

The Research on the Development of the Fashion Curations and Its Current Situation in China

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Abstract. With the thriving of various types of art exhibitions in China, fashion displays also approach the view of people gradually. However, as a new art-related form of exhibition, related researches and practices in China are comparatively limited and the audience lacks the common sense of fashion curation and fashion display. Indeed, the site and forms of fashion display are various, such as the window display in malls and department stores or exhibitions in the gallery or museums. Nonetheless, this research would mainly focus on the museum or gallery aspect. This paper aims to learn about related research and case studies in order to explore the innovative ways and the possible future orientation of fashion curation in China, and the results find that besides exhibitions hold by fashion brands with less or more commercial intention, the local department of culture and fashion brands need to develop creative methods and techniques to spread the local culture, design inspiration, and process innovation to empathize with the audience, such as cross-border cooperation and hold non-commercial fashion curation in China.

Keywords: Fashion; Curation; Exhibition; Display; China.

1. Introduction

With material satisfaction nowadays, people pay more attention to the spiritual word. More and more people like to visit exhibitions during their free time in China. Moreover, energy and money have been invested in curation, and innovative methods have been applied to the industry. According to the report from CCEES, in 2021, 5,495 offline economic and trade exhibitions will be held nationwide, with a total exhibition area of 91.8357 million square meters, a net increase of 87 and 14.5696 million square meters compared with 2020, an increase of 1.59% and 18.86% respectively [1], which shows that the development of curation is not restrained because of covid 19, on the contrary, the industry of curation showed a positive tendency. In addition, a new type of exhibition along with a new type of industry also walk into people's view in recent years—fashion exhibition and fashion curation. In fact, fashion curation includes various types, such as window displays and department stores, and exhibitions in gallery and exhibition sizes, the latter one is mainly discussed in the paper. However, as a new industry fashion exhibition and fashion curation, the related research and practice are limited, only fashion brands and luxury brands hold fashion exhibitions in China recently years in order to extend their brand impacts and or advertise their products, and more or less with commercial intention. Such as the perfume display 'Sophisticated' held by Chanel with the strong commercial intention to advertise their products or exhibition held by Dior 'dreams of designers', which displayed large numbers of exquisite haute couture and hand drawings of designers. This kind of exhibition not only extends its brand impact but also with high aesthetic value. However, Fashion is a form of self-expression and autonomy at a particular period and place and in a specific context of clothing, footwear, lifestyle, accessories, makeup, hairstyle, and body posture. The term implies a look defined by the fashion industry as that which is trending [2]. Fashion is not just related to luxury and fashion brands or commercials, it can also reflect the lifestyle of different eras and changes in society. Due to most fashion exhibitions being related to commercial reasons, unlike other art exhibitions, the audience for fashion exhibitions is not as many as in other forms of exhibitions. In addition, commercial value is the priority that fashion and luxury brands hold exhibitions, so the quality of these exhibitions varies. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to explore the possibility of future fashion curation in China, not limited to fashion curation and exhibition only for fashion and

luxury brands, and find more innovative ways to attract a more diverse audience. In this paper, the first chapter would give an introduction to the history and development of fashion curation and exhibition. The second section discusses the general current situation of fashion curation and exhibition. The third part would use detailed examples to discuss the status quo of fashion curation in china. Then better ways to improve fashion curations in china would be given. Also, the non-commercial ways to develop the industry would also be discussed. The article also utilizes the literature reading method and case studies to explore possible ways to solve the existing problems in Chinese fashion curation.

2. The Development and Current Situation of Fashion Curation

The form of fashion curations varies, including window displays in department stores, and exhibitions in galleries and museum size. The former pays more attention to the commercial aspect and attracts more customers. However, this article focuses on the artistic aspect of fashion curation and treats it as a form of formal art exhibition. Also, try to find ways to balance the business and art in this new industry.

2.1. The Development of the Fashion Curation

Though fashion exhibitions may seem very common in museums nowadays, it was until about the 1980s that fashion finally became a stand as a legitimized fine art form [3]. Before that fashion exhibitions and displays were seen as a problem. However, the history of exhibitions about clothes is much longer than people expect, especially customs that can reflect the ecclesiastical, royal, and ethnographic history and development. According to Jean L. Druesedow the director of the Kent State University Museum, “perhaps one of the earliest deliberately organized exhibitions of dress occurred at the opening of the Royal Armory as a museum in the former Three Crowns Palace in Stockholm, Sweden, in the early seventeenth century” (2010) [4]. However, what Druesedow said is 'dress' but not fashion. The person who changed the awaked situation was the former Vogue editor Diana Vreeland, curating the Metropolitan Museum of Art's 1983-84 Yves Saint Laurent retrospective which is the start of contemporary fashion exhibitions. This exhibition broke the aura of antiquarianism before and became one of the most influential fashion displays.

The voice of resisting fashion in museums still exists today. According to Valerie Steele, a notable fashion historian and the director of the Museum at the Fashion Institute of Technology, the position of fashion within the museum "replicates the historically poor status of fashion within academia." Regardless of critics, prominent museums have been champions of a natural crossover between art and fashion since the 1990s, an existence that has become an unavoidable element of our current visual culture. According to Markus Brüderlin, director of the Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg in Germany, "a museum pointing the way forward in the search for Modernism in the twenty-first century cannot ignore fashion," and that fashion in museums is required "to provide visitors with the measure of otherness they deserve as a statement about our culture." The Kunstmuseum Wolfsburg, along with other prestigious institutions such as The Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, The Musée de la Mode et du Textile at the Louvre in Paris, and The Victoria and Albert Museum in London, have ardently supported fashion's importance within visual culture and, as a result, have presented numerous landmark fashion exhibitions.

With this kind of institutional support, the fashion exhibition has evolved into what people know today: the blockbuster-like shows à la “Alexander McQueen: Savage Beauty” at the Costume Institute in 2011, which attracted a record-breaking 660,000+ visitors, making it the eighth biggest show on record at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. While it may be impossible for another museum to mount a fashion exhibition rivaling that of the McQueen retrospective, there is no doubt many will try [5].

2.2 Current Situation of the Fashion Curation

Though Art's 1983-84 Yves Saint Laurent retrospective was a breakthrough in the contemporary fashion exhibition, it has been argued to be too commercial. In 1999, famous fashion designer Giorgio Armani donated 15 million dollars to the Guggenheim Museum in New York, this action was criticized by Patricia Bickers in an Art Monthly article, a brand donated huge money to a museum, it seems to imply that the museum itself was for sale, and also raised questions about institutional ethics. At the same time, plenty of critics also believed that the show was curatorially compromised because the show primarily emphasized the designer's recent work[5].

Fashion exhibitions always seem deeply connected with fashion brands, so sometimes the commercial aspect is much more important than the aesthetic aspect and their audience is very limited. for example, many fashion brands hold exhibitions about their beauty products. The perfume display 'Sophisticated' held by Chanel in ShangHai Chain is a good example.

The exhibitions displayed many classic Chanel perfumes and built distinguished exhibition halls to display their products. These kinds of exhibitions with highly commercial value held by brands are ways to help them connect with their customers and win the consumer's trust and approval and advertise their products. At the same time, these exhibitions provide a more natural relaxing, and immersive environment for their potential consumers. Online propaganda medium innate ability production high-efficiency huge effect, but the offline expansion of the visual experience possible omnidirectional future consumers themselves to reach the world of quality label sentiment an ideal world, the hundreds of years of brand history story or designer's feeling process, such a large-scale painting is open to the public, and this kind of shocking simplicity and tactile temperature is beyond the line of business [6]. Still, the audience for these shows is limited, the main audience may not as the same as ordinary art exhibitions, and the audience for these shows is mainly fans of a certain brand and potential customers. This phenomenon is very common in China nowadays, brands held so-called fashion exhibitions to advertise their commercial values. However, most shows held by fashion and luxury brands like that their artistic value is much less important to these brands.

3. Current Situation and Improvement Approaches of China Fashion Exhibitions

3.1 Fashion Exhibitions are Over Commercial and Audience is Limited

With the development of society, people's life is more colorful than ever, and spiritual need is also stronger than ever. More and more people like to visit exhibitions and displays nowadays in china. In May 2022, the 2021 China Exhibition Survey Report published by the China Exhibition Survey Research Group was announced, and in 2021, the number of online exhibitions nationwide increased to 5497, and the number of 2020 exhibitions increased to 89, an increase of 1.65% [7]. In the face of the ongoing uncertainty in the activities under the new crown epidemic, the number of sales is still increasing, and it is clear that the heat of the country's consumers is only increasing. Fashion exhibitions also become more and more popular during this period.

When it comes to fashion exhibitions, Fashion and luxury brands are still the mainstream in china. Fashion exhibitions are like a window, letting customers view these brands from different angles. When luxuries and fashion are associated with art, the value of these products and brands is evaluated. Exhibitions help these brands tell the story of their histories and designs in revisiting, heavy learning, or advanced methods. In this way, the brand constantly imports a new cultural image and intangible value, gives a deep impression of the latent transition and renewal of consumers. Without any doubt, fashion and luxury brands can extend their impact in the Chinese market, and at the same time, they can provide wonderful exhibitions with high artistic value to the audience, and balance business and art.

As the example, 'Sophisticated' held by Chanel in Shanghai China, most fashion shows in china focus on commercial value rather than artistic value and it is indeed a good way to extend the scale

of customers' Jun, a critic who has worked in domestic art museums and overseas fashion museums, believes that the high-cost and short-lived fashion shows throughout the year are no longer enough to attract the current fast-paced new generation of consumers and expand to a larger market group [6]. It is believed that these kinds of shows can extend the scale of customers but can not attract an audience that is not a customer of the brand or potential customer.

3.2 Ways to Improve Fashion Exhibitions in China

3.2.1 Cross-border cooperation is a new opportunity for fashion curation

However, it does not mean that fashion brands or luxury brands are not capable to hold good exhibitions. On the contrary, many works by fashion brands and luxury brands are of high aesthetic value. Especially Haute Couture, Vintage Collection, High Jewelry, Fine Watchmaking, etc. In addition, the overlapping of artistic customer groups can be transformed into potential customers of these brands. Luxury brands can also increase their cultural and artistic attributes by holding art exhibitions or establishing cultural and artistic foundations, thereby enhancing brand value.

Cross-border cooperation has been seen as a very common way in fashion design, such as Mondrian dresses on the show, or moving the works of famous artists such as Van Gogh and Monet even Star Wars to fashion prints, has been difficult to inspire consumers to appreciate the artistic value of the brand. Today, art has become a kind of romance in public life, a sense of ritual in young people's lives. They put forward higher artistic requirements for the advertising and marketing of luxury goods. Brands have a social responsibility and commercial needs when conceiving and planning commercial art exhibitions, expressing profound brand stories to consumers, displaying high-end lifestyles, and disseminating valuable art, taste and aesthetics [6].

Craftsmanship and restoration exhibition held by Cartier in China is a good example that combines artistic value and commercial value together, also combines the culture and craft of the brand with traditional Chinese culture and history. This one-of-a-kind event drew over 600,000 visitors to one of the world's most famous venues, with over 850 items stretching from the Ming dynasty to the present day. These pieces came from the Cartier Collection, the Maison Archives, the Palace Museum's collections, and public institutions such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York, the National Gallery of Australia in Canberra, the Qatar Museums, the Musée International d'Horlogerie in La Chaux-de-Fonds, and private and royal collections. [8]. In this exhibition, Cartier repaired over 600 antiques with thick Chinese culture in the Gugong Museum. Also, this exhibition did not require an extra fee, as long as the visitor bought a ticket for the Gugong museum, they could visit the exhibition for free. In this way, the scale of the audience was not limited to the customers of this brand and also improved the impact of Cartier in China.

Same to Prada, the famous fashion brand Prada, besides clothes, the company has also built avant-garde contemporary buildings around the world for a long time, and also participated in the maintenance of excellent buildings [9]. Prada repaired Rong Zhai located on North Shaanxi Road, Shanghai, and was purchased by Rong Zongjing, a Chinese entrepreneur in the late Qing Dynasty and the early Republic of China, in 1918. It is one of the most elegant garden houses in Shanghai. Refined Rong Zhai highlights Prada's latest attempt to continuously explore design language and design form. The mansion now is used as a special location for Prada events in China. Moreover, the mansion is also open to the public, visitors coming there cannot only go through the fancy historical tourist attraction and learn the Prada crafts and its design language.

Besides the two brands, the well-known Italian designer brand Fendi also held its show on the Great Wall which caught a lot of attention at that time. At that time, FENDI wanted to enter the mainland market, then CEO Michael Burke felt that FENDI's double F logo was quite similar to the design of the Great Wall, so he came up with the idea of going to the Great Wall to hold a show. Each beacon tower on the Great Wall is managed by a different functional department. Terence contacted the eight beacon towers on the Great Wall before and after, and received the support of the Beijing Ministry of Culture and the Italian Consulate General to upgrade this commercial activity into a

cultural activity. In the end, it took Terence more than 2 years and more than 50 million yuan to bring this century show to the ground [10].

As mentioned above, fashion brands and luxury brands can combine their crafts and designs with the local culture, crafts, and art together, in order to expand the range of the audience. Besides Prada and Cartier, many other brands have experimented many times to connect their designs with Chinese elements, such as Dior and Valentino, many seasons of their designs took inspiration from Chinese culture. Therefore, these brands can hold exhibitions with local features to win the market.

3.2.2 Non-commercial fashion curation in china

Besides fashion and luxury brands, local museums can also curate fashion exhibitions, to tell the traditional and local athletics. The customs and clothes in museums have a long history and museums in china have a large collection of traditional customs from different dynasties. They mean a lot and contribute a lot when it comes to historical research. Clothing has become a symbol of participating in social activities in daily life. Understanding the aesthetic origin, clothing system and pattern characteristics of clothing in past dynasties will help to study the aesthetic ideas carried by clothing patterns in the next step. From the evolution of the mainstream clothing of civilization, people can glimpse the history of this civilization. Ancient Chinese clothing is the treasure house of traditional Chinese aesthetics and an inexhaustible source of various literary and artistic creations. Because of its beauty, it can stimulate modern people's yearning and love for traditional Chinese culture, which is a good thing, but at the same time, it should be noted that ancient Chinese clothing is also an important historical material for studying the social and cultural changes in ancient China. The meaning it embodies is not static but flowing. Almost from the day when clothing originated, people have integrated their own customs, aesthetic methods, preferences for colors, and images of various cultures and religions into clothing, forming the original spiritual connotation of clothing culture.

The history of clothing changes is an evolutionary history in which various ethnic groups integrate and national cultures influence and promote each other; it is a history of the rise and fall of the creation and development of material civilization; it is a history of the development of technology and art.

Chinese traditional costume culture has a long history and profound accumulation. It is a classic part of Chinese and world culture. It has extremely high artistic value and economic value. The systematic induction, sorting, and research of Chinese traditional costume culture will help improve the level of clothing design in China. Deepening the design connotation, has certain theoretical and practical significance. In this case, museums holding exhibitions about local clothes can not only help people know the local aesthetics but also advocate the local culture.

4. Conclusion

This article discussed the general history and current situation of the fashion curation, then through detailed case studies, discussed the problems that fashion exhibitions in china. Exhibitions in china held by fashion brands and luxury brands generally are too commercial and the range of the visitors are limited. Moreover, china lacks noncommercial specialized exhibitions to advocate Chinese culture and history. This paper suggests possible ways to improve and change the situation in China, fashion brands and luxury brands can Collaborate with artists and combine local culture and elements to their exhibitions to win the Chinese market, and also to balance art and business. Moreover, the traditional Chinese clothes are various and the evolution of Chinese clothing reflect the Chinese history, which museums in china can also try to hold exhibitions to advocate Chinese aesthetics and culture. Fashion exhibitions in gallery and museum size are a new industry and getting more and more popular in china. The author hopes this article could help fashion curators get familiar with the Chinese market and provide valuable information and ways through detailed examples to help them curate better. Still, there are many parts that have not been discussed in the article, the possibilities of fashion curations in china is not predictable. The article mainly talked about famous international brands and traditional Chinese clothes. The individual designers or Chinese brands have not been discussed in the article. Many famous designers worked for several brands and left many remarkable

works during their career. In this case exhibitions about a certain designer may not possible be held by certain brands, but may need the third party to organize. Hope in the future, fashion curation can not mainly manipulate by fashion brands and museum but more energy participates.

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