

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ART MUSEUM SPACE AS EMOTIONAL HEALING

Yi Qiong Juan

*Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti
Malaysia Sarawak, MALAYSIA*

Wan Jamarul Imran Bin Wan Abdullah Thani

*Faculty of Applied and Creative Arts, Universiti
Malaysia Sarawak, MALAYSIA*

Corresponding Author
yiqiongjuan@163.com

Abstract: This article explores the emotional healing function of art museum space and its potential impact on people's daily lives. Drawing on the theories of emotional therapy and art therapy, it is believed that art museum spaces can provide visitors with a unique transformation experience, helping them regulate emotions such as anxiety, boredom, and fatigue. This article explores how the layout of artist works and exhibition halls creates a visual and emotional experience through specific case studies, literature research, and questionnaire surveys. This experience is fundamentally different from the repetitive and rigorous spatial sense in daily life. Through the creativity of artists, different artistic spaces are created, bringing a new experience to the audience, allowing visitors to feel the charm of artistic creativity and obtain beautiful emotional value. Through case studies, it is proposed that good creative spaces can provide emotional therapy for visitors. Ultimately, this article demonstrates the potential of art museum spaces in changing emotional states and improving overall happiness. This provides new discussions on the application and significance of the creative industry in community residents' lives in the future, and proposes research directions for the development of the creative industry in the future.

Keywords: Emotional healing; Art museum space; Art therapy; Well-being

1. INTRODUCTION

Regarding art therapy: Art therapy, also known as art therapy, is a type of psychological therapy. General psychotherapy often uses language as the main medium of communication and treatment, while art therapy has the most distinctive characteristics, mainly providing artistic materials, activity experiences, and other methods of treatment. For those who study the struggle between human physical pain and spiritual demons, visual art is the most direct and intriguing part of the vast sea of wisdom, guiding researchers to explore and verify the ways and methods for humans to overcome physical and mental difficulties. In the field of psychotherapy, this unique corner is called art therapy or art therapy. Emotional anxiety and tension have become common emotional problems in modern society. Research has shown that moderate anxiety can promote people's work and creativity, but excessive anxiety not only causes panic in people's lives, but also reduces their work ability and creativity. How to moderately alleviate people's anxiety and tension through effective relaxation? The author found that the behavior of visiting art museum spaces or art museums can inadvertently regulate people's emotions, allowing them to relieve tension in real life and work through immersive experiences in exhibition spaces during the visit process. For example, in contemporary art exhibitions, the artist breaks away from the original realistic pattern in space and matches colors, allowing the audience to inadvertently break free from the stereotypical realistic spatial environment and immerse themselves in the artistic space created by the artist. This kind of transformation is naturally formed unconsciously, so the audience does not feel very deliberate, but rather forms a moderate relaxation and curiosity during the visit, achieving the function of regulating emotions. Therefore, this article analyzes through case studies to demonstrate the effective role of art museum art spaces in emotional therapy. This article will conduct a questionnaire survey on the contemporary art exhibition visitors at Hunan Art Museum and conduct qualitative data analysis on about 200 collected data to explore the significance of creative space in art museums for emotional therapy of the general population.

2. Experiencing Art in the Contemporary Space

2.1 Research on the role of museums and galleries in art therapy:

According to Chatterjee and Noble (2013), "The days when museums were seen as static and inert are gone forever. A more contemporary perspective explains how museums provide an interactive environment that can contribute positively to today's happiness" (Chatterjee and Noble 2013: x). The historical, anthropological and cognitive science surveys of the multi sensory museum called by Levent and Pascual

Leone (2014) further emphasized the therapeutic potential of tactile contact between tourists and museum artifacts (Chatterjee 2008, Classen 2007), and analyzed the therapeutic effect of the museum from a medical perspective (Silverman 2010: 2-4). This indicates that museum art space is of great significance in improving people's living standards.

In 2014, the Museum and Gallery Research Center (RCMG) launched a one-year behavioral research project funded by the British Arts Council and headquartered at the Museum Research Institute at the University of Leicester. Later, a book by Dodd and Jones (2014) titled 'Body and Mind: How Museums Affect Health and Happiness' was published. The purpose of the project was to explain how museums respond to changes in public health conditions, improve people's health levels through the use of collections, eliminate health inequality, and actively promote the realization of public health.

Research shows that museums have long promoted social integration at the individual, community and social levels (Leonard 2010; Sandell 2003). Personally, visiting museums can enhance self-esteem, self-confidence, creativity and develop intelligence. In addition, people have also discussed how important it is to escape from daily activities and responsibilities and cultivate sentiment in museums. At the community level, museums can play the role of catalyst for social rebirth, thus enabling communities to enhance their autonomy, self-confidence and skills to enhance their control over life and the development of their communities (Sandell 2003). Social input and the consequent reduction of social isolation are regarded as important components of health (Cherry et al. 2013). By reproducing these participating communities in collections and exhibits, museums have the potential to increase inclusiveness, respect and respect among communities, and challenge stereotypes (Sandell 2003).

Today, museums all over the world are expanding their social roles, functions and objectives, forming alliances with health, welfare, social services and other institutions to strive to reverse disadvantages and achieve social results (Sandell 2003).

2.2 Theoretical research on artistic emotional therapy:

The relationship between aesthetics and emotion is very significant and Rong (1999) mentioned, "If there is no subjective sense of pleasure, there is no matter whether it is beautiful or not" (Li Rong 1999: 308). According Kant in Rong (1999), "the aesthetics mainly depends on emotion, and the main content of aesthetic judgment is a certain subjective attitude and emotion (pleasure and unhappiness) of individual things, not a concept" (Li Rong 1999: 374). Therefore, the process of aesthetic judgment is not only the process of intellectual activities, but also the process of emotional activities.

In aesthetic practice, people form specific perceptual images in their minds through aesthetic feeling, perception, and often through association and imagination. According to Xinhan, "Aesthetic psychological activity is mainly a kind of image thinking activity, which is always accompanied by and depends on the image. The main form of this image is aesthetic imagery" (Chen Xinhan 2002: 53). That is why in aesthetic representation, the aesthetic imagery and image have similarities, and both have representativeness, external integrity, vividness and generality.

Meanwhile, Minmin (2004) stated that, "Beauty is not only concrete and vivid, but also has a strong appeal. It directly appeals to people's feelings, moving, motivating and pleasing people with feelings. Anything beautiful can stimulate people's feelings and make people get great pleasure and satisfaction in spirit. Emotion is the most active factor in aesthetic psychology, which makes the whole aesthetic process permeated with emotion" (Huang Minmin 2004: 253). Therefore, aesthetic activities are always accompanied by feelings and emotions.

Xinhan (2022) mentioned, "In the process of aesthetic appreciation and creation of beauty, from aesthetic intuition to aesthetic imagination, judgment to the will to create beauty, aesthetic emotion and emotion are permeated everywhere. It is the central network of various psychological contents, forms and structures in the process of aesthetic appreciation and creation of beauty" (Chen Xinhan 2022: 48).

In summary, the important role of museums in art and emotional therapy has been fully emphasized in existing research, and relevant scholars have also conducted research on the theory of art in emotional therapy. However, most of the current research on art therapy mainly focuses on the medical field of psychotherapy. Some scholars have conducted research and argumentation on how to use museums for emotional therapy, but specific cases related to it are still rare. Therefore, this paper mainly explores the emotional therapy of art and demonstrates it through case studies.

3. METHODOLOGY

By consulting relevant literature, there is a solid research foundation both domestically and internationally on the impact of museum space on people's psychological recovery. Even in authoritative medical literature, there are cases of museum space being used for practical treatment. However, this article mainly focuses on the spiritual relaxation and healing of museum spaces among ordinary people, investigating the relaxation of daily stress during museum visits and the improvement of people's artistic feelings, and analyzing the positive role of museum spaces in public education from a social perspective.

Firstly, give a brief introduction to the exhibition space supported by this survey: Below are several exhibits from the 'Hunan Region–Corner' exhibition space exhibited by Hunan Art Museum, providing a sense of aesthetic space and pleasure that is indistinguishable from reality based on the creative intention and the audience's feelings.

'Falling' (see Figure 1) by Xiao Bin, uses materials such as a plumb bob and fine sand as elements. Countless plumb hammers quickly fall, creating a strong sense of oppression. When they are about to fall to the ground, they are instantly dissipated, causing ripples that are intertwined with hardness and softness, dissolving and merging. When watching this work, the audience creates a contrast with the real environment, feels the visual impact of colors and forms, and thus gives people an aesthetic pleasure.



Figure 1. Falling by Xiao Bin

'The Creator' (see Figure 2) by Ren Zhen is based on an elephant as the prototype. Elephant "is a symbol bestowed on the mother by the family, as the elephant is the creator of the forest. The other side of the work is vaguely carved, seemingly commemorating the birth of a baby cow. Due to the transformation of identity and role in childbirth, Ren Zhen dissolved some conflicts between family and creation into a beautiful future. Children have been the source of energy for an artist's mother identity for a long time, as they are immature and pure. This work is colorful and childlike, and the design of the installation is different from that in real life, giving people a sense of childlike romance.



Figure 2. The Founder by Ren Zhen

'Mirror of Time and Space' (see Figure 3) by Ling Hui, reconstructs and arranges 90 ocean paintings of different times, regions, whole or parts into a large scale image of dozens of square meters, extending infinitely under the reflection of the mirrors on both sides. In creation, sea and sky have become important carriers for exploring the experience of time and space. The sea can be seen as a mirror of time, a recorder of physical time, reflecting different colors under different light conditions, allowing people to appreciate and develop broad and open-minded emotions inside.

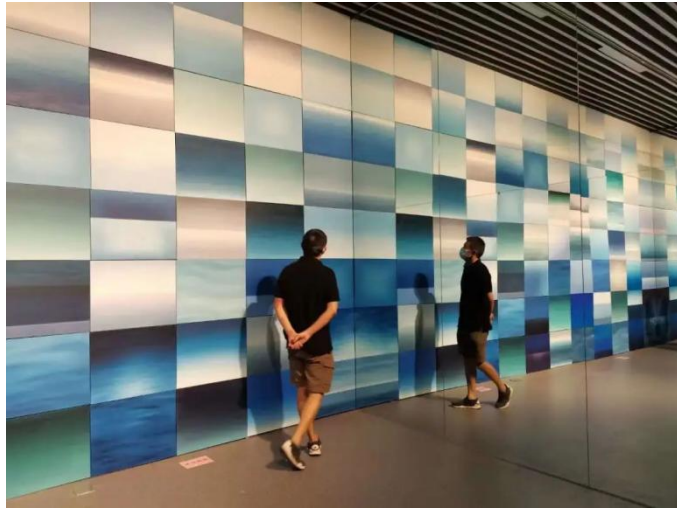


Figure 3. Mirror of Time and Space by Ling Hui

'Fantasy Shadow' (see Figure 4) by Wang Feng, intervenes on ordinary stainless steel plates, exploring the power struggle between the creator's body and materials, exploring the possibilities of material energy conversion, individual and whole, confrontation and dissolution, and the extension of virtual and real space, presenting a new visual experience between control and loss of control.



Figure 4. Fantasy Shadow series by Wang Feng

Secondly, regarding the specific situation and analysis of this questionnaire survey: This topic has set up a set of questionnaires through relevant research to conduct research on ordinary people visiting art exhibitions. Firstly, in order to ensure the emotional treatment effect of the audience on the creative space of the art museum, the questionnaire survey questions are mainly focused on the audience experience after visiting the exhibition space. For example, what was your first impression of the

exhibition space? How do you feel about the design of the exhibition space? What are your feelings about visiting art and creative exhibitions? What is your mood after watching this exhibition? Conduct an investigation into the issue. The form of answering questions is multiple-choice and free writing. In addition to the questions provided on the questionnaire, participants in the survey can also freely provide feedback on the visiting experience. Secondly, in order to collect the experiences of different types of people on the emotional healing function of artistic and creative spaces, most of the participants in the questionnaire were ordinary visitors to the art exhibition, who came from the surrounding community, office workers with a certain interest in the art exhibition, and students from universities around the art museum. The age group mainly includes young people (20-30 years old) and middle-aged and young people (31-45 years old); Thirdly, the form of sending out the questionnaire: This questionnaire is conducted in the form of an electronic questionnaire through a mobile mini program. After conducting the questionnaire survey, the information of the audience participating in the questionnaire will be synchronized to the platform that distributes the questionnaire. The platform will conduct preliminary data analysis on the collected questionnaire, and then further analyze the data through the project team to obtain the survey results.

4. EMPIRICAL RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

The following are the results of this questionnaire survey (see Table5: Appendix: Questionnaire Survey) : The survey was conducted from August to October 2022, and more than 200 valid questionnaires were distributed to visitors to the "Hunan Region Corner" exhibition at the Hunan Art Museum. Among them, the first question is about the first impression of the exhibition:77.78% of the audience believe that art exhibitions are visually novel and can attract their attention after visiting (see Table1) ; 55.56% of the audience is attracted by the gap between the display space and real life (see Table1) ; In the second theme, 88.89% of people believe that many artistic scenes interact well with the audience and have an artistic sense (see Table 2) ; In the third question, 66.67% of the audience believe that watching an exhibition makes them feel relaxed (see Table 3) ; I feel that the artist's creations have brought me a visual and spiritual pleasure experience; The last question is the mood after watching the exhibition: 66.67% of the audience think the exhibition is very relaxing and give them a break in their hearts and eyes (see Table 4) . Through the above data analysis, most visitors believe that the art creativity exhibition gives people a new feeling in the visual sense, which can attract their visual senses, thus opening up the fixed environment that is unchanged from real life to attract visitors to jump out of the stereotype of life when visiting the art exhibition and immerse themselves in the atmosphere created by

the art space. At the same time, due to the interactivity of the artistic and creative space, visitors can participate in it, thus having a certain degree of interactivity to gain an exhibition participation experience. Thirdly, during the visit, the majority of the audience felt the relaxation brought by the exhibition, which can also be concluded that the art space did indeed bring a sense of pleasure to the audience emotionally, relieving the pressure brought by busy work and life. It also has a certain emotional regulation effect, allowing the mind and eyes to relax after visiting the exhibition. It is not difficult to see that a creative art exhibition can bring a relaxed and joyful viewing experience to the ordinary audience. When watching the exhibition, due to the change of space, the audience will have a pleasant emotional experience in the process of visiting. Through visit and interaction, they will experience emotional restoration in the process of watching the exhibition. Of course, this may also be adjusted with different exhibition themes. Through research and data analysis, this case demonstrates that the museum art space has a healing function for visitors' emotions.

Table 1: What was your first impression of the 'Hunan Region–Corner' Exhibition?

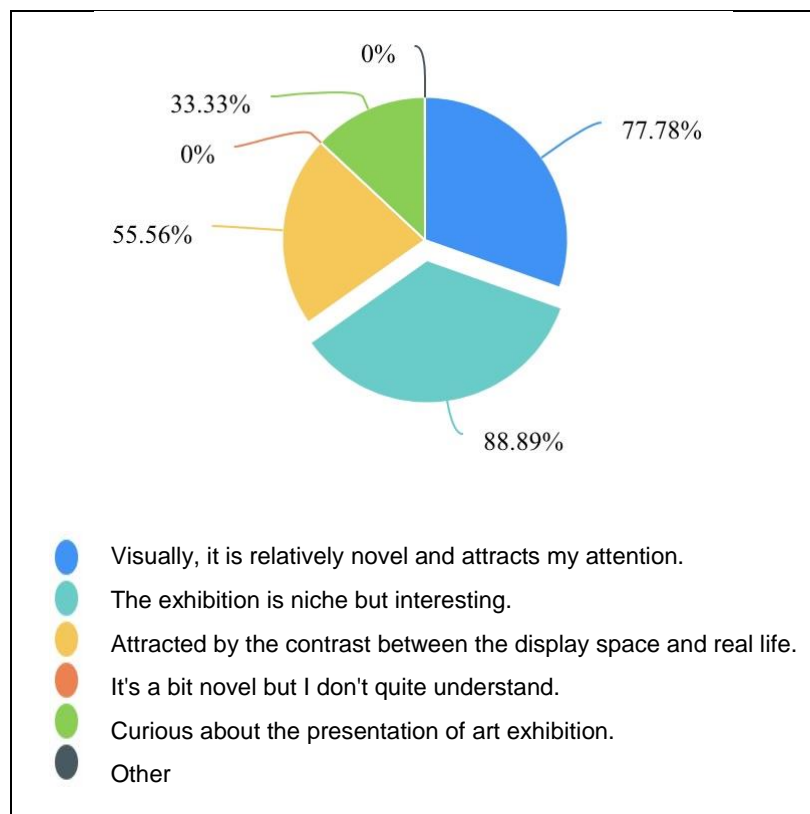


Table 2: How do you feel about the design of the exhibition space?

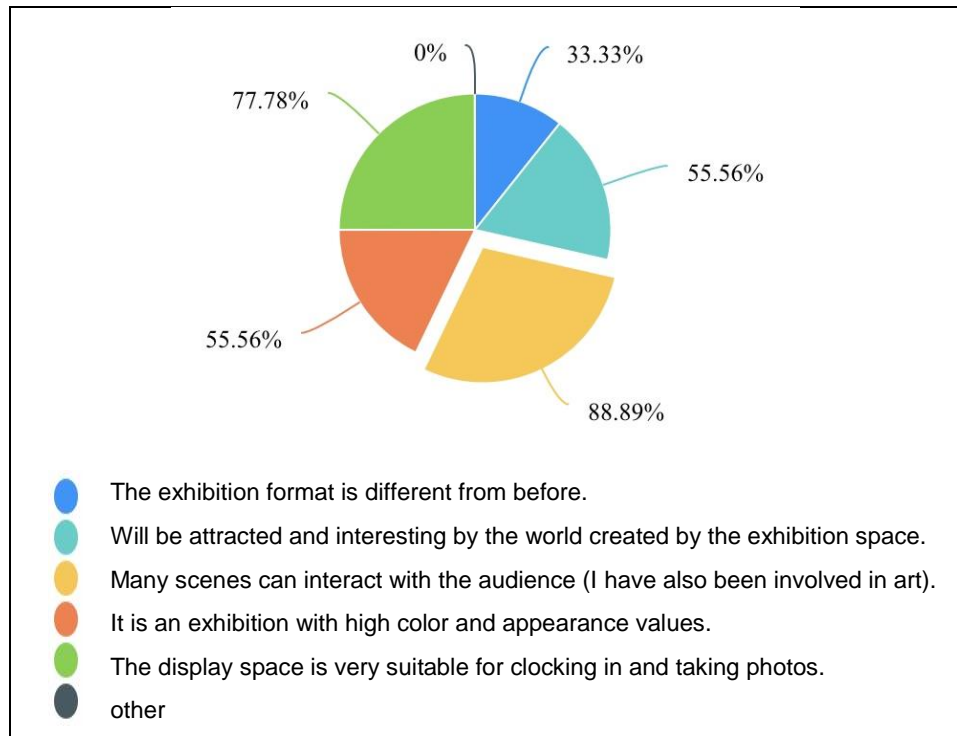


Table 3: What are your feelings about visiting art and creative exhibitions?

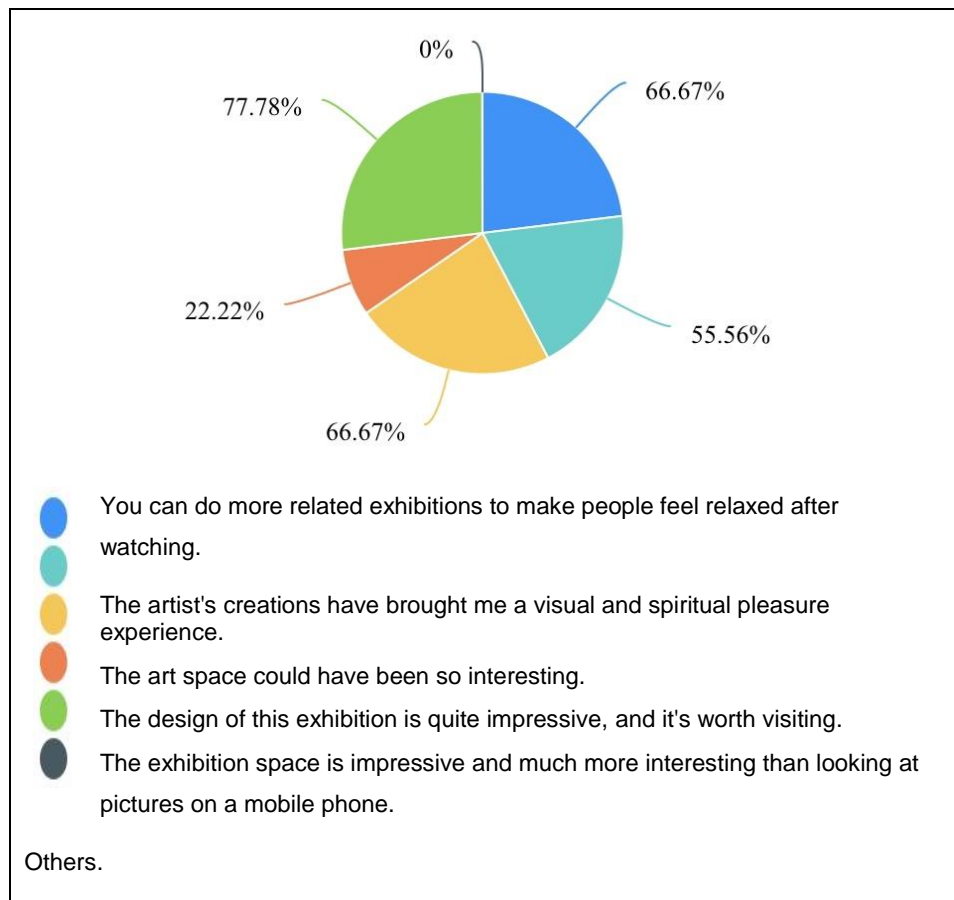


Table 4: What is your mood after watching this exhibition?

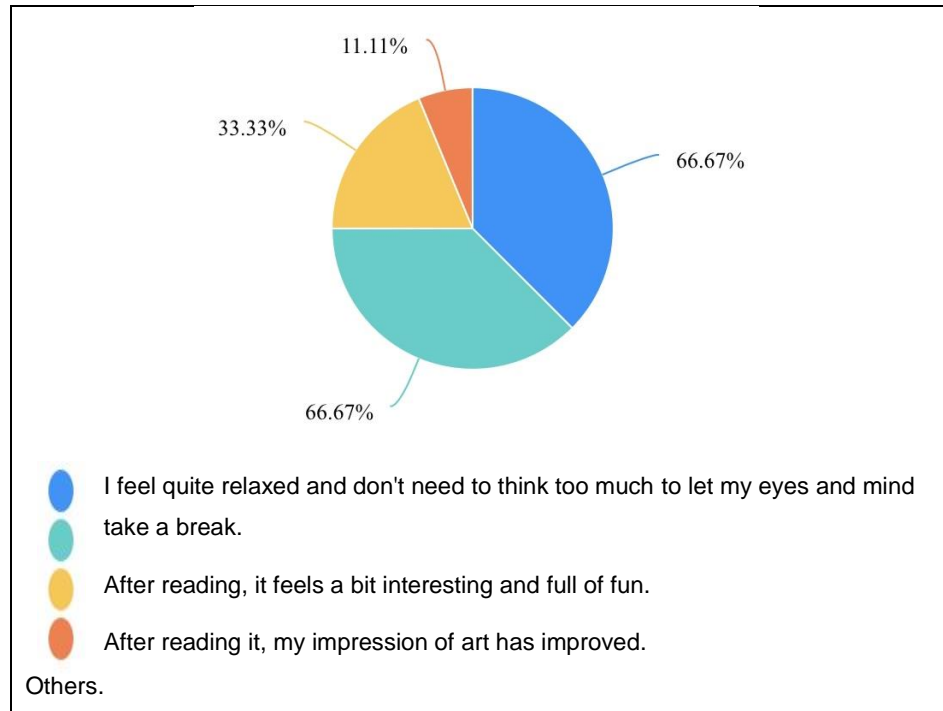



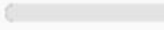
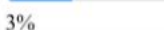









Table 5: Appendix: Questionnaire Survey

Hunan Art Museum Exhibition Hunan Region · Corner Visit Questionnaire Survey

Question 1: What was your first impression of the ‘Hunan Region–Corner’ Exhibition? [\[Multiple choice question\]](#)




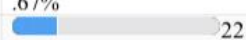
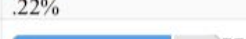

OPT	Subtotal	Proportion
Visually quite novel and attracts my attention	161	 77.7
Exhibition niche but interesting	184	 88.8
Attracted by the gap between the display space and real life	115	 55.5
It's a bit novel, but I don't quite understand	0	 0%
Curious about the presentation of art exhibitions	69	 33.3
Other	0	 0%
Number of valid participants in this question	207	

Question 2: How do you feel about the design of the exhibition space? [\[Multiple choice question\]](#)

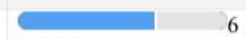

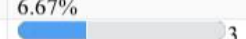

OPT	Subtotal	Proportion
The exhibition format is different from before.	69	 33.
Will be attracted and interesting by the world created by the exhibition space.	115	 55.
Many scenes can interact with the audience (I have also been involved in art).	184	 88.
It is an exhibition with high color and appearance values.	115	 55.
The display space is very suitable for clocking in and taking photos.	161	 77.
Other	0	 0%
Number of valid participants in this question	207	

Question 3: What are your feelings about visiting art and creative exhibitions? [\[Multiple choice question\]](#)

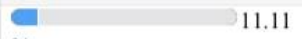
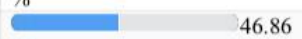
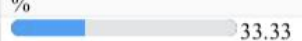

OPT	Subtotal	Proportion
-----	----------	------------

You can do more related exhibitions to make people feel relaxed after watching.	138	 66.67%
The artist's creations have brought me a visual and spiritual pleasure experience.	115	 55.56%
The art space could have been so interesting.	138	 66.67%
The design of this exhibition is quite impressive, and it's worth visiting.	46	 22.22%
The exhibition space is impressive and much more interesting than looking at pictures on a mobile phone.	161	 77.78%
Others.	0	 0%
Number of valid participants in this question	207	

Question 4 : What is your mood after watching this exhibition? [\[Multiple choice question\]](#)

OPT	Subtotal	Proportion
I feel quite relaxed and don't need to think too much to let my eyes and mind take a break.	138	 66.67%
After reading, it feels a bit interesting and full of fun.	138	 66.67%
After reading it, my impression of art has improved.	69	 33.33%
Others.	23	 11.11%
Number of valid participants in this question	207	

Question 5: Your age [\[Multiple Choice question\]](#)

OPT	Subtotal	Proportion
Under 20 years old	23	 11.11%
20-30 years old	97	 46.86%
20-30 years old	69	 33.33%
Over 45 years old	18	 8.7%
Number of valid participants in this question	207	

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Art museums have long been recognized for their ability to evoke strong emotional responses in visitors. The power of art to heal the soul is rooted in several key aspects of the museum-going experience, including visual stimulation, mindfulness, connection to culture and history, reflection, emotional catharsis, social interaction, and distraction.

Visual stimulation is perhaps the most obvious aspect of art that contributes to emotional healing. Artwork can evoke powerful emotional responses through colour, form, and subject matter, providing a visual outlet for feelings that are often difficult to express. For example, a painting that depicts a joyful scene can bring a sense of happiness and contentment, while a more introspective piece can evoke feelings of sadness or contemplation. In this way, art provides a safe and non-judgmental space for visitors to explore their emotions and connect with their inner selves.

Mindfulness is another important aspect of the art museum experience that can contribute to emotional healing. Being in a quiet, peaceful environment surrounded by works of art can help to calm the mind and promote mindfulness. This can provide a sense of clarity and stillness, allowing visitors to focus on their thoughts and feelings in a more intentional way. By slowing down and taking time to reflect, visitors can gain a deeper understanding of their emotions and find a sense of peace and calm.

Connection to culture and history is another way that art museums can contribute to emotional healing. Art museums often showcase works from various cultures and historical periods, providing a sense of connection and belonging. Engaging with works of art from different times and places can help visitors gain a deeper appreciation of their own cultural heritage and feel a sense of connection to the wider world. This can be particularly important for those who feel disconnected or isolated, providing a source of comfort and solace in difficult times.

Reflection is a key aspect of the art museum experience that can contribute to emotional healing. Engaging with art provides opportunities for introspection, reflection, and self-discovery. Visitors can take time to examine their thoughts and feelings, exploring what resonates with them and what does not. By considering the emotions evoked by the artwork and reflecting on their own experiences, visitors can gain a deeper understanding of themselves and their place in the world.

Emotional catharsis is another important way that art museums can contribute to emotional healing. Looking at art that portrays emotions, especially those that are difficult to express, can provide a form of emotional release. By witnessing these emotions depicted in a visual form, visitors can process their own feelings in a safe and non-judgmental way, gaining a greater sense of clarity and understanding.

Finally, social interaction is another aspect of the art museum experience that can contribute to emotional healing. Sharing experiences with others and discussing emotions evoked by the artwork can deepen emotional connections and foster emotional healing. Engaging in conversations about the art can help visitors to better

understand their own feelings and perspectives, while also strengthening bonds with others.

In conclusion, visiting an art museum can provide a powerful source of emotional healing. Through visual stimulation, mindfulness, connection to culture and history, reflection, emotional catharsis, social interaction, and distraction, art museums offer a safe and nurturing environment for visitors to explore their emotions and connect with their inner selves. Whether seeking solace from a difficult experience or simply looking for a place to reflect, art museums can play an important role in promoting emotional well-being.

REFERENCES

1. Chen Xinhua.(2022).On the Mechanism of Aesthetic Cognition.Shanghai: East China Normal University Press,48-53.
2. Cherry, K. E., Walker, E. J., Brown, J. S. and Volaufova, J.,et al.(2013).Social Engagement and Health in Younger, Older, and Oldest-old Adults in the Louisiana Healthy Aging Study. *Journal of Applied Gerontology*, Vol. 32, pp. 51–75.
3. Chatterjee, H.J. (ed).(2008).Touch in Museums: Policy and Practice in Object Handling.Oxford: Berg.
4. Chatterjee, H. and Noble, G.(2013).Museums, Health and Well-being.London: Routledge.
5. Classen, C.(2007).Museum manners: the sensory life of the early museum, *Journal of Social History*, (40), (4), 895–914.
6. Dodd, J. and Jones, C.(2014). [Online]. Mind, Body, Spirit: How Museums Impact Health and Wellbeing. Available at: <https://www2.le.ac.uk/departments/museumstudies/rcmg/publications/mindbody-spirit-report>.(Last accessed 16 April 2023).
7. Huang Minmin. (2004).Concise Complete Works of Modern Psychology. Hefei: Anhui University Academic Press, 253.
8. Levent, N. and Pascual-Leone, A. (eds).(2014).The Multisensory Museum: Cross-Disciplinary Perspectives on Touch, Sound.
9. Leonard, M.(2010).Exhibiting Popular Music: Museum Audiences, Inclusion and Social History. *Journal of New Music Research*, Vol. 39, No. 2, pp. 171–181.
10. Li Rong.(1999).Introduction to Aesthetics. Jinan: Qilu Publishing House, 308-310,374
11. Li Yulong.(2015).The relationship between aesthetics, image, and emotions in art therapy *Journal of Jishou University (Social Sciences Edition) (S2)*, 89-90.

12. Robertson, D. N.(2011).Free Time in an Art Museum: Pausing, Gazing and Interacting. *Leisure Sciences*, Vol. 33, No. 1, pp. 70–80.
13. Sandell, R.(2003).Social Inclusion, the Museum and the Dynamics of Sectoral Change. *Museum and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 45–62. Available at: <https://ira.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/52/1/mands4.pdf>.(Last accessed 16 April 2023).
14. Sandell, R.(2003).Social Inclusion, the Museum and the Dynamics of Sectoral Change. *Museum and Society*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 45–62. Available at: <https://ira.le.ac.uk/bitstream/2381/52/1/mands4.pdf>.(Last accessed 16 April 2023).
15. Salom, A.(2008).The Therapeutic Potentials of a Museum Visit. *The International Journal of Transpersonal Studies*, Vol. 27, pp. 98–103. Available at: <http://www.transpersonalstudies.org/ImagesRepository/ijts/Downloads/The%20International%20Journal%20of%20Transpersonal%20Studies,%202008,%20Volume%2027.pdf>.(Last accessed 16 April 2023).
16. Smell, Memory, and Space. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
17. Silverman, L.H. (2010).*The Social Work of Museums*. New York: Routledge.