness, allowing anyone in the world to use it safely, conveniently, and easily at any time and place. It should provide the maximum convenience to people through visual, audible, and usable means, achieving an organic integration with people and the environment. Japanese artist Izuka Hachiro has created a group of two public art sculptures in Maedabashi Park, Toyohashi, Japan (Figure 8). The design takes into consideration the relationship between aesthetics and functionality, with one of the sculptures designed as a seating element for the public to rest, showing consideration and care for people’s daily lives. This exemplifies the humanistic care in public art design.



Figure 8: Maedabashi Park, Toyohashi, Japan by Izuka Hachiro

As an art form, public art design should possess aesthetic appeal. However, as a design process, it should also prioritise practicality and quality. The nature of public art design, which engages the entire society, necessitates the requirements of universal design. Firstly, it strives for accessibility and should not impede the public environment. Secondly, it must ensure safety, being harmless to both individuals and the surrounding environment, and should not pose any public risks. Thirdly, it should effectively guide public order while maintaining simplicity, comfort, and a balance between functionality and aesthetics. Fourthly, it should allow anyone to intuitively understand how to use it. Lastly, it should effectively convey necessary information and messages to the public.

#### *4.3 Reflecting collective spirit by involving the public*

Involvement, referring to engagement and participation, involves a third party or oneself immersing or integrating into something and establishing a psychological, emotional, and behavioural connection to it. The involvement of public art design refers to the involvement of the public in the planning and installation process, as well as their engagement during the appreciation phase, manifested through behavioural and emotional participation. Public involvement is an essential aspect of public art design, as it is only through public participation that it can become truly shared among the masses. It serves as a gauge to measure the openness of public art design, determining the social impact and influence of the artwork, and even contributing to its success or failure.

The participatory nature demonstrated during the planning and installation process allows the public to enjoy the joy of artistic practice, inspiring their collective consciousness and creative abilities. For instance, the “Field” series created by British artist Antony Gormley in Australia, South America, North America, Europe, the UK, China, and other locations is a collaborative artwork involving the public. Among them, the largest-scale piece was “Asian Field” completed in Huadong Town, Guangdong, China in 2003 (Figure 9). Antony Gormley, together with over three hundred residents of different ages, created nearly 200,000 clay figurines using local clay, following a simple requirement that each figurine must have two eyes and stand upright. These clay figurines formed a spectacular sea-like installation, reflecting the collective spirit of public art on a grand scale.



Figure 9 : *Asian Field* by Antony Gormley

The involvement of public art becomes evident once the installation is complete, as it allows the public to engage with the artwork to the fullest extent, merging themselves with the piece and its environment. In northern Italy, there is a small island called San Paolo located in the centre of a lake, separated from the lakeside towns of Sulzano and Monte Isola by the surrounding water. Since the 1970s, Christo and Jeanne-Claude began conceptualizing and planning (Figure 10), aiming to wrap San Paolo Island and connect it to the two towns with a floating bridge-like structure. It was not until 2016, seven years after Jeanne-Claude's passing, that Christo alone realized this creative vision. "The Floating Piers" (Figure 11) allowed the public to freely stroll on top of it and admire the panoramic view from the elevated slopes. During the 16-day exhibition, a large number of visitors from different locations flocked to Sulzano, causing traffic congestion.



Figure 10: Sketch of *The Floating Piers* by Christo and Jeanne-Claude

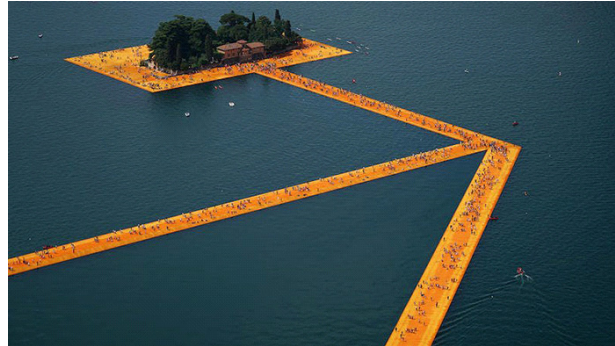


Figure 11: *The Floating Piers* by Christo

The public's involvement in public art design extends the appreciation of artworks to the experience of their creation, allowing for a multifaceted engagement that involves both creative and physical actions. This transforms viewers from passive observers into creators and users, enabling them to derive satisfaction on psychological, spiritual, and emotional levels. This generates a sense of symbiotic pleasure with the art and the environment. As a result, public art design is a product of interaction between artists and the public, fundamentally altering the relationship between artists and viewers. It eliminates the barrier between the public and the artwork/environment, creating a pathway for connection and reflecting democratic ideals, open-mindedness, and a spirit of sharing.

## 5. Aesthetic and Conceptual Aspects of Public Art Design

### 5.1 *Aesthetic functionality*

The purpose of public art design is to improve the urban environment aesthetically, enhance people's lives, and create a superior public space for the community. Therefore, it should possess the necessary aesthetic function to elevate the city's cultural image and the cultural level of its citizens. Firstly, public art design should emphasize the artistic beauty of the artwork. Artistic beauty is generated by the aesthetic consciousness of the artist and represents the higher form of beauty, possessing aesthetic value greater than that of reality and evoking a stronger aesthetic response. Creating artistic beauty is the ultimate requirement and fundamental demand of artistic creation, representing the pinnacle of an artist's artistic accomplishment and the highest criterion for the value of art. Secondly, public art design should possess its aesthetic attributes, taking into consideration the natural and architectural environment when determining the form and content of its design. It should harmoniously integrate with the surroundings, presenting concentrated, ideal, and typical imagery to facilitate communication with the public. It should have a guiding artistic concept and an infectious artistic emotion.

The aesthetics of public art design involve two aspects. Firstly, it lies in the creation of beauty

in the process of artistic design and production. It reflects the artist's understanding of objective objects and their perception of the architectural environment. By extracting creative elements following the principles of beauty, the artist employs abstract forms to express conceptual ideas, artistic language, and organisational abilities, conveying a modern cultural message. Secondly, it encompasses the psychological and physical reactions experienced during the process of engaging with public art design outcomes. Due to individual preferences, experiences, thoughts, and personalities, people's responses differ, resulting in varied aesthetic experiences and outcomes. This complexity adds a layer to public art design, requiring a balance between innovative concepts that make the form unique and relevant to the times, and honouring the general aesthetic habits of the majority of people. The aesthetic image formed by the material materials, formal composition, and symbolic imagery in public art design integrates elements such as emotion and scenery, object and self, form and spirit, harmoniously enhancing the distinctiveness and vivacity of the design, while increasing public cultural awareness.

Public art design integrates aesthetics with the interaction between people and the environment, taking the "creation of tangible objects as a starting point and encompassing public participation, emotional interaction, place identity, and cultural characteristics" (Wang, 2007). It involves the urban lives of the public, appearing within the public's view in public spaces, and serves as a bridge of trust between the public and art. Japanese artist Harada Kazunori designed the streetlamps for Matsumotojo (Figure 12). The primary consideration was the harmony between the installation and the environment, ensuring there was no visual obstruction to the historic architecture of Matsumoto Castle. Therefore, Harada utilised a flat rectangular element to separate the lighting design from the road and the sidewalk. Additionally, this rectangular element is extended to the design of traffic lights and bridge railings (Figure 13), creating a cohesive and minimalist aesthetic style in the vicinity of Matsumoto Castle. The creative aspect of public art takes into account the role of harmonizing public order and meeting people's visual aesthetic needs for visual pleasure.



Figure 12: Street Design in Matsumotojo I by Harada Kazunori



Figure 13: Street Design in MatsumotojoII by Harada Kazunori

The use of modelling to alter the rhythm of the environment and reconfigure a new visual space aims to create a sense of beauty and imagination for the public in the context of public art design. Lee Ufan, a prominent figure in the Mono-ha movement in Japan and a pioneer of Asian contemporary art, believes that “when the viewer appreciates a work, whether it is a sculpture or a painting, it is not something familiar to the viewer. However, it resonates with the viewer in some way. When the viewer leaves, they will contemplate the meaning of the image they have just seen, making the experience highly meaningful.” In a notable example, Lee Ufan installed a massive stainless steel arch sculpture, titled “Relatum - The Arch of Versailles,” in the outdoor gardens of the Palace of Versailles (Figure 14). On each side of the arch, there is a stone supporting it. In the middle of the pebble-covered ground, there lies a long steel plate. The minimalist, restrained, and austere style of the sculpture provides the public with a completely new aesthetic experience. Lee Ufan combines natural and industrial materials, creating interdependent relationships between people, objects, and spaces. As viewers engage with the artwork, they gain a profound appreciation for beauty through a dialogue between themselves and the art space.



Figure 14: Figure-14: *Relatum - The Arch of Versailles* by Lee Ufan

## 5.2 A modern concept

“Public art, as a contemporary art concept, derives its important theoretical resources from sociology. The notion of public art is primarily sociological and secondarily artistic. Its conceptual transformation entails a shift from art studies to sociology” (Sun, 2009). Sociology is a discipline that studies society, aiming to seek or improve social welfare, engage in dialogue and communication with society and the public, and liberate humanity from unequal and oppressive material conditions. On the other hand, art studies focus on the nature, purpose, function, tasks, and methods of art, encompassing theoretical and academic knowledge within the realm of humanities.

In a broad sense, the concept of public art encompasses its values, which guide the practice of public art through certain ideologies and theories. It can be related to various fields in humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences. Narrowly defined, it refers to the use of artistic language and material media to create new urban spaces with a modern way of thinking, leading to public aesthetic effects. Public art design distinguishes itself from other forms of design and sculpture. It is an interdisciplinary, comprehensive, and multimedia art form rather than a specific design or sculpture category. The emphasis in public art design lies in its public and modern concepts, which are realized through design, sculpture, installation, and other means. Modern art serves as the primary mode of expression for public art design.

Due to its primary purpose of beautifying urban spaces, public art design needs to align with the modernisation of urban architecture, which is why public art sculpture exhibits symbolic, conceptual, and abstract characteristics. Japanese artist Izuka Hachiro believes that the environmental factors of public art led to its inclination towards abstraction. However, abstraction does not come out of nothing; it is derived from real life, extracted from objective things, and reflects the artist’s innovative thinking. Izuka Hachiro extracts inspiration from the natural forms and transformations of clouds, expressing his abstract thoughts through graphic symbols (Figure 15), and uses these abstract patterns as elements to create a series of two-dimensional or three-dimensional sculptures. Among them, the yellow sculpture installed at the Graduate School of Design, Harvard University (Figure 16), captures the dynamic flow of clouds, adding warmth and liveliness to the campus environment.

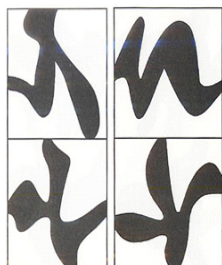


Figure 15: *Abstract Planar Modelling of Clouds* by Izuka Hachiro



Figure 16: *Graduate School of Design, Harvard University* by Izuka Hachiro

The modern concept allows artists to eliminate complexities and break free from specific shapes and colours, seeking to express their attitudes through clean and concise forms. They attempt to open up another world for people and evoke their unique perception of the world, encouraging a new perspective on art. German artist Ludger Gerdes considers public art design as a medium for communication between people and nature, emphasizing a modern consciousness through simplified forms. He focuses on the relationship between personal perception and space, starting from the public's perspective, identifying elemental units, and organising them in connection with the natural environment. His artwork *Parlor Game* (Figure 17) employs rectangular elements resembling stone benches, arranged equidistantly in a circular form around grass, evoking a warm dependency on the context of public art design.



Figure 17: *Parlor Game* by Ludger Gerdes

Abstract modelling often involves creating individual elements and combining them to form rich forms, using simple language to create complex shapes. This highly abstracted aesthetic consciousness stems from the artist's pursuit of modern art forms, influenced by both contemporary artistic trends and the fusion of modern architectural design concepts. It can be said that public art design is a synthesis of painting, sculpture, architecture, and design in the realm of modern art. It fully leverages the advantages of technology, industry, and materials to shape spaces that connect and interact between individuals and the external world. This promotes continuous changes in artistic content, form, techniques, and functions, utilising artistic forms that align with the needs of urban development to create and optimise human living spaces in accordance with social, cultural, and temporal concepts.

## 6. Conclusion

The sorting out of the principles of public art design in this article has guiding and practical significance for promoting artistic leadership in current urban construction and promoting economic development. In summary, public art design adheres to the fundamental principle of serving the public, creating harmonious relationships with the public and the environment while maintaining aesthetic significance. Throughout its continuous development, it has accumulated a rich repertoire

of expressive forms and techniques. At the same time, it embraces the task of leading social and cultural progress and addressing potential economic development issues. In today's rapidly developing world of economy, technology, and industry, countries around the globe are continually advancing their urban modernisation. The aesthetic improvement of urban spaces has become an essential and profound requirement of modern society. The development of public art still plays a crucial role in improving various aspects of society. "A good visual environment not only serves daily travel needs or embodies existing implications and emotions but also serves as guidance and promotion in new explorations" (Lynch, 2001). Public art design connects people with society and represents a link to the future of human design.

### Conflicts of Interest

No author has any other conflict of interest to declare.

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