Analysis of the Application of Interpretive Theory in the New Sanxingdui Museum

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Abstract: The exhibition based on the Interpretitive Theroy can not only make it easier for the audiences to understand and master the core content of the exhibition, but also help the dissemination efficiency of museum information. In 2021, due to the success of the new round of archaeological excavations, the total number of cultural relics has been further improved, and the existing venues can no longer meet the needs of cultural relics collection and exhibition. The New Sanxingdui Museum is a newly built and open "Site Class" museum in which three major exhibitions are used to explain the content of the theory. Through theoretical analysis, combined with the results of field investigation, this paper analyzed the specific application of Interpretive Theory in the New Sanxingdui Museum in detail, and found that the museum followed the idea of Interpretive Theory in general, but there were still significant problems in details, and proposed possible solutions to these problems.

Keywords: Sanxingdui, interpretive theory, Site Class Museum, curation

1.   Introduction

In 1986, with the discovery of No. 1 and No. 2 sacrificial pits, the unearthed cultural relics were of great scientific and artistic value, making the Guanghan Sanxingdui site gradually enter the public view. In order to better spread the ancient Ba-shu culture, the Sanxingdui Museum was officially built in 1997. In July 2023, the New Sanxingdui Museum was completed and opened, with a total of more than 1500 cultural relics on display here, and its building area reached 54400 square meters [1]. In the existing research, many scholars and media workers have elaborated on the highlights and advantages of the exhibition of the New Sanxingdui Museum, but most of them stay on the surface, and there are few discussions on its shortcomings. Out of the interest for the Sanxingdui Ruins and ancient Ba-Shu culture, the author visited the new museum after its completion as a field research. In order to fill the gap in the current research, this study combines theory with reality, and takes Interpretive Theory as the main theoretical basis to explore how the New Sanxingdui Museum applies Interpretive Theory to exhibition planning.

In this study, firstly, due to the "Site Class Museum" characteristics of the New Sanxingdui Museum, this study conducted a literature review of Interpretive Theory from a multidisciplinary perspective. Secondly, through the results of filed research, this study analyzed in detail how the exhibition of the New Sanxingdui Museum was designed by applying Interpretive Theory. Finally, this study also put forward the unsatisfactory aspects of the exhibition under the framework of Interpretive Theory, and a possible improvement scheme. At the theoretical level, this research can

provide the corresponding theoretical basis for the exhibition construction and transformation of other or similar "Site Class" museums. At the practice level, this research can promote the subsequent transformation and upgrading of the exhibition of the New Sanxingdui Museum.

2. Theoretical Basis

2.1. Connotation of Interpretation

The term "Interpretation" first appeared in Western philosophy, and its initial meaning refers to the process of information dissemination from one party to another or multiple parties. Because of its broad meaning, it quickly broke away from the field of philosophy and was gradually applied in many fields such as history, communication, nature, education and so on [2]. Freeman Tilden, known as the father of modern Interpretation, put forward Interpretive Theory in his research published in 1957, and gave a clear definition of the concept of "Interpretation": It mainly refers to the educational activities aimed at revealing the relationship between things through the use of original things, respondents' own experience and intuitive media [3].

2.2. Interpretation in Different Fields

Although Freeman's definition of "Interpretation" has been able to meet the needs of modern research and practice from a macro perspective, researchers in various disciplines still have differences and different focuses on the understanding of Interpretive Theory, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Comparison of Interpretive Theory in different disciplines.

Researcher	Subject area	The main emphasis on "Interpretation"
Andrew Bowie, et.al (1998)	Philosophy	The relationship between language and epistemology in Contemporary Philosophy [4]
Stuart Hall (1973)	Communication Science	The status of the audience in media communication has changed from passive decoding coding to active decoding [5]
Lowenthal D (1985)	History	Heritage Interpretation from a historical perspective [6]
Susan M. Pearce (1994)	Archaeology	Comprehensive interpretation of history, materials, environment and significance in Archaeology [7]
Tessa Brida (2013)	Museology	Interpretation methods, evaluation and interpretation system in museums [8]

2.3. Connotation and Application of Interpretation Theory

It can be seen from Table 1 that although different disciplines have different emphasis on Interpretive Theory, they all focus on the core elements in the field and describe the process of interconnection between the subjects of different elements. In Museology and Archaeology, these subjects are generally divided into three categories: Objects, that is, exhibits and cultural relics themselves, which are mainly used as disseminators of information. People, that is, the audience of exhibits and cultural relics, are mainly the recipients of information. Media, that is, venues or props carrying "Objects" and "People", are mainly used as methods and means of information dissemination. The interactive process of these three themes has also become the core interpretation system in the museum.

In their research published seven years ago, Jianqiang Yan et al. elaborated on the research status status of museum exhibitions in mainland China from a macro perspective. He pointed out that at that time, a considerable number of exhibitions in Chinese museums still focused on the presentation of "objects", ignoring the role of "People" and "Media" [2]. Nowadays, more and more museums begin to care about the needs of the public and learn to promote exhibits or cultural relics to a diversified audience by more efficient means [9]. It is not difficult to see that Chinese museums have begun to have a trend of "changing from focusing on 'Objects' to focusing on the whole interpretation system". The New Sanxingdui Museum, as a museum that has just been completed and opened, also well conforms to this wave.

In this study, due to the special nature of the "Site Class" museum of the New Sanxingdui Museum, in addition to museology itself, it is relatively closely related to archaeology. My study takes the current situation of Chinese museums as the background, takes museology as the theme, and takes archaeology as the auxiliary to analyze the concrete embodiment of the Interpretive Theory in the New Sanxingdui Museum from a multidisciplinary perspective.

3. Application of Interpretive Theory in the New Sanxingdui Museum

At present, the New Sanxingdui Museum has three permanent exhibition halls, which are "Pursuing Dream In The Century", "Majetic Capital" and "The World Of Humans And Gods". In the " Pursuing Dream In The Century" as hall 1, the overall historical context of the excavation of Sanxingdui ruins is systematically explained from the perspective of archaeology, and the discovery of sacrificial pits 1 and 2, "Awakening The World" is the climax of the whole exhibition hall. The theme of exhibition hall 2, "Majetic Capital", is the unearthed cultural relics. It is divided into different structures according to the material of cultural relics, and discusses its special significance around architecture, social structure, manufacturing and other aspects. Exhibition hall 3, "The World of Humans And Gods", focuses the audience's perspective on the belief, religion and artistic creation in ancient Ba-shu society.

This chapter will start from the three parts of Sanxingdui's "Object", "People" and "Media" to explore their specific embodiments in the three exhibition halls.

3.1. Sanxingdui's Research on "Object"

The "Object" of the museum contains three dimensions: the noumenon of the Object, the derivation of the object, and the circulation of the object. The noumenon of the object mainly refers to all kinds of information contained in the object itself, including the name, material, size, manufacturing process, etc. The derivation of object mainly refers to the functions, uses or meanings derived from objects in the process of use or dissemination that do not belong to them, as well as the relationship between them and other related objects. The circulation of object mainly refers to the new significance derived from objects entering the field of collection and exhibition [2].

The Object on display in hall 1 "Pursuing Dream in The Century" includes three categories: photos of archaeological sites, written records and unearthed cultural relics. The core theme of hall 1 is the display of the archaeological excavation process and the contents of cultural relics protection and restoration. The purpose is to restore and highlight the entire archaeological process. The channels for visitors to obtain information mainly come from the explanatory text, on-site photos and written records on the display boards on the walls around the exhibition hall, while the unearthed cultural relics scattered in the display cabinets of the exhibition hall play an auxiliary role in disseminating information. In addition, due to the particularity of the exhibition content, some of the contents were also presented to the audience in the form of 3D printing, painting, CG, mind map and other multimedia methods. It can be seen that the on-site photos, text records and other exhibits give full

play to the function of the object itself, and the audience can most intuitively obtain the information that the curator wants to convey through the content reflected in the photos and text. As the most direct proof of archaeological excavation, the unearthed cultural relics provide researchers with the required information in the scientific research stage, and develop a new significance in the exhibition stage, the witness of history. But in the derivative dimension of things, hall 1 has no special embodiment.

Hall 2, "Majetic Capital", is quite different from hall 1, which focuses on the unearthed cultural relics in the site. On the whole, it is divided into four categories according to the material: pottery, gold and silver ware, jade ware, and copper ware. Each category is further classified according to the purpose and manufacturing process. Among them, the noumenon of the object as the root is displayed incisively and vividly, and the audience can obtain all the information about the exhibit itself from the exhibition with rigorous logic and careful classification. Moreover, the exhibition of exhibits in hall 2 does not stop at itself. In terms of the derivation of objects, the curators compared the exhibits horizontally and vertically among different categories, the same category, different processes, the same processes, different uses and the same uses through the information on the exhibition board, so that the audience had a profound understanding of the relationship between different cultural relics, and actually embodied the curators' thought of "from micro to macro". Looking back at the exhibition theme of hall 2, it is not difficult to find that the exhibition of cultural relics in this exhibition is not a simple list or combination. Instead, these cultural relics with different materials, uses and processes have constructed the appearance of the entire Bashu Empire, including social structure, culture, sacrificial system, various manufacturing, processing, religion, rule, economy and other aspects, which shows the pluralistic symbiosis, inclusiveness, integration and innovation of Sanxingdui civilization, reflects the significance of material circulation, and highlights the thought from micro to macro again.

The curator's idea of "The World of Humans And Gods" in hall 3 is very similar to that in hall 2. The curator also transmits the information to the audience by logically classifying and comparing the cultural relics. The difference is that hall 3 focuses on a more specific level, religious beliefs. Most of the exhibits on display in hall 1 and hall 2 are daily necessities used by ancient Ba-shu people and nobles, while those on display in hall 3 are mainly works of art and handicrafts. In terms of the noumenon of things, the exhibits in hall 3 reveal the ancient Bashu people's respect for nature and awe of all things in the world. The carvings on the cultural relics range from birds and animals to sacred trees and the sun. The exhibition hall is equipped with very detailed text descriptions. In terms of the derivation of objects, the exhibition also integrates the differences in the use occasions and methods of different utensils among the same belief elements (such as the sun), as well as the correlation between different belief elements. In terms of the circulation of objects, the curators also classified and compared the religious culture of Sanxingdui with that of different or the same period, different or the same region in the exhibition board, helping the audience connect the information provided by the exhibition with their own possible knowledge reserve, and have a more complete understanding of the belief system of ancient Chinese society.

In general, the three exhibition halls of the New Sanxingdui Museum fully reflect the meaning of "Object" in Interpretive Theory, and enable the audience to have a profound understanding of ancient Ba-shu culture from three aspects: the cultural relics themselves, the links between cultural relics, and the significance of cultural relics. However, there is still a serious deficiency in details: the description of the cultural relics is not clear. The display cabinets in the exhibition hall are basically divided into joint display cabinets and independent display cabinets. According to the normal logic, the cultural relics in the independent display cabinets are more representative and significant than those in the joint display cabinets. However, this point is not reflected in any way. Except for the 11 first-class cultural relics in the collection, the description at the bottom of most of the independent

display cabinets only shows the basic information of the cultural relics (such as name, place of excavation, and age). The audience can not directly know where the importance of the cultural relics is reflected, but can only speculate through the existing knowledge. This is the focus of future upgrading.

3.2. Sanxingdui's Research on "Human"

According to Interpretive Theory, the process of interpretation should focus more on the receiving side of information, adhere to the idea of informal education, take into account the dynamic factors such as the knowledge reserve, personality and needs of the diverse public, and stimulate the audience's interest, participation and learning desire in a targeted way [10]. It is not difficult to see that the museum's research on people includes three parts: the audience's expected input, the audience's visiting process and the audience's visiting harvest. As the investigation of the audience involves the internal data of different stages of exhibition planning, due to the limited social resources, this study can only make a brief discussion from the results. This paper argues that the new Sanxingdui Museum has reached a qualified level in the study of people, but it is difficult to call it excellent. This paper will analyze from the above three aspects.

3.2.1. Audience Expectation Research

The New Sanxingdui Museum is a museum for the general public of the whole society. From its early publicity, IP creation, creation topics and Museum positioning, it is not difficult to see that the expected audience source of the New Sanxingdui Museum is extremely wide. It uses rich publicity means to attract people from all walks of life to visit. When the author went to the field research, it was in the off-season. According to the museum, the number of visitors was small at this time, but it still gave me the feeling of "a sea of people", which showed the success of its publicity methods. The New Sanxingdui Museum has also made a preliminary study of audience types for such a wide audience group, which is specifically reflected in the changes in the text description in the exhibition hall. Compared with the old Sanxingdui Museum and most other "Site Class" museums, the New Sanxingdui Museum is particularly easy to understand in terms of text description, and the frequency and number of proper nouns are significantly reduced. In the "Site Class" museums, the contents related to archaeology are often highly professional and relatively obscure to the general public, while the vast majority of the textual explanations in the New Sanxingdui Museum are accessible even to those with low educational levels, as well as to young people and children. Teenagers and children can be seen everywhere in the exhibition hall taking notes and communicating with their peers while visiting, which is not common in museums that are not mainly for teenagers and children (such as science and technology museums).

3.2.2. Audiences' Visit Process

As mentioned above, the new Sanxingdui Museum attaches great importance to the dissemination of information, which can be reflected in both its research on "Object" and its preliminary research on audience expectations. And this is exactly what the New Sanxingdui Museum has done to "separate" from the audience. Different from western society, although some Chinese visitors are eager to gain knowledge and insight through visiting museums, in fact, more of them still have a casual attitude. These visitors do not care what the curators want to tell themselves through the exhibition, let alone what they have gained through visiting museums. They care more about the quality of their visiting experience. Through the observation, more than 60% of the audience just want to see these cultural relics that are popular on the Internet. They are satisfied with observing the cultural relics themselves with their own eyes, taking photos of them with cameras, and even taking photos with them and

posting them to social media. As researchers, we should not subjectively criticize this part of the audience, but should try to meet the needs of the majority of the audience as much as possible. As mentioned above, the display cabinets in the museum are divided into joint display cabinets and independent display cabinets. People are aware that the cultural relics in the independent display cabinets are more important and are scrambling to surround the display cabinets. At the same time, people wanted to get a glimpse of the artifacts and take pictures of them, which led to long queues for viewing and taking pictures and made the whole exhibition hall chaotic. The curator should predict the behavior and psychology of the audience in the early stage, and conduct field research through observation, questionnaire and other methods in the follow-up. Under Interpretive Theory, the starting point and foothold of the whole exhibition are to meet the needs first, then talk about the harvest, pay attention to the visiting process.

3.2.3. Audiences' Visit Harvest

For researchers, practitioners and the general public with a strong desire to learn, the new Sanxingdui Museum has achieved remarkable results in information dissemination. The display board is interspersed with a large number of text and picture descriptions, including historical facts, theoretical knowledge, practical results and other multi-level content, which can help audiences form an extremely integrated knowledge framework of Sanxingdui and ancient Ba-shu culture. For ordinary tourists, their harvest may come from outside the exhibition, such as cultural and creative products, visiting experience, etc., which will not be discussed in depth here.

In a word, the New Sanxingdui Museum has investigated the types of visitors, but it has not mastered the characteristics of different groups of visitors. Since it has just opened, there is no follow-up survey on the audiences' visit activities at present. The museum has successfully made enough people enter the museum, so how to make more visitors leave the museum with satisfaction is one of the key issues to be considered in the future of the New Sanxingdui Museum.

3.3. Sanxingdui's Research on "Media"

Information dissemination in museums is mainly reflected on two levels: exhibition space and informal learning. The exhibition space is one of the main media for the museum to disseminate information. The audience can only move and stay in the space designed by the curator and cannot exercise their subjective initiative to a large extent. Therefore, a reasonable exhibition space should be designed to avoid an adverse experience for the audience. Informal science is that the vast majority of visitors entering the museum are voluntary. Curators should try to stimulate the interest of their visitors through special media so as to achieve more efficient dissemination of information.

In the setting of exhibition space, we should follow the principle of constructivism [11]. Curators need to provide the audience with a learning environment that is as reductive or similar as possible. The New Sanxingdui Pavilion is excellent in this respect. Take exhibition hall 2 as an example: First, the theme of the exhibition hall is "Majetic Capital". Through the situational text bedding, multiple units of "Bountiful Land of Ancient Shu" (ancestors' life scene), "Constructions Of Ancient Shu Capital" (the meteorological structure of the royal capital), "Supreme Ruler" (reflecting the community composition, hierarchy, and power symbols of ancient Ba Shu society through cultural relics) and "The Fertile Land of the Duguang Area" (restored to the ancient Chengdu plain) are flowing in clouds and water, jointly depicting the magnificent scene of the ancient Ba-Shu capital. Secondly, the exhibition also combines large and small situations. In the middle of the exhibition, the curator constructed a half-scene painting showing the entire Ba-shu empire through 3D printing, screens, screens, projectors and other contents. In such a big situation, the curator also constructed small situations such as sacrificial pits, rivers, cities and towns in order through light and shadow,

sound effects, video and other media. Large and small scenes complement each other, fit the display content, and integrate with the theme of the whole exhibition hall. In addition, the whole atmosphere of the exhibition hall is also very exquisite. For example, the use of different colors of ambient lights, display boards and cabinets when displaying different categories of cultural relics, and the centralized display of exhibits can also give the audience a strong sense of oppression. It can be seen that the setting of the exhibition space in the New Sanxingdui Museum allows the audience to immerse themselves in the real experience brought by the situation in the process of appreciating cultural relics, reading instructions and watching videos or scenes.

In the concept of informal learning, museums should focus on the interactive exploration provided to the audience and create a positive learning experience for them [11]. I can see the efforts made by the new Sanxingdui Museum in this regard, but the overall level is not satisfactory. The exhibition provides the audience with some contents that can interact with the exhibits. For example, the jade display area of hall 2, provides the audience with several large-scale jade raw materials that can be touched at will. At the end of hall 2, the dynamic Chengdu Plain, which changes with time, is simulated through a 360-degree surround screen. The audience can feel the changes of the four seasons and the charm of the natural scenery of the Chengdu Plain. In addition, some exhibition halls are also equipped with "Children's Corner", "Interactive Screen" and other contents to provide better learning methods and space for young audiences. On the one hand, due to the exhibit characteristics of "Site Class" museums, the lack of interactive content and weak interactivity of exhibitions are irresistible factors. On the other hand, a core element of "ruins" museums is the publicity of the specific history displayed, and people's understanding of history can't just stay in passive acceptance [12]. The museum should try to stimulate the audience's own thinking about history. The relics of Sanxingdui have been shrouded in mystery since their excavation. There are still some unexplained mysteries, and these unsolved mysteries are exactly one of the main driving forces for some visitors to visit. The New Sanxingdui Museum should summarize and refine these issues that have not yet formed a final conclusion in the academic community, and express the academic discussion on these issues on the same plane in a popular form. Although the audiences cannot obtain the answers to the questions through the exhibition, they can follow the footsteps of scholars to form their own thinking.

4.   Conclusion

The theory of interpretation has been fully applied in the new Sanxingdui Museum. In terms of "Object", Sanxingdui follows the exhibition ideas of Chinese traditional "Site Class" museums, with reasonable classification and logical smoothness, making the museum a qualified information disseminator. In terms of "People", the performance of Sanxingdui was somewhat unsatisfactory. Although the museum attracted a large number of audiences, the audiences' experience could not be well guaranteed. Sanxingdui needs to focus on the receiver of the information in the subsequent upgrading, and make changes to the existing exhibition content from the perspective of the audience in a down-to-earth manner. In terms of "Media", the exhibition can surprise audiences in many places, so that the audiences can feel the ingenuity of the curators in designing the layout of the exhibition hall and the exhibition form of the exhibits, opening up the channels of information dissemination, and ensuring the harvest of the audience after visiting a certain extent. Unfortunately, it failed to arouse the audience's thinking at a deeper level, and the depth of the exhibition was somewhat insufficient. The limitations of "Site Class" museums may be one of the fundamental reasons for the creation of the New Sanxingdui Museum exhibition. In the future, museum practitioners should not only focus on the combination of Museology and archaeology, but also thoroughly open their horizons, open up communication channels, promote the integration of multiple disciplines, and promote the Public Transformation of academic research, so as to get rid of the shackles brought by the type of museum, so that the whole human society can be upgraded.

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