

# The Impact of Aesthetic Cognition on Audiences' Emotional Experience in Experimental Immersive Art Exhibitions

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**Abstract:** With the development of science and technology, art exhibitions in various countries now pay more attention to innovation and cross-border cooperation, integrating different art forms and concepts. Emerging technologies such as digital art and virtual reality are also being used in art exhibitions. In addition, some exhibitions present social issues, political issues or environmental themes to trigger thinking and discussion among the audience. Art exhibitions are also increasingly focusing on sustainability and inclusivity in an attempt to engage a wider audience. For the same art work, the audience's unclear interpretation and aesthetic standards have always triggered research and discussion by many scholars. However, some researchers have identified the impact of aesthetic education and aesthetic cognition on the creation of art workers, and few studies have analyzed art from the audience's perspective. Organizers are making conscious efforts to engage a broader audience by creating spaces that welcome diverse voices and perspectives. This trend underscores the importance of accessibility in the art world, as well as the need for exhibitions to resonate with varied demographic groups. Therefore, this study aims to think about the impact of aesthetic cognition on the exhibition experience/emotional experience from the audience's perspective. importance. The research work used methods such as ground theory which including of using questionnaires, visiting interviews, and meeting analysis to

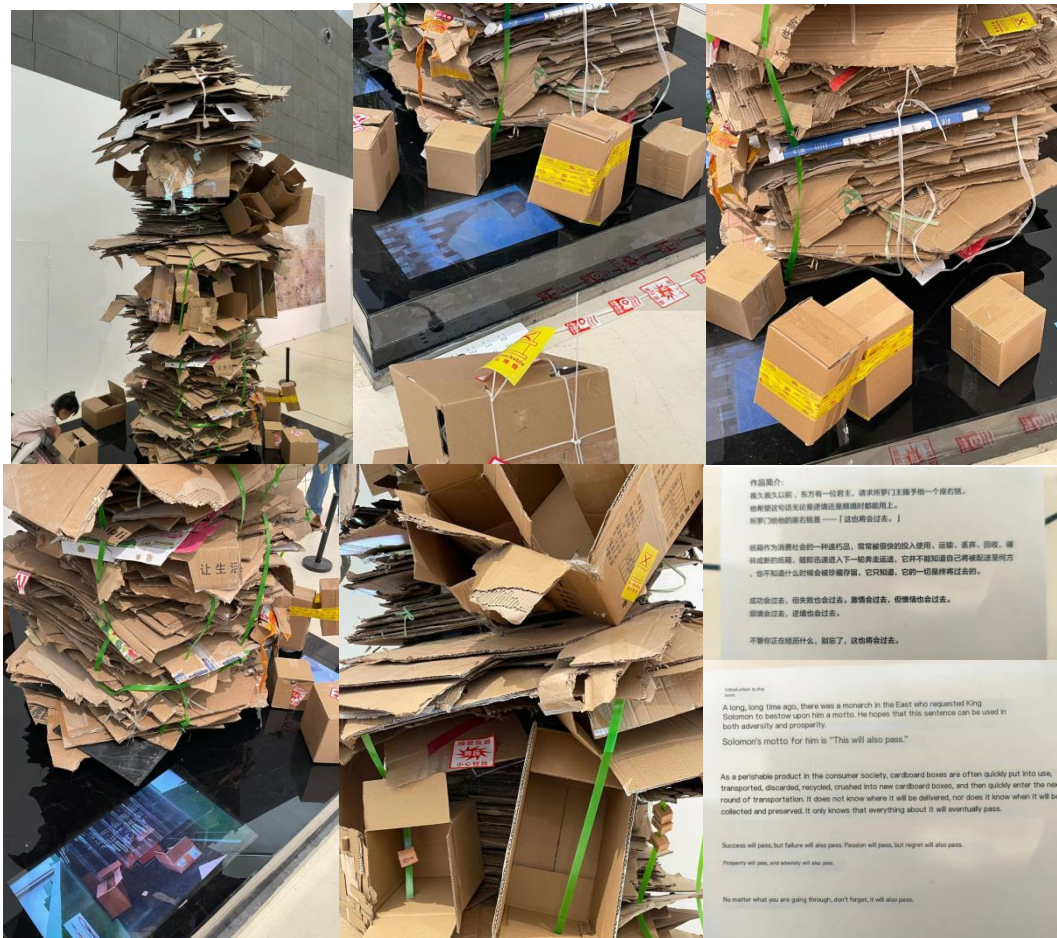
conduct research on the artistic works of the June graduation exhibition of the School of Experimental Art and Science and Technology of the Central Academy of Fine Arts in China. This provides a certain theoretical basis for artists and curators to create experimental art works.

**Keywords:** experimental art, aesthetic cognition, exhibition experience, emotional experience.

## 1.INTRODUCTION

This article primarily focuses on the controversies and public opinion surrounding the graduation exhibition pieces of Chinese art schools in June 2024. It aims to conduct a case study and research on the resulting social hotspot.

### 1.1. THE SUBJECTS "SUPER HIVE" CREATED BY THE SCHOOL OF EXPERIMENTAL ART AND TECHNOLOGICAL ART OF THE CENTRAL ACADEMY OF FINE ARTS

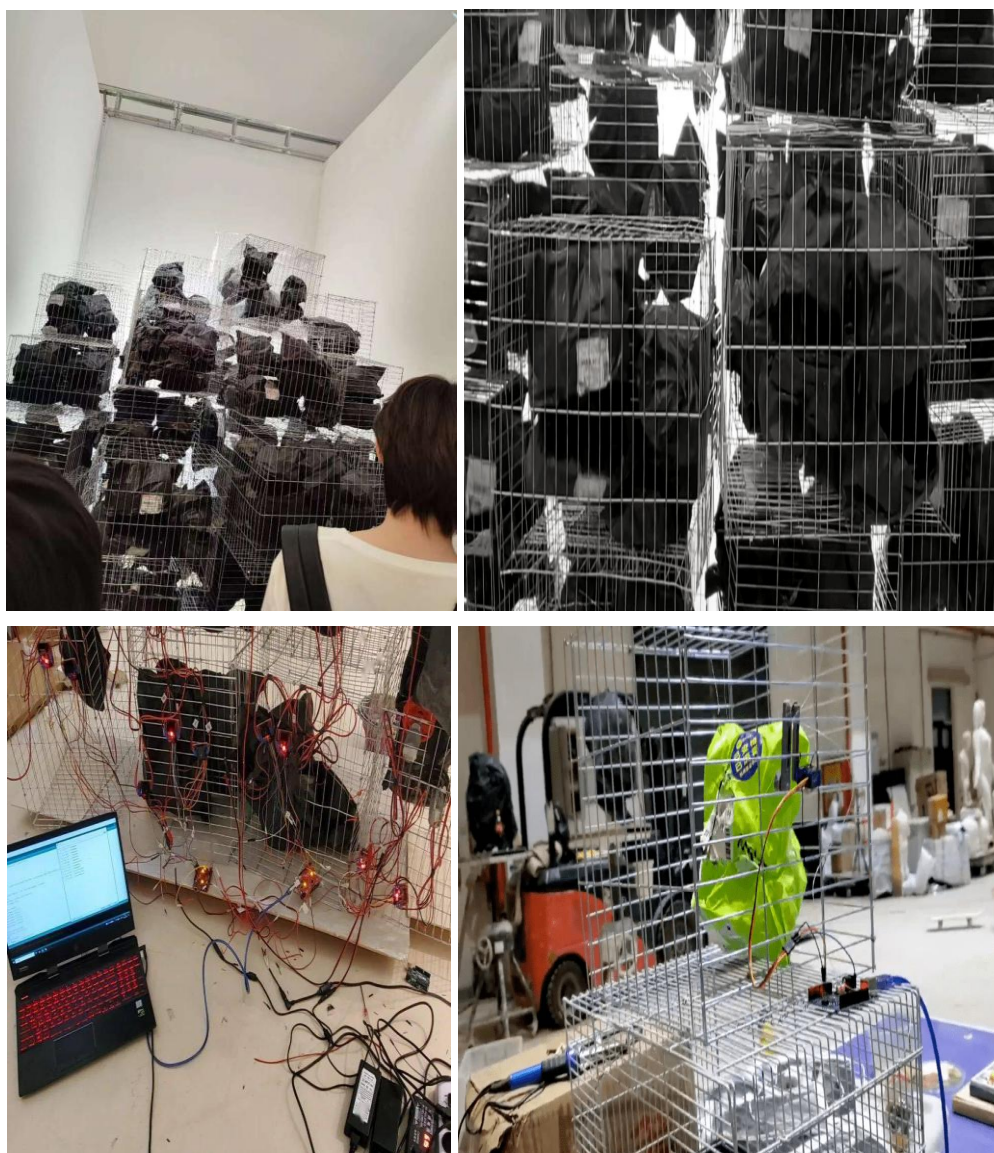


**Figure 1.** "Super Hive" by the School of Experimental Art and Technological Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts

#### Artwork Description (Figure 1):

According to the creator, this piece draws inspiration from the symbol of ephemeral products in today's consumer society—the cardboard box. Beneath the cardboard box, an LED screen displays a continuous loop of the box being discarded, recycled, remanufactured, reused, discarded again, and recycled once more, showcasing its mechanical cycle of life and death. This symbolizes that no matter what one goes through, there is always a chance to start anew and that everything will eventually pass. Additionally, a projector uses angle techniques to cast an

image of two hands onto the cardboard box. These hands grasp at everything but ultimately hold onto nothing, conveying the idea that success seems within reach, yet it often proves to be elusive. The title "Super Hive" is derived from a cylindrical building in Beijing, which houses over 8,000 migrant workers. People constantly move in and out, much like the fate of the cardboard box. This artwork reflects on the fleeting nature of human life, paralleling it with the transient nature of cardboard boxes, and it prompts contemplation on the current state of work and the pursuit of upward mobility



**Figure 2.** *"The crows in my heart"* by the School of Experimental Art and Technological Art of the Central Academy of Fine Arts

#### Artwork Description (Figure 2):

This graduation work titled "The Crows in My Heart" by an undergraduate from the Sculpture Department of the Central Academy of Fine Arts evokes the moment of unboxing a package, a thrill brought on by consumerism. However, this fleeting pleasure is not without its dangers;



it seems to conceal a threat that could engulf us, trapping us in an invisible cage. The piece employs familiar objects combined with unexpected visual impact, prompting the audience to reflect on the essence of consumer culture while appreciating the artwork.

In today's society, consumption has become a significant way of life, and in the relentless pursuit of novelty and satisfaction, people gradually lose themselves in a torrent of materialism. "The Crows in My Heart" deeply questions this phenomenon, making us aware that beneath the surface pleasure lies a void concerning identity and value. Through its visual shock, the artwork provides a space for extended imagination, allowing viewers to awaken and reconsider their relationship with consumption.

Additionally, the piece offers profound contemplation through its form. Those cardboard boxes, once regarded as simple items, are now imbued with new meaning by the artist. They are not merely vessels of consumption; they reflect our state of existence. Through this contrast, the audience is led to explore where true fulfillment lies in this fast-paced era.

## **2.LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **2.1. EXPECTATIONS AND PSYCHOLOGICAL PRECONCEPTIONS OF THE AUDIENCE**

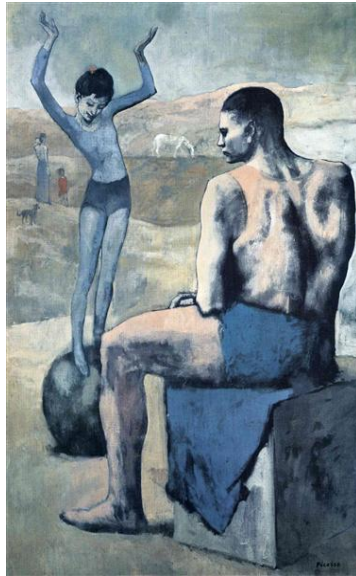
Even before entering the exhibition hall, audiences have already started participating in the process of exhibition critique. Audiences habitually enter the exhibition space with expectations. Their mindset before viewing an exhibition is not a blank slate; rather, it is filled with psychological preconceptions. These preconceptions are complex, formed by the accumulation of memories and emotions, and influenced by the promotional information about the artwork, such as the prestigious title of the Central Academy of Fine Arts. Additionally, these preconceptions are shaped by the audience's directed expectation framework, and even by broader national and communal public expectations.

These diverse and rich psychological preconceptions indirectly affect the standards by which audiences judge artists and their works. Due to their complex social backgrounds, cultural levels, and cognitive abilities, audiences possess complex and individualized aesthetic expectations. Age gradually stabilizes an individual's aesthetic expectations, forming a directed expectation framework. This framework directly influences the audience's aesthetic experience and can even lead to differences in aesthetic appreciation.

### **2.2. EXAMPLE OF PAST ARTWORKS**

From the perspective of the impact of aesthetic objects on aesthetic individuals, a good painting will make the audience feel the same and immerse themselves in it. Picasso's 1905 work "Girl on a Ball"(**Figure 3.**) is a prime example of this. This painting marked a turning point in Picasso's artistic creation, where the interplay between organic and geometric forms dominated the early development of Cubism. In a barren plain, solitary figures beg, and circus performers and other civilians wander this alien world. The juxtaposition of spheres, cubes, and

human forms in the painting symbolizes the contrast between innocence and maturity in society, provoking thoughts on the inequality within social work. The contrast between the naivety of youth and the worldly old acrobat prompts the audience to reflect on societal disparities. The artist's belief that he has completed his feelings in painting does not represent the "final" completion of a painting. Only when he finds an object to pour over and an audience who can communicate with the artist through the painting can the painting be truly completed in a sense.



**Figure 3.** 《Girl on a ball》



**Figure 4.** 《child with dove》

Similarly, in Picasso's *Child with a Dove*, created during his Blue Period, we see a deep exploration of emotional resonance and social commentary. The solitary child, with a melancholic expression and a dove in hand, evokes feelings of vulnerability and innocence. The blue tones create an atmosphere of sadness and reflection, inviting viewers to empathize with the child's plight. The dove symbolizes hope and peace, contrasting the child's isolation in a harsh world. This artwork, much like *Girl on a Ball*, encourages the audience to confront themes of social inequality and the loss of innocence, illustrating Picasso's belief that a painting achieves completion not only through the artist's expression but also through the emotional connection it fosters with its viewers. Only when an audience can communicate with the artist through the painting can the artwork be truly complete in a sense.



**Figure 5.** 《le radeau de la méduse 》

**Figure 6.** 《Skrik》

As material living standards improve, people's cultural life needs also increase. Many people choose to go to art galleries and other places full of artistic atmosphere to "listen or talk" on weekends or in their free time. (Some of them do it out of hobbies, and some do it to relax.) Some do it out of hobbies, while others do it to relax. After a person's spiritual world improves, his aesthetic requirements will gradually increase, and he will inevitably require paintings to meet his own aesthetic needs. The French painter Théodore Géricault's Romantic painting "The Raft of the Medusa" (**Figure 5.**) depicts the various states of the shipwrecked victims suffering from hunger and thirst, groaning in agony, and is suffused with a suffocating atmosphere of tragedy. The Norwegian painter Edvard Munch's Expressionist work "The Scream" (**Figure 6.**) uses extremely exaggerated techniques to fully convey emotions of suffocation, anxiety, and loneliness, brimming with a cry of terror and despair towards life. If a viewer goes to an art gallery with an irritable mood and sees the above two works, then these dull, complicated paintings that express the author's intense psychological struggle will make him more depressed and the psychological burden will be more serious. At this time, the viewer should make a choice that suits him or her, make good use of his or her aesthetic ability, and choose a painting or paintings that can make him feel relaxed and happy.

### **2.3. CONTROVERSIES TRIGGERED BY READYMADES**

The term "readymade" first appeared in 1915, associated with Marcel Duchamp's first readymade artwork, "Roue de bicyclette" (**Figure 7.**), which was created in 1913. It refers to the practice of taking existing objects from reality and combining or reconstructing them to directly form a new work of art. The selection of objects in readymades is typically related to human life and often consists of utilitarian items with practical functions, such as a bicycle wheel, a snow shovel, or a wooden door.

The main distinction between readymades and traditional artworks lies in the ambiguous and elusive nature of the meaning constructed within readymades. Unlike traditional artworks, which often feature narrative systems and visually striking color compositions, readymades do not rely on these elements to convey their significance.

Marcel Duchamp aimed to reduce the absolute boundaries between beauty and ugliness in art, without relying on sensory impact to please the eye for artistic enjoyment. An example of this approach is his work "Fountain"(Figure 8), which diminishes the visual impact typically associated with artworks.

"Fountain" breaks through the limitations of material and location; Viewers don't necessarily have to visit an art gallery to appreciate a piece; they can also grasp its appearance through descriptions from others, since a urinal is a familiar everyday object. On the other hand, the viewer's interpretation of the work is partly free from reliance on the secular. In addition, the work itself cannot be attached to the recording background, nor does it have cultural connotation. It does not have any practical object in the nature of a work of art. From a "visual" point of view it almost loses its meaning, thereby eliminating the meaning of the boundary between beauty and ugliness.



**Figure 7.** Roue de bicyclette



**Figure 8.** 《Fountain》

## **2.4 SUPER HIVE**

The use of raw materials and the overly straightforward stacking arrangement of this piece sparked controversy among viewers. Many expressed confusion and disdain, saying things like, "I don't get it," "Is this just a pile of trash?" "Is this the level of students from the Central Academy of Fine Arts?" and "This piece feels very perfunctory." (However, some netizens noted that despite its lack of maturity, they could see the artist's attempt to convey a satire on consumerism.) However, some netizens pointed out that, despite its immaturity, they could recognize the artist's effort to convey a satire on consumerism. Faced with the wide array of online comments and discussions, the creator of the piece, Ms. Qiao, issued an apology to the audience regarding the controversy. She explained that the misunderstanding arose because the artwork looked like a pile of garbage, but her intention was not to make people think that contemporary art is just a chaotic jumble of wild ideas.



The artist explained that the motor beneath the piece is functional and that each layer of cardboard was meticulously cut and assembled by hand, combined with acrylic panels to ensure the structure could bear its weight. She mentioned that the process even resulted in accidental injuries, highlighting the high cost and personal effort invested in the creation. The inspiration for this piece came from her grandmother, who used to collect garbage, filling an entire room with such waste paper. However, the money earned from recycling these items was barely enough to cover the artist's basic daily living expenses in Beijing. Despite this, her grandmother remained enthusiastic, seemingly unaware of how far behind she had fallen in terms of contemporary consumer standards. This mirrors the artist's message that both cardboard boxes and humans are transient.

(Despite the artist's apology, the controversy continued to stir debates online. To address the aesthetic understanding gap between art creators and viewers, this article conducts a series of investigations.) The artist's apology did not quell the ongoing controversy, which continued to spark discussions online. To bridge the aesthetic understanding gap between art creators and viewers, this article undertakes a series of investigations.

### **3.METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. AUDIENCE SURVEY RESEARCH PROCESS DESIGN AND RESULT ANALYSIS**

This survey takes the Central Academy of Fine Arts Experimental and Science and Technology Graduation Exhibition and its audience as the research object, and conducts case investigation and analysis using non-interventional observation and interview methods to verify the audience's aesthetic psychology and understanding of the artwork during the audience experience. degree of difference.

#### **3.2. RESEARCH PROCESS DESIGN**

##### **3.2.1.BEHAVIOURAL OBSERVATION DESIGN**

Behavioural observation of the audience will be conducted from May 26 to June 2, with time periods ranging from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. The observation time is distributed in the morning and afternoon, weekdays and weekends to eliminate the influence caused by the particularity of the time period.

During the research process, observers used non-interventional observation methods, pretending to be spectators, and recorded the visitors' visiting time, stopping points and visiting behaviours during the visit. The reasons for using non-interventional observation are as follows:

1. The most authentic and reliable data can be obtained by observing without the subject knowing.

2. On-site observation and data recording can avoid errors or omissions. During the research process, observers designate the exit or entrance of the exhibition hall as the starting point for the investigation. When selecting participants, they focus on a random visitor encountered at the starting point. Using a stopwatch and pre-printed forms, they record the visitor's time spent in each exhibition area, number of stops, and other behaviours such as taking photos or engaging in conversations. The timing concludes as the visitor exits the exhibition hall. Observers should avoid contact with or detection by the subjects to ensure accurate recording of their true visiting behaviours.

The data recorded during observation includes the visitor's gender, age group, accompanying group, total duration of visit, duration of visit in different exhibition areas, number of stops, engagement in conversation, reading of exhibition descriptions, photography or selfies, viewing of videos, and interaction with exhibits. Visitors who complete the entire exhibition hall route are considered valid samples. Visitors who leave the exhibition hall before visiting less than half of it are categorized as invalid samples.

### **3.2.2. QUESTIONNAIRE AND INTERVIEW DESIGN**

This questionnaire includes a total of 2 modules. The first is a closed questionnaire, that is, the audience only needs to choose the options.

The selection is the basic information of the visitors. The second part is to conduct interviews with the visitors to collect the visitors' opinions and experience survey on the exhibition.

### **3.2.3. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

Focus group discussions with the audience will be conducted from Jun4 to June 12, This schedule includes both weekdays and weekends to minimize any time-related biases. The participants will be invited to engage in discussions about their experiences in the exhibition. The focus group sessions will be structured to encourage open dialogue, allowing participants to share their thoughts on their visiting behaviors, emotional responses, and interpretations of the artwork.

### **3.2.4. PARTICIPATORY OBSERVATION**

This research employs participatory observation as a method to gather in-depth insights into visitors' interactions and experiences during the exhibition. In this approach, the researcher actively engages with the audience while observing their behaviours and emotional responses.

It will involve two main components. First, the researcher immerses themselves in the exhibition environment, acting as both an observer and a participant. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of how visitors interact with the artworks and with each

other. The researcher may take part in discussions or activities, facilitating a more authentic connection with the audience.

The second component involves detailed documentation of observed behaviours. This includes noting the time spent at different exhibits, the number of stops made, and specific interactions, such as conversations or reactions to the artworks.

## **4. DATA FINDINGS AND ANALYSIS**

### **4.1. BASIC INFORMATION ABOUT THE SURVEY SAMPLE**

For visitors who spontaneously visit the graduation exhibition of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, the visiting needs can be roughly divided into the following categories:

Learn and seek knowledge. Some professional art workers and students from related majors will come with specific purposes. This kind of audience will be attentive and serious when visiting. Some people will even bring paper, pens, cameras and other tools to record the exhibits in detail. Learning audiences will focus more on the exhibits themselves;

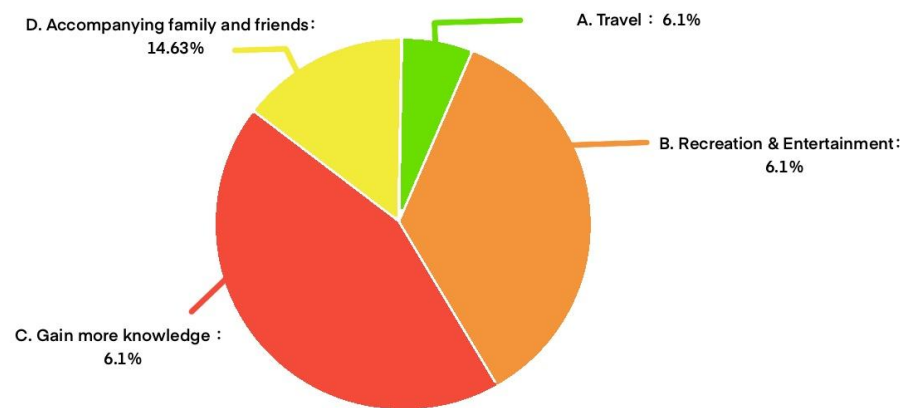
In addition to such professionals, some studious visitors will visit with the purpose of expanding their knowledge or educating future generations.

Leisure and entertainment. There are mostly parents with children and young people accompanying the elderly.

Many visitors come for recreational or social purposes, either alone or with friends, to pass the time. This type of audience values the visiting experience more than the educational value. (The travel and tourism audiences come from a variety of professions. Some come here because of popular online works, while others just check in and take photos, and most of them use mobile phone cameras to record.) The audience for travel and tourism includes people from various professions. Some are drawn here by popular online content, while others simply stop by to take photos. Most of them use their mobile phone cameras to capture their experiences.

As for the audience's motivation for visiting, the author analyses it from two aspects. First, a questionnaire was used to investigate the motivations of the audience for the visit. In addition, by analysing the behaviour of the observed samples, they were divided into professional art people and non-professional entertainment people for interviews.

According to the statistics of visitors to the exhibition in this questionnaire, professional visitors who are learning and seeking knowledge account for 44% of the total; visitors for leisure and entertainment account for 35%; visitors who accompany family or friends account for 15%; visitors who are tourists account for 6%.



**Figure 9.** Distribution chart of visiting motivations of questionnaire samples

### ***9.1 Differences in audience emotions and behavioural responses under different natural features:***

**Table 1:** Comparison of emotional and behavioural responses between audiences of different genders

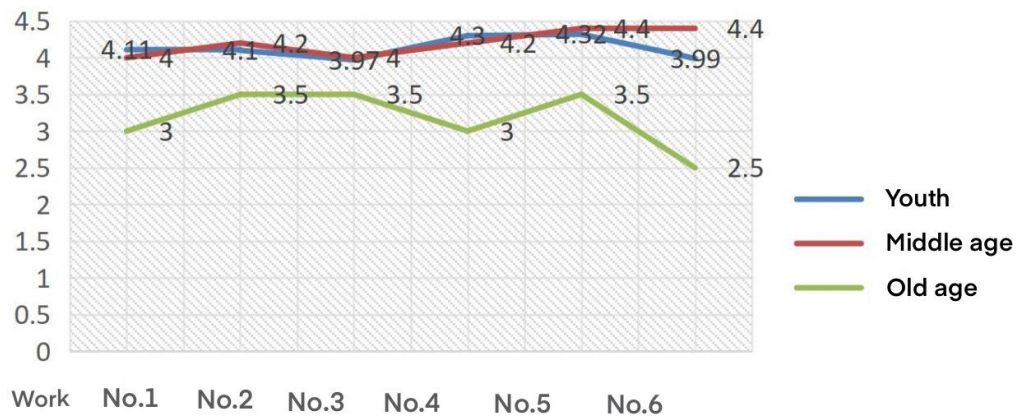
Comparison of Emotional Response Differences between Gender Audiences		
	male	female
Emotional pleasure level	3.79	4.28
Emotional arousal	3.76	4.27

Comparison of Behavioral Response Differences between Gender Audiences		
	male	female
Average number of stops	18.8	27.6
Average visiting time	13	19.6

As can be seen from the figure above, the positive emotional response of male viewers is much lower than that of female viewers. The emotional response of female viewers is also more positive than that of male viewers. Most male visitors stay in the exhibition hall for a shorter time on average, and their behaviour is characterized by browsing the exhibits at will. To this end, we selected the proportion of female viewers to be greater than that of male viewers to conduct interviews and surveys.



**Table 2:** Age Difference-Emotional Pleasure of Works



The curve of emotional pleasure varies consistently across different age groups, indicating that age does not affect the emotional pleasure of the audience. Therefore, age differences will not be considered during the sampling process for interviews.

## 5.DISCUSSION

### 5.1. PART 1 QUESTIONNAIRE

According to the questionnaire, the author integrated and selected effective interviews with 30 audiences, including 15 audiences who had received professional art education and 15 non-art workers, including 8 women and 7 men each.

### 5.2. PART2 INTERVIEW

The interviewed audiences expressed their own opinions on the work "Super Beehive" and. Through interviews with offline audiences, some understandings from the audience's perspective were compiled:

**Audience 1:** This work itself is created using ready-made products. Duchamp also did this a long time ago. It is not a new thing. It is impossible to say how high the author's intention is. Put it among a group of graduation works. It's also ordinary.

Some data show that most of the audience is similar to the audience. They have been art practitioners for many years and have watched the creative works of graduate students as teachers. They have a certain understanding of the development of art history, so they do not have too many expectations.

**Audience 2:** The reason why the work caused controversy on the Internet is because it was mistaken by viewers as a pile of garbage cardboard boxes. Of course, if the ready-

made materials of this kind of garbage cardboard are replaced with acrylic moulds, glass or the like, the controversy will be much smaller. But if you do this, the creation cost will be much higher, which is actually unnecessary for an ordinary graduate. After all, the work is enough if it is meaningful.

Audience 2, as a non-art practitioner, expressed his interest in art and shared some similar artworks to express his own judgment standards.



**Figure 10. Pictures from audience's mobile phones**

**Audience 3:** The most outrageous and controversial thing about this work is the author's "apology." Originally, the work itself is controversial, and it is understandable that different audiences have different opinions. Just feel free to say it and comment on it. However, when the author stood up and "apologized" instead of explaining, things went in the other direction. The "apology" itself revealed the author's unconfidence and lack of firmness in his work. Secondly, this author Why don't the instructors and the college to which he belongs stand up and speak out, allowing a graduate in his early twenties to stand in the spotlight of public opinion?

**Audience 4** is a photographer and media worker: In fact, this is a very good contemporary artwork: 1. The shape of the stacked cardboard boxes by the author refers to a real-life tube building in Beijing, which is densely packed with 8,000 households in Beijing. Drifting, like a honeycomb. 2. Below the work, there is a video showing "carton production, recycling, shredding, and recycling", which means "quick-perishable goods - constantly experiencing the impermanent cycle of being needed and being rejected." 3. The third part of the work is the projection of hands that are constantly climbing up, which means that both the "rich nest" and the "honeycomb" will pass one day, and points to thinking about the current working status and the meaning of climbing up. 4. The overall combination conveys the feeling of people constantly struggling and climbing up in reality. What makes people feel sad is that such an excellent work was biased by some unscrupulous media and attracted a lot of criticism. The author himself was forced to apologize to the "public" under pressure. The media can maliciously and one-sidedly report in order to attract eyeballs; bloggers can mislead the public at will in order to gain traffic. Everyone should have their own aesthetic taste and value orientation. Don't follow someone's lead and make others take advantage of them. Profit-making chess pieces... This will allow more people who don't know what to

do to get involved, and the result will be more negative emotions and distorted values to this society.

**Audience 5:** Many viewers are not actually art majors. They can only comment based on their impressions of appreciation and cannot fully understand the work. However, they must give full respect to the work and the author no matter what. Creating something is inherently embarrassing and personal. Not everyone can sympathize with or understand it. At this time, it's not a bad idea to stick to yourself. However, the topics raised by the work itself and the author's apology seem to constitute a so-called "performance art", which is somewhat interesting.

## 6.CONCLUSION

Finally, we integrated and summarized the relevant data and conclusions from the interviews and discussed them with the students and professors participating in the exhibition in the form of a meeting. After experiencing this storm, the author himself has some thoughts: "Because artistic expression always moves forward in thinking, this experience made me think a lot. I resisted and reflected. This feedback allowed me to gain more perspectives from the audience." Sample, artistic creation is to use the language of art to communicate with the audience. From this, I can also see that the final presentation method of my work does not allow most audiences to understand the expression of the creative concept. I will adjust and simplify my creation in future creations. language to form more effective communication with more audiences and art lovers.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENT

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