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Ullens Center for Contemporary Art Design Alterations

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Abstract: Taking the past life of 718 Factory as an example, this paper explores the spatial transformation of old industrial heritage in Beijing and its current development; and how the cultural heritage of the industrial era can be combined with contemporary art that represents the "future style" in the contemporary context. The paper is a time-line analysis of architectural positioning, spatial planning, material utilization and other dimensions, which provides a reference for the transformation of urban industrial relics.

Keywords: Industrial Heritage Transformation; Chinese Contemporary Art.

1. Introduction

With the rapid economic development after the reform and opening up, China also ushered in a period of urban transformation, and many large factories gradually faded out of the historical stage. These abandoned factories are like old men in their twilight years, standing alone in the midst of prosperous cities. The booming development of the tertiary industry has brought spiritual and cultural needs, and these factories have been reopened. How to retain the industrial atmosphere while adapting to the current social development has become an important issue, and many scholars and designers have given different answers.

798 Art District has now become the hottest art district in Beijing, which is a good example for studying the transformation of industrial heritage and is very meaningful to learn from.

2. 1950: Background of the Times

Let's go back to the early 1950s. For political reasons, China was in close contact with the Soviet Union, which provided a lot of assistance to China, including the construction of the "718 Joint Factory" in the Jiuxianqiao area of Beijing, also known as the North China Radio Parts Factory, which was divided into several research institutes, and where many key components of China's first atomic bomb and many important parts of the first artificial satellite were produced. Many key components of China's first atomic bomb and many important parts of the first artificial satellite were produced here.

The main designer of the plant came from East Germany and was influenced by the Bauhaus style. The design of the plant is simple and generous, and the building materials are mostly cement and concrete, pursuing the unity of art and technology and basing the design aesthetics on meticulous logic. In order to meet the functional requirements, the factory building is 10 meters high, and with the skylight vault, the net height is 13 meters, and the 50-meter-high brick chimney rises to the sky; the windows of the factory building are all set to the north, making full use of the sky light and reflected light to ensure uniform and stable light during operation.

In 1957, a building with distinctive architectural features and characteristics of the times was erected, becoming one of the largest projects in the "First Five-Year Plan" and kicking off a glorious era.

718 United Factory has fundamentally changed the backwardness of China's electronics industry and marked the modernization of China's electronics industry. Its products filled many national gaps and gradually met the needs of national defense, national economic construction and scientific and cultural undertakings. Under the leadership of Mr. Luo Peilin, China's electronics industry was able to "take a shortcut" and leap to the international advanced level, and even surpassed the Soviet Union.

Since the reform and opening up, the wave of globalization has swept through every aspect, and the rapid iteration of technology development has driven the transformation and upgrading of industries; at the same time, the cultural orientation of the city and the lifestyle of people in Beijing have been transformed. The company was faced with the task of redefining and redeveloping.

In 2005, the various plants of 718 United Factory were dismantled to the last part, which is the existing 798 Factory.

3. 2007: Plant New Life

As the economy continues to develop, we have not stopped pursuing and exploring art.

In the late 1970s, a time of rapid change, the influx of Western ideas brought a cross-section of the development of Western contemporary art to Chinese artists, thus influencing the creation of a large number of artists; in the 1980s, after an experimental period, the Star Art Exhibition in '79 and the 85 New Wave marked the formal birth of Chinese contemporary art, and artists began the journey of "After the accession to the WTO in 2000, the economic strength increased, while the cultural demand also grew, and contemporary art was gradually recognized by the mainstream, and such international and localized exhibitions as the Shanghai Biennale emerged.

The plant's geographic location is still some distance from the central city of Beijing, making the rent low and the economic advantages obvious; the plant is close to the Central Academy of Fine Arts' Huajia Di campus, making it more convenient for teachers and students to commute; and the space itself is high, large and open, and easy to transform, making it suitable for the creation and storage of large artworks. In 1995, Professor Sui Jianguo rented a workshop in 798 to create and store large sculptures, and with this large space and low cost, many artists and related practitioners were attracted, and galleries, studios, and art galleries sprang up.

In 2007, the former 718 Factory was transformed into the Ullens Center for Contemporary Art, and the opening exhibition, 85 New Wave: China's First Contemporary Art Movement, set the tone of the museum and the height and depth of the exhibition.

Around 2010 was the "golden period" of the domestic real estate economy, and private art museums also saw an explosion during this period.

3.1. Architectural Design

The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art is "committed to promoting China's deeper participation in the global dialogue through contemporary art". Fifty years later, a new era has begun, and now it will become a spiritual container for Chinese contemporary art, interpreting what conceptual art is. How to balance the modern architectural style and the original industrial architecture is a major topic of discussion on the way of renovation.

In front of the building is Sui Jianguo's spray-painted fiberglass installation, Made in China (Dinosaur). It is both realistic and conceptual, and is a response to the prevalence of consumerism in the context of economic globalization. Under the wave of consumerism, how should artists deal with the relationship between art and the art market? The Ullens Center for Contemporary Art is both a museum and a market enabler. The new language of the times is used to reflect the reality of China and the changes in society as a whole. From the architectural design to the installation art displayed in the plaza, it is closely related to the pulse of the entire era.

The pavilion was formed by merging the two original factories, and the brick-red wall design is still used in the renovation of the building to fit the history of the factory. The entrance was renovated in collaboration with architect Yung Ho Chang and the Very Architecture Studio, and was completed in 2012 on the occasion of Ullens' fifth anniversary. The four letters of "UCCA" were chosen in an orange-tinged brick red, echoing the wall and reflecting the sense of unity in the design. Between each letter, benches are set up for visitors and passersby to rest, fully demonstrating the contemporary "people-centered" design concept.



Figure 1. Facade design



Figure 2. Made in China (Dinosaur)

3.2. Interior Part

The original space structure is beam and column structure, the entrance foyer is also a small exhibition hall, located in the north span of the main building, with an opening of 9.8m, into

The foyer, with a depth of 13m and a height of 13m, has a height of about 4m on both sides and is used as a restroom and exhibition space as well as an office. The canal and foyer together form an axial space of 70m in length, 13m in height and 13m in width, providing a strong visual orientation.

The main wall material inside the exhibition hall is clear water brick with white paint on the surface, and the floor is gray cement floor. At the same time, the beams are exposed and only treated with paint, which not only can be used as linear components in the space to enrich the sense of space composition, but also can be used with some mechanical devices and brick chimneys as symbols of the industrial era, emphasizing the industrial and historical significance of the overall space, while the modern treatment can be integrated with the overall atmosphere of the art area. The roof is treated with open skylights, and the louvers and shading cloth are used for light filtering treatment to make the interior light softer and more transparent. As a factory building, it also has an inherent 13-meter-high ceiling, which also allows the entrance foyer to be used as a small exhibition hall, maximizing space utilization and serving as a prelude to the exhibition and correlating with the internal exhibition hall to ensure spatial continuity. For example, in Xu Bing's solo retrospective held in 2018, the large-scale installation "art for the people" was hung at the foyer.



Figure 3. Facade design

3.3. The Following is an Example of "Xu Bing: Reflections and Methods" and a Brief Discussion of the Design of the Ullens Exhibition Hall

The entrance to Ullens is unremarkable, with a black passage about a few dozen meters long leading out of the entrance to the exhibition hall, in which the anticipation is gradually stretched to the limit, as if one were in a classical Chinese garden. As a large art center, this design may not attract too many people to enter, there is a sense of alienation. The large red and yellow banners are tonally coordinated with the surrounding Ullens orange pointers, and even with their large size, they do not look out of place, but rather have a sense of dignified atmosphere and calmness. The exhibition hall as a whole is a large column-free space, providing a very large degree of freedom for the interior exhibition design.

Entering the exhibition hall, is Xu Bing's most famous and one of the most important works of the "Book of Heaven", a volume of books arranged with the three scrolls above makes the space does not appear to be large, plus the people who

come and go stopping even a little crowded. In the middle is a large exhibition board, standing like a door on three levels of steps, and on both sides you can enter the small exhibition hall. The design of the gallery is unique, neither overwhelming nor too monotonous and boring, and the space is cleverly divided to play an appropriate role in guiding the content of the display of some small prints created during the student period, which laid the groundwork for a later creative career. When you step through the "gate", you will officially enter Xu Bing's art world and see how he jumped out from his initial printmaking, and then stood out from the "85 New Wave" through his exploration of semantics, transforming little by little into a contemporary artist, facing different cultural He also looks at how he has transformed into a contemporary artist in the face of different cultural collisions and the development of technology, and how he dialogues with the times.

The exhibition hall is cleverly divided, and the entrances and exits are always set on both sides to guide the flow of people, so that the viewer can easily find the connection between each sub-collection, without having to look at the guide map for half a day, but naturally enter each sub-collection to explore the growth of an artist's lineage.

This is the most wonderful part of the exhibition in my opinion - when you have witnessed the growth process of the artist and can resonate with him, and then look back at one of his most important works, you will have a deeper understanding and a better understanding of his thoughts. The exhibition will be more profound, and the understanding of the ideas will be fuller.

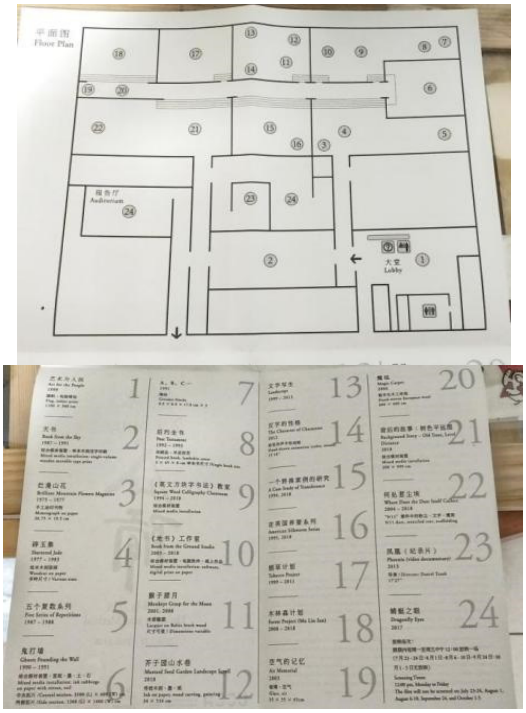


Figure 4. Floor plan

4. 2019: A Different Ullens, A Different 798

Since 2013, China's economic development model has shifted from the "world's processing plant" type of exports to boosting domestic consumption, and Chinese people above the middle class have begun to generate demand for spiritual consumption after their material consumption has reached a certain level.

In 2018, OMA, the design firm founded by Dutch architect Koolhaas, redesigned and carried out a comprehensive upgrade of the architectural space. During this 11-year period, the 798 Art District has long become an integral part of Beijing's urban culture as urbanization has rapidly progressed.

4.1. Architectural Design

The façade of the building continues the same style, still using red brick as the main body, and reinforcing the first floor fair-faced concrete load-bearing columns and exposing them to form an elevated gray space between the building body and the new foyer entrance of the building.

The first floor facade features curved glass with a great degree of curvature, the hard glass is now as soft as a stage curtain, forming a strong visual contrast with the rough textured red brick. The glass curtain gradually slopes toward the entrance, creating a sequence that achieves a visual orientation. The space on the left side is used as an art store (previously a stand-alone store on the adjacent Bauhaus square). The right part of the glass slants into the staircase, making the staircase part of both the interior and exterior, blurring the sense of architectural boundaries. Compared with the traditional façade design, this bold attempt is not only a further exploration of the material itself, but also an experiment to transform the building façade from a two-dimensional plane to a three-dimensional space. It is a dialogue between contemporary art and architectural design, which not only shows the infinite possibilities contained in the material itself, but also a perfect combination of technology and art, and a good interpretation of architectural properties, truly letting the material speak.



Figure 5. Glass on the façade



Figure 6. Stairs through glass

The small mosaic tiles laid in the foyer area connect to the streetscape, extending to the entrance in a gradient of colors,

from white to dark gray, from light to dark, and finally converging in the interior space of UCCA. The choice of gradient paving further blurs the sense of boundary brought by the building, allowing the building to also become part of the landscape, and the two are organically integrated. At the same time, the landscape serves as an extension of the building, allowing more people to notice the size of UCCA without the oppressive feeling of a large building, and the UCCA logo is attached to the foyer on a white brick wall with red letters on a white background. Compared to the previous orange logo façade, this time a brighter red color was chosen. In Chinese contemporary art, red has always been favored by many artists, as it is experimental and revolutionary, and represents the vitality of life.

This renovation transforms UCCA from an "invisible" art space to a "transparent" art museum by opening up the structure and introducing a new entrance to achieve maximum transparency between the exhibition space and the street level. I think it emphasizes its spatial attributes as a "contemporary art center" more than before, both in terms of the streetscape and the sunken theater under the stairs in the foyer, which strengthens the connection between the building and people and makes the building more "human". It is not only an exhibition space for contemporary art, but also a spiritual home for people, while the previous architectural design felt more modernist - minimalist and industrial

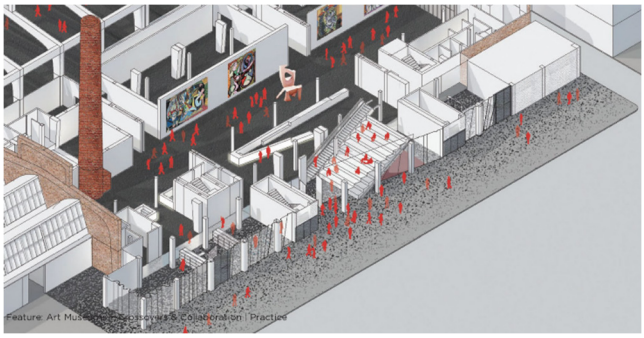


Figure 7. Axonometric drawing

4.2. Interior Part: Functional Layout

A stepped public area at the entrance provides a resting place for visitors. Behind the staircase, the corner below it and the inward curving glass forms an arched shelter that becomes a sunken small square for children's activities, improving space utilization while reflecting the museum's public education function.

A staircase leads to the bookstore on the second floor. The staircase spins up with perforated board handrails on both sides, and the hard lines speak of the building's glorious history as an industrial plant. The natural wood neutralizes the coldness of industrial products. The glass curtain wall on the outside opens up the view and is a good perspective to view Qiu Zhijie's large ink mural work "The Whole World - Art Ecological Map". In this work, the artist details the relationship between China's contemporary art market and artists. Created specifically for the new space in the renovated UCCA building, it is the largest site-specific map created to date, and will continue to exist as part of UCCA after the exhibition, and will serve as a testament to the unique position of this important institution in the contemporary art ecosystem.



Figure 8. Interior design



Figure 9. The Whole World - Art Ecological Map

The equipment and components of the original plant in the office area were preserved and painted in dark gray to make them stand out from the simple background in the form of silhouettes, reflecting the original industrial character of the space.

When comparing the design of the previous exhibition hall, it is easy to see that Ullens has made large-scale changes to the division of the exhibition hall in this renovation. The designers have integrated the previously fragmented exhibition halls, removing the partitions between the canal, the gallery and the lobby, and completely opening up the first floor of the street-level slab to the exhibition halls.

4.3. Analysis of Changes in the Design of the Exhibition Hall, Using the Example of "Immaterial/Rematerial: Computer Art World"

This computer art exhibition, which uses a lot of new media technology, is extremely interactive and attracts people of different ages to come and see the exhibition. The four panels progress in layers. What is very different from the past is that the division of the exhibition hall space is sometimes carried out with the works themselves, and the audience will unconsciously move into the next hall, and this invisible guidance is also a very good way to lead. For example, Peter Cordle's Untitled, which is an architectural sculpture in itself, is also used as a gallery by the curator to seamlessly integrate the exhibition halls. A small window-style design has also been added to increase the interest of the exhibition on the one hand, and to protect the equipment and reduce the possibility of vandalism on the other. The new gallery and the middle gallery are hosting a solo exhibition of a painter, and the difference in the layout can be clearly seen due to the different nature of the two exhibitions.

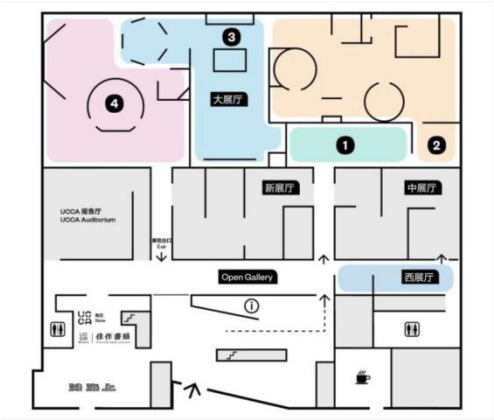


Figure 10. Floor plan

In the new media's exhibition hall layout, there are fewer blocking lines designed to encourage audience participation; and many rings and rectangles are used so as to give the audience a more immersive experience.

In the design of the exhibition hall, the original layout was preserved, but more changes were brought about by the content of the exhibition, including the later "Cao Fei and the Stage of the Times," in which Ullens built a space directly inside the exhibition hall in the form of a space from the early 21st century, and the introduction pages were designed in the style of vintage newspapers. Unlike other galleries, Ullens does not have a permanent exhibition hall, so the format of the exhibition is diverse and varied, and each time the space is used to interpret the spiritual core of contemporary art.

5. In Conclusion: UCCA's Renovation is a Continuation of History

UCCA uses modern technology to transform historical obsolete items, and tells history in a modern expression, which is a kind of sensual expression, a humanistic continuation, and tells the story of red brick walls to people later while interpreting modern art. It is also the reason why UCCA has become a comprehensive art center in 798. It is a building complex that is different from typical art museums and urban museums, neither a complete inheritance of history nor a complete prevalence of urban architecture, but a pivot point connecting two points in time, a respect for history and a response to the trend of the times.

The UCCA's renovation, both in terms of its original intention and purpose, reflects, to a certain extent, the changes in Chinese society and the country's attitude towards cultural heritage. This is undoubtedly one of the benchmarks on the way to renovating industrial buildings, and a major step forward in the country's exploration of cultural heritage preservation. the UCCA's renovation does not stop there, as the latest inauguration of a new building at Ullens in 2019 showed us a renewed UCCA, a building that seems to be alive, growing more mature and inclusive over time.

The 2019 renovation of the Ullens, which is what we see now, is mainly an adaptation of the previous building, changing the original relatively closed building system and adding an entrance to the main road. The main body of the building itself has a glass facade on the first floor, which breaks the hermeticity and staleness of the building and gives the building a sense of movement, allowing people to directly see the merchandise on display inside the building, while the interior of the building is enriched by the glass facade, which enhances the sense of light penetration inside the building. This is not only a technical innovation, but also the driving force behind the revitalization of UCCA. Every exhibition in UCCA is combined with the spatial advantages of the building itself and the contents of the exhibition, in order to present the best experience to every visitor.

UCCA has provided a platform for art to be displayed and thus continues to emanate life in the new era of trends

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