

Original Research Article

## Under the Threshold of Collective Memory ——Take the Day of Shenzhen People as an Example

Hao Dong

Qilu University of Technology University, Jinan 250000, China

---

**Abstract:** In order to create a profound image of the city, enrich the spiritual needs of the public. For China's current urban landscape construction is growing but ignore the space for the construction of "people" meaning, leading to the public for the phenomenon of lack of urban space identity, through the analysis of the city public art, the public art under the threshold of collective memory, and analyzes the influence of the urban collective memory construction mechanism, think it helps to enhance the public identity and urban space.

**Key words:** Urban public art; Collective memory; Urban space

---

The main body of the article consists of three parts. In the first chapter, the research background is briefly described in view of the lack of public sense of urban spatial identity in the process of urbanization, and establishes the significance and value of the research. The second chapter clarifies the relevant concepts and analyzes the internal connection between "collective memory" and urban public art. In the third chapter, a Day of Shenzhen People, a work of urban public art, is put under the threshold of collective memory, from the dimension of "collective memory", which discusses how to empower urban space in the way of public art.

### 1. Introduction

With the acceleration of China's urbanization process, the urbanization construction has also brought many opportunities and challenges to the urban space. In the process of development, the large-scale urban reconstruction has caused the earth-shaking changes in the original towns. The drastic updating method results in "the existing residential network being dismembered, the daily living space system being broken, and the graph bottom relationship of physical space is no longer complete" <sup>[1]</sup>. The new buildings get rid of the shackles of urban structure and context, and are disconnected from the old city environment; the historical and cultural heritage cannot be well protected, and the integrity of the features is destroyed. At the same time, the disorderly urban expansion makes the city losing its form: cities and buildings are blindly copied and cloned, and one city is becoming a copy or pirated <sup>[2]</sup> of another city. Therefore, in the process of China's urbanization construction, a significant problem is concerned about: the identification crisis of urban space. It is also the root cause of the public's lack of identity for urban space.

In the past decade, the theory of collective memory in the field of sociology has begun to enter the research field of urban space, providing a new perspective for interpreting the relationship between public art and urban space: public art is an effective medium to spread memory and enhance spatial identity <sup>[3]</sup>.

Due to the great role of public art in reshaping the city image, carrying the city culture, enhancing the charm of the city, and strengthening the construction of urban living environment, it is increasingly valued by the governments of all countries. At present, in addition to European and American countries, many Asian countries,

such as Japan and China, have also formulated their own public art policies, hoping to further promote the development of public art in their own <sup>[4]</sup>.

The starting point of the development of public art in China can be traced back to the 1980s. The exploration of public art has changed from the 1980s to urban beautification, from the adorable awakening of urban environmental awareness in the 1990s to the urban environment design, it has experienced several different development stages <sup>[5]</sup>.

Public art was an unprecedented transformation in the 1990s. At this stage, Chinese public art more highlighted the value of "people", and public art began to return to the thinking of "public" <sup>[6]</sup>. The creation of this public art work was in May 1998, at the end of the 1990s, when Chinese public art became more and more mature, and this work has also become one of the representative works of Chinese public art. This also shows that the work has a very high research significance.

## **2. Study purpose and significance**

The purpose of this paper is to analyze the source and influence of the lack of identity of urban space caused by the identity crisis of urban space. The author believes that the phenomenon of "one thousand of cities" in the process of urbanization in China is the lack of identity of urban residents. Therefore, the author hopes to try to put public art works on the perspective of the theoretical framework of collective memory, and discuss the ways to solve this problem.

Collective memory is a valuable history of urban development, which contains urban memory, personal memory and the spirit of place. It is the invisible language of mutual communication between regional people and regional space. With the acceleration of the urbanization process, the collective memory is also missing and blurred. This leads to more and more people can not find a cultural sense of belonging and emotional resonance in memory <sup>[7]</sup>. Therefore, how to awaken the collective memory through the urban public art and how to seek the urban spatial identity through the public art are the focus worth considering in the contemporary urban public art design.

## **3. Collective memory and urban public art**

Collective memory (collective memory) this concept by the French sociologist habush (Maurice Halbwachs) in the social structure of memory for the first time, after he again in the theory of collective memory systematically elaborated the social groups (family, religion, social class) and the correlation between collective memory, the "memory" in the analysis of the social framework, give the meaning of sociology <sup>[8]</sup>. Collective memory (collective memory) is also called group memory. Habwah defines it as "the process and result in which members of a specific social group share the past, and the condition for ensuring the inheritance of collective memory is the social interaction and group awareness to extract the continuity of the memory" <sup>[9]</sup>. It refers to the common memory of a group with a specific cultural cohesion and identity. It can enhance the cohesion of the organization and the sense of belonging of the members of the organization, and is the premise for the realization of collective identity <sup>[10]</sup>. Every country, every city in the process of progress, have inevitably left the traces of memory. Memory is related to groups, and there are as many memories as many groups. Groups are made up of people, so every person who has witnessed it is the material carrier of collective memory.

"Public art" appeared in the United States in the 1960s, it is as the national foundation for the arts (National Endowment for the Art) and the public service administration (National Endowment for the Art) advocated such

as "art in the public domain", "art in the field of architecture", "art percentage" program and other activities, and with the big social era (the Great Society) the tolerance of government image closely with <sup>[11]</sup>.

Public art is translated as "public art" in the English context, and it is an imported word in China. It is an imported word because it first appeared in the West, and was formally introduced to the Chinese <sup>[12]</sup> after the 1980s and 1990s.

Public art is derived from the urban space, and its development is closely related to the evolution of urban culture and artistic ideological trend. In the process of development, public art has spread to the countryside and fields, so the concepts of "rural public art" and "field public art" have also appeared. This paper discusses the public art in the urban public space, so the "public art" referred to in this paper is "urban public art".

The core concept of public art is the appeal for public nature. It aims not only at the aesthetic problems of public space, but more importantly, the power and rights of public space <sup>[13]</sup>.

Habbach believes that many ordinary people believe that compared with their childhood, there is always a sense of inexplicable absence and heavy repression in their childhood or youth. Society needs the collective memory, because the collective memory gives the past history a unique charm <sup>[14]</sup>. However, the collective memory is not invariable. As the living environment of the group is always changing, the collective memory is also constantly changing accordingly. Collective memory is a cultural process with the ability to flow forward, and it is the spiritual need of people.

All cities contain the factors of memory, and the people, things and events in the process of urban development will inevitably leave traces of memory. When the history of the city is recalled and narrated in this way or another, the experience, emotional and psychological experiences of the urban population will inevitably develop and change between the past, the reality and the future <sup>[15]</sup>.

Although the collective memory is not invariable and the individual memory is also very different, the collective memory produced by the collection of the human body has the same reference. It is because of the existence of the reference that the individual memory will appear universal connection and the collective memory can be produced. However, with the acceleration of the urbanization process, the rapid urban construction and the continuous upgrading of the urban landscape lead to the lack of references. For example, the prevailing urban landscape image manufacturing modes such as "cultural building", "heritage cloning" and "urban transplantation" lead to the predicament of "one thousand scene" in urban construction <sup>[16]</sup>. This will inevitably make people feel uncomfortable, this discomfort comes from the strangeness of the external environment, people are unable to connect their emotions with the changing city, resulting in the lack of inner sense of belonging.

From the perspective of collective memory, paying attention to the urban public art works and the lack of identity in the urban public space may become a new idea to stimulate the creative vitality and enhance the urban spirit.

#### **4. Shenzhen people's day**

"A Day of Shenzhen People" is a group of large documentary group sculptures, these large sculptures are located in the south of Yuanling residential area in Shenzhen. As a public space of a city, it has distinctive characteristics and extremely high social value. As the name suggests, "A Day of Shenzhen People" is to show the real scene that reflects the characteristics of Shenzhen urban life. These sculptures selected 18 types of people with typical characteristics, such as middle school students, children, doctors, company staff, cleaners, teachers, shareholders, etc., according to the real people and other advanced large, made of bronze and granite. Main body,

supplemented by relief wall, pavilion, greening, lighting, sound facilities, presents the city life of this day, such as the basic statistics of the city (total population, area, administrative division, age and gender structure, per capita income, life expectancy, living area, etc.) and the weather forecast, air quality report, the stock market, agricultural and sideline products prices, film and television forecast, narrative scenes, supplement the integrity of the story, condensation in urban life ordinary day <sup>[17]</sup>.

This work faithfully records the history of Shenzhen in an original ecological way. The original intention of the work is to let the people's will enter the urban design, and to make the public become the master of the urban public art.

A Day in Shenzhen is a milestone in the transformation of Shenzhen's urban sculpture to public art. It is also the first and most typical work of public art in China.

Urban public space is the carrier of urban public art, and the construction of collective memory is inextricably linked with the crowd community living in the urban public space. Therefore, the collective memory constructed by "A Day of Shenzhen People" is also the collective memory constructed by the witnesses who lived in this land.

"A Day of Shenzhen People" is located in the south side of Shenzhen Yuanling Community residential area. Yuanling Street was built in the 1980s, which is the model room for urban construction in Shenzhen in its early years. In 1980, it became the first special economic zone established in China, a window of China's reform and opening up and an emerging migrant city. Shenzhen has also become a "city of immigrants". So far, a large number of people flocked to Shenzhen. Shenzhen takes the market as the center, and has formed a relatively loose and inclusive social psychology. "Heroes don't ask where they came" and "Shenzhen people come" were the slogan of Shenzhen at that time. Under this historical background, Shenzhen formed a unique urban characteristics and personnel composition belonging to Shenzhen. Thus also formed the collective memory that belongs to Shenzhen alone.

"A Day of Shenzhen People" is the crystallization of the city's unique collective memory. From the beginning of the establishment of "A Day of Shenzhen People", it has been widely welcomed, and almost every Shenzhen people can find their own shadow in its kind. Every individual, from community residents to ordinary citizens to migrant population, is a participant of "A Day of Shenzhen People". Every witness is a material carrier of collective memory. Collective memory is not a mechanical repetition of the past, but a subtle film that combines different moments of history and the present and adds the perspective of people's realistic needs. Therefore, the collective memory not only conveys the past historical civilization of human beings, but also creates a valuable new history.

Together, they created this work, jointly created the collective memory, and this work has also constantly enriched its internal meaning in the development process of Shenzhen.

Collective memory frames the past, limited by the present, and rules for the future <sup>[19]</sup>. Urban public art bearing the collective memory is both a mirror and a beacon to the urban public <sup>[20]</sup>. Urban public art needs to awaken collective memory, construct and relate the past with the present. Combine the memories of the past with the reality of the present.

"A Day of Shenzhen People" has condensed the day of Shenzhen on November 29, 1999 into its works through new public art concepts and methods. It can be said that "A Day of Shenzhen People" also embodies space, cohesion, history and memory. This work carries the memory of the past. As the wave of urbanization continues to move forward, "A Day of Shenzhen People" still plays the role of "mirror" and "beacon". For those

who experience it, everyone can recall Shenzhen on that day through this work. For the new generation of people, this work can be connected to Shenzhen on that day.

## 5. Conclusions

"A Day of Shenzhen People" writes about the collective memory." A Day of Shenzhen People" connects the collective memory through the form of public art, thus enriching the collective memory. So far, the collective memory continues. Urban public art is also constantly showing new vitality, urban public space has also formed its own unique spatial spirit, and the public has a more and more sense of belonging and spiritual resonance to urban space.

## References

1. Zhang Jie, Deng Xiangyu, Yuan Luping. Explore new urban building types and mend the urban texture — Take the ancient city of Jinan as an example [J]. *Urban Planning*, 2004 (12): 47-52.
2. Qiu Bing, Zhang Fan. Cultural crisis behind the image feast —— Cultural interpretation of the phenomenon of "one thousand scenes" in contemporary Chinese cities [J]. *Research on Modern Cities*, 2013,28 (04): 10-15.
3. Chen Gao-zuo, *Thought and Movement of Modern Art*, Tianjin University Press, 2021.06, p. 222
4. Wu Shixin. *The Contemporary Public Art Research in China* [D]. Chinese National Academy of Arts, 2005.
5. Wu Dingyu. *Evolution and Construction- -Research on the Development Course of Public Art in China since 1949* [D]. Chinese National Academy of Arts, 2017.
6. Wu Shuling, You Linling. Urban public art of awakening the collective memory [J]. *Architecture and Culture*, 2021(05):128-130.DOI:10.19875/j.cnki.jzywh.2021.05.048.
7. Wang Juan, media ceremony and social reproduction of 36 Years of New Year's Eve stage communication interpretation, *Guangming Daily Press*, 2019.09, p. 50
8. (Fa) by Maurice Habwait (Maurice Halbwachs); Bi Ran, translated by Guo Jinhua. *On the collective memory* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2002.10.
9. Cao Xinghua, Qiang Biao. Research on the construction of university archives resources from the perspective of collective memory [J]. *Lantai World*, 2015(02):116-117.DOI:10.16565/j.cnki.1006-7744.2015.02.034.
10. Zhong Yuanbo. The conceptual formation and historical evolution of public art [J]. *The Art Review*, the 2009(07):63-66.DOI:10.16364/j.cnki.cn11-4907/j.2009.07.016.
11. Wu Dingyu. *Evolution and Construction- -Research on the Development Course of Public Art in China since 1949* [D]. Chinese National Academy of Arts, 2017.
12. Sun Zhenhua. Publicity of public art [J]. *Art observation*, 2004 (11): 14.
13. (Fa) by Maurice Habwait (Maurice Halbwachs); Bi Ran, translated by Guo Jinhua. *On the collective memory* [M]. Shanghai: Shanghai People's Publishing House, 2002.10.
14. Zhu Rong. *City and Memory: The continuation and development of urban History in Psychology* [J]. *Southern Architecture*, 2004 (04): 65-68.
15. By China Architecture and Culture Center, *Urban Public Art Case and Path*, Jiangsu Phoenix Science and Technology Press, 2018.04, p. 134
16. Weltze, Ji Bin, Wang Lijun, et al. *Social memory: history, memory, and inheritance* [M]. Peking University Press, 2007.