

# Research on Public Art in Historical and Cultural Blocks

## -- A Case Study of The Wide and Narrow Alley in Chengdu

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### Abstract

**With the accelerating pace of urbanization, the cultural value of historical and cultural blocks has attracted more and more attention from the society. The historical and cultural block embodies the culture left over from thousands of years of development of a city. As the name card of a city, it has great influence on the economy, culture, politics and life of the city. As a new art form, public art is involved in the reconstruction and protection of historical and cultural blocks, and plays a decisive role in the construction and development of historical and cultural blocks. Taking The Wide and Narrow Alley in Chengdu as an example, this paper expounds the involvement of different forms of public art in the construction of historical and cultural blocks, and explores the role and significance of public art in urban cultural tourism.**

### Keywords

**Public Art; Historical and Cultural Block; Development Significance.**

### 1. Introduction

Today, with the rapid development of science and technology, the scale of urban construction is also expanding. As a part of urban planning, historical and cultural blocks play an indelible role in sublimating urban cultural value. With the rise of the tertiary industry, historical and cultural blocks have become the focus of the cultural tourism industry and gradually appear in people's lives in the form of tourist attractions. In order to improve the image and popularity of the city, the combination of public art and historical and cultural blocks has become an indispensable element in the transformation of historical and cultural blocks, so that there is more interaction and interest between the public and the historical and cultural blocks.

### 2. The Historical Origin of the Wide and Narrow Alley

Located in Qingyang District, Chengdu City, Sichuan Province, The Wide and Narrow Alley is composed of three parallel lanes, including Wide Alley, Narrow Alley and Wells Alley, as well as the residential quadrangle courtyards between the lanes. It is one of the three historical and cultural protection zones in Chengdu city, and also an ancient street of the Qing Dynasty that is relatively well preserved in Chengdu city. The Wide and Narrow Alley was formed by continuous development, evolution, accumulation and integration from the earliest "less city" to "Man city" in the Qing Dynasty and then to "New city" in the Republic of China. From "little city" to "Man city", the Qing government on the basis of less city ruins built the city, and soldiers stationed and live in here, for the sake of their thoughts and adapt to the living environment of home, they will live in north yard built courtyard form, therefore, width lane is also known as the north alley culture and architecture in the southern "orphan". To the period of the republic of China, the soldiers dispersed, demolition of the old wall, some western architectural cases have begun to emerge, broke the spatial pattern of the original city, in the traditional Chinese

life also gradually into the western way of life, the original with characteristic of strong north "Hutong city" gradually evolved into a "modernity" of urban space. In the development history of The Wide and Narrow Alley, spatial forms, residential groups and lifestyles were changing. However, from "less city", "Man city" to "new city", certain lifestyles and cultural charm with inherent correlation were accumulated. The life attitude of folk houses in western Sichuan was integrated with the architectural form of quadrangle courtyard in the north. Sichuan region characteristic leisurely and comfortable and easy and comfortable way of life and advantageous geographical condition mutual echo, thus formed the Sichuan people's freedom, happiness consists in contentment, leisurely and comfortable and easy life appeal and character, and "slow" and "idle" way of life and value orientation is the width alley culture essence of tone and personality.

### 3. The Expression Form of Public Art in The Wide and Narrow Alley

With the improvement of people's living conditions and aesthetic awareness, public art begins to involve itself in urban planning and construction in various forms, playing a subtle catalytic role in the ever-changing times and people's thriving quality life. As a historical and cultural block with the life mark of "old Chengdu", The Wide and Narrow Alley is gradually combined with public art in the process of development and construction. Through different forms of public art, the city name card attached with Chengdu regional culture is better displayed to the whole world.

#### (1) Public sculpture

In terms of its development, sculpture is the most widely used and intuitive art form among public art forms. In the transformation of the historic district, the artist refines the potential cultural characteristics of the local area and recreates the historical scene and life style in the form of sculpture. Most sculptures in historical and cultural blocks take folk customs and history as themes, and combine local historical culture, humanistic characteristics, ethnic customs and other cultural factors to set the works in public Spaces such as entrances, streets and squares. In the reconstruction project of The Historical district of The Wide and Narrow Alley, many public sculptures in the form of round carving and relief were designed. Taking "Wide and Narrow Nine Walls" as an example, there are altogether nine works in this group, which reflect the historical restatement of The Wide and Narrow Alley and the reproduction of the life of Chengdu city. The work of thinking of riding a horse in "Wide and Narrow Nine Walls" (Figure 1) shows the posture of a horse in relief form. This series of works is to show the life of the military academy during the period of the "Man city", such as the life scenes of living and training. In the "Man city" period, the officers and men are riding travel, the horse is a part of life, is also the embodiment of the array, and once reached its national wealth to the later decline of corruption, the existence of the horse has been throughout the timer shaft, the horse as a witness to the width alley historical change, the width of the alley has the very important status in the history. In the series of the "Wide and Narrow Nine Walls", there is also a relief work reflecting modern life -- Echo of old House (Figure 2). Most of these relief works depict the images of market life of Chengdu people and create the living atmosphere of "old Chengdu". Many time-sensitive objects are "embedded" on the wall, such as sewing machines, stone mills, record players and a series of old objects. The old objects form a strong contrast with the new era. While enjoying the convenience brought by the rapid development of the era, we can also recall the "slow time" of the past. This kind of public sculpture with popular language and form of expression, it through to the understanding of the history, the perception of life, firmly grasp the historical humanities factors, only when the works reflect the real scene, create a vivid historical scenes and life style, to make people a sense of belonging and identity, make a sculpture has deeper cultural implication.



**Figure 1.** The work of thinking of riding a horse in "Wide and Narrow Nine Walls"



**Figure 2.** Echo of old House

## (2) Installation art

From the perspective of the public experience, in order to meet the needs of people's material experience and spiritual experience in today's era, installation art begins to intervene in the public life as a public art form with interactive, experiential and comprehensive characteristics. Installation art, as a rising star of the art form and transformation of the historical and cultural streets, by combining xi folk cultural history, geographical environment, people and other regional culture characteristics, enhance the value of the historical and cultural blocks, as well as art added connotation and significance, has realized the culture, space close contact with the audience. The work of breathing tile wall (figure 3) in a combination of artistic expression activity, work is divided into physical tile wall area and interactive installation area, physical tile wall area is composed of tiles on top of a wall, interactive installation area is between a park also placed more than 60000 of the special material of metal bar, The walls sag as gravity changes, allowing each push to squeeze the steel rods against the grinding tool to produce a vague tile pattern. Tiled wall is not only a cultural element, but also a kind of emotional sustenance, an expression of the feelings of alley and courtyard. The space enclosed by tiled wall symbolizes the place where we live. The infinite continuity of tiles is the continuation of association, which may make you miss home, think about the stories happening under the eaves, or feel the space of infinite circulation. In Sichuan-Chongqing area, there is an exclusive word

"rake ear", which means a name for men who are afraid of their wives. This name is a kind of praise for Sichuan-Chongqing men, which not only reflects men's respect and understanding of women's characteristics, but also a potential performance of regional folk customs. "Ear Rake" (Figure 4) is based on this potential folk custom as the source of creation. Through the analysis and interpretation of the character characteristics of "Ear rake", the work presents a form between two-dimensional and three-dimensional, with both planar images and three-dimensional vehicle models. This kind of art form can let people recall the historical scenes of the 1970s and 1980s by watching the plane images, and can feel the market life of the old society by sitting on the parking space. It is an art work with both regional and interactive features. Installation art to create a full of interactive fun in historical and cultural atmosphere and cultural blocks to create the way of "man and object are one", at the same time, in guiding the public to behavior involved in the works of art, in the process of the interaction between people and work width alley scene has become a charming art landscape, in the historical and cultural block works jointly with the public to participate in the whole process of the art intervention. In the transformation of historical and cultural blocks, interactive installation art stimulates the public's interest in participating in block activities, creates an effective channel for sensory experience and spiritual interaction in a behavioral way, and makes the cultural communication form of historical blocks more three-dimensional, vivid and comprehensive.



**Figure 3.** Breathing tile wall



**Figure 4.** "Ear Rake"



### (3) Art activities

Sun zhenhua mentioned in *The Era of Public Art* that "Public art is a process art, which focuses on the process rather than the result of the work. In the form of expression, public art is often reflected as a process of social practice and public activities." [5] From this point of view, open art activities frequently occurring in people's life are also one of the public art forms. Width alley as the "gold card" of Chengdu city image, also as "funny" of Chengdu city life, in order to promote the quality of urban life and vigor, as well as promote the development of historical and cultural blocks, width alley art activities every year, culture performance, craftsmanship, the performances and other cultural activities, the public to participate in the project process, As the role and object of activities, the historical district culture becomes more open and creative. For example, the first Midsummer Space Art Week was held in 2017, during which Chinese and foreign artists interacted with the audience through performance art, musical performance, joint graffiti and other performance ways. The audience could participate in artistic activities and interact with the urban space. The art activities to establish good drama performance between intimate interaction, to experience the immersive feel with vivid and vitality of art, the public through experience the art in public space, thus further build social relationships, more healthy, correct energy also add charm to the city of "humanity" in Chengdu. The way of art activities is free and spontaneous. For example, there are many three-dimensional and static bronze sculptures in the Wide and Narrow Alley scenic spot, and there are often some "living sculptures" that can interact with people. They are a group of performance art lovers, and through this way of activity, they can enhance the intimacy with the citizens and the city. Art activity is a kind of interesting, interactive and participatory art form, context in shaping and maintaining the historical and cultural blocks at the same time, also stimulate the vitality of traditional culture with the attitude of innovation, for the protection of the historical and cultural blocks, the development, the research provides a more feasible path.

## **4. Public Art Helps the Development of Cultural Tourism Industry in Wide and Narrow Lane**

From wen gen products, public art has all kinds of types, such as sculpture, installation, landscape, etc., these products have rich cultural connotation, can turn cultural symbols and expression, and be able to close to the masses, with relatively simple attitude of these types of products after processing, tourism is a good way to translate into tourism products. The integration of public art into cultural tourism greatly expands the ideas and sources of tourism product innovation and realizes the more diversified and unique development of cultural tourism products. Therefore, when public art is integrated into cultural tourism projects and cultural and creative products are exhibited, it can not only improve the artistic and economic value of tourism projects, but also play the role of spokesmen for the city image, or develop into a city landmark, which is of great significance to enhance the city's brand awareness.

In terms of the subject of creation, the subject of creation should be expanded to allow all people, not only professional artists, to participate in public art. With the expansion of the field of innovation and the expansion of creative subjects, everyone can become an artist and a creator of tourism products, and the speed of innovation is also increased. Different creative subjects have different knowledge backgrounds, cultural expression ways and different perceptions of the same thing. After being integrated into cultural tourism projects, it can provide different perspectives and creative ideas for the development of cultural tourism, and finally bring rich and diverse cultural tourism products. The expansion of creative subjects can effectively improve the speed and quality of innovation and promote the innovation of cultural tourism projects.

In terms of creation methods, when public art is involved in historical and cultural blocks, not only the creation subjects expand from experts to the general public, but also the creation methods change from single to rich. Traditional tourism projects are made by experts after investigation, which is a relatively single creation path. With the integration of public art, the creation path can be changed from experts to the whole people, and project assignment to public opinion crowdfunding. With the participation and interaction of all staff, a harmonious and harmonious tourism scene has been formed. The creation of public art needs to be conceived and creative according to the actual space environment, and appropriate materials and expressions are selected for artistic creation. The creation method can be integrated into tourism to display local characteristics in a more suitable way, and art works can become a symbol of the region.

## 5. Conclusion

Historical and cultural blocks to retain the original form of residents residence, retained the era replace legacy of memory, become a can let people place oneself among them feel "living museum", its protection and development has always been the hot spot in the country, government and tourism related departments, era of development to the 21st century, when the public art are involved in the protection and development of historical and cultural blocks, On the premise of preserving historical traces, a large number of modern art works are integrated into the historical and cultural blocks, which is the need of cultural inheritance and the pursuit of quality life. Public art brings a new form of cultural experience to the public, innovates the traditional means of cultural protection, and makes a beneficial exploration and special contribution to the sustainable development of historical and cultural blocks.

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