

# *Art Expositions, Galleries and Public Appreciation in the Current Era: A Case Study of Art Chengdu in 2019*

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**Keywords:** Art Chengdu in 2019, super Melt - 2021 Chengdu Biennale, contemporary art, art exhibitions, public appreciation

**Abstract:** Chengdu, located in the southwest of China, is the most important center for the formation and promotion of modern and contemporary art in the whole southwest. The Second Art Chengdu - Art Chengdu International Contemporary Art Expo" held in Chengdu in 2019 is a reflection of an almost fanatical contemporary art feast from the current cold situation and calm perspective. Today, contemporary art has become a popular cultural practice. "In addition, this article also cites the "Super Melt - 2021 Chengdu Biennale" held in Chengdu Art Museum in 2021 as an exhibition case to compare with art Chengdu in 2019, trying to analyze the subtle changes in the relationship between China Contemporary Art and Art Expo, galleries or art galleries and the public before and after the epidemic. This article focuses on analyzing the works and final sales of more than ten representative high-level galleries in 2019 Art Chengdu Exhibition, exploring the confrontation between top galleries at home and abroad and Chengdu, the "third city of art", and taking this as a slice, exploring the logical relationship between the current era of art exhibitions, galleries and public appreciation.

## 1. Introduction

Chengdu, located in the southwest of China, is the most important center for the formation and promotion of modern and contemporary art in the whole southwest. 2019 is the last year of the "pre epidemic" era, and the momentum of vigorous development of contemporary art throughout the world is also advancing in full swing in 2019. Standing in the current "post epidemic" era, looking back on the epidemic that has lasted for three years, many industries encountered unprecedented difficulties and shocks in their development during this period, and contemporary art suffered a heavy setback. The review and analysis of the grand art event "The Second Art Chengdu - Art Chengdu International Contemporary Art Expo" held in Chengdu in 2019 (Figure 1) is a reflection of an almost fanatical contemporary art feast from the current cold situation and calm perspective. Art critic Boris Grouse once mentioned in the article "Comrades of the Times" that "at the beginning of the 21st century, art has entered a new era, that is, an era of mass production as well as mass consumption of art. Today, contemporary art has become a popular cultural practice." As a medium of expression and carrier of contemporary art, art exhibitions have sprung up like mushrooms, and with the development of technology and art concepts, The presentation of contemporary art is gradually diversified, which has gone far beyond traditional art exhibitions. At the same time, the significance of art exhibition is not

only to share the ideas of works and artists, but also to be endowed with multiple meanings.



Figure 1: 2019 Art Chengdu is located in the exterior of Hall 1, New Convention and Exhibition Center, Century City, Chengdu

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## **2. An Art Fair or a Biennial Exhibition May be an Important Outlet for a City to Show Its Artistic Taste and Attitude towards Contemporary Art.**

Art Chengdu kicked off on April 28, 2019. The exhibition period was extended from the first three days to five days. The audience came one after another during the last two public opening days, reaching the peak of visitors. Although improving the quality of the whole people is not the primary function of a powerful art fair, from the perspective of the exhibition effect of this art exhibition in Chengdu, efforts should be made to achieve a balanced development between public education and art commerce based on the cultural consumption demand driven by the social and economic development of Southwest China. "Humanism is the product of a cultured mind and an attitude that knows how to take care of, preserve and praise things in the world"[1]. How can the International Contemporary Art Expo, which Chengdu intends to build, attract more top galleries from around the world? How well do collectors and ordinary audiences participating in the art fair accept the works displayed?

Correspondingly, the "Super Fusion - 2021 Chengdu Biennale" opened on November 7, 2021 has a more reliable and strong government background - under the guidance of Chengdu Municipal Bureau of Culture, Radio, Television and Tourism, sponsored by Chengdu Academy of Painting (Chengdu Art Museum), co organized by Chengdu Urban Investment Group, and has received the participation and support of many related facilities, equipment and personnel Fan Dean, President of the Central Academy of Fine Arts, served as the general curator. The exhibition is a grand one, consisting of 8 theme exhibition sections, 1 International Art Museum Director Summit and 17 parallel exhibition sections. In the theme exhibition, 18 curators were invited to form a curatorial

team to plan the "multi state symbiosis", "home coexistence", "intelligent resonance", "time tide co combustion", "ecological resonance", "creative resonance", "national empathy" and "aesthetic education co line". During the exhibition, a curator's summit with the theme of "future co thinking" will be held. The exhibited works involve 272 artists from 35 countries and regions, including the famous foreign contemporary artists Anish Kapoor, Tony Craig, Olivier Eliasson, Kasten Holler, and the most important Chinese contemporary artists: Zhang Xiaogang, Zhou Chunya, Zeng Fanzhi, Xu Bing, Su Xinping, Zhanwang, Liu Jianhua, Liang Shaoji, Cao Fei, etc. They brought as many as 506 wonderful works of art to the audience.

As a result, the 2021 Chengdu Biennale has been rated as the largest and the highest artistic level Biennale in Chengdu and even in China in 2021. Many experts also believe that the 2021 Chengdu Biennale is a well deserved "phenomenal" exhibition. The 2021 Chengdu Biennale will last for 252 days, fulfilling the public education responsibility of art to a certain extent. Since its opening, the 2021 Chengdu Biennale has been loved by the masses and supported by all walks of life. The 2021 Chengdu Biennale has effectively used the role of online publicity and online promotion. In the new media era, it has attracted many popular We Media's clocking and publicity. Moreover, visitors can watch such high-quality exhibitions for a whole day free of charge by simply making a convenient and fast online appointment with mobile phone software one day in advance, and can also watch and listen to relevant speeches and lectures held by artists. Therefore, by the end of the exhibition, the number of visitors to the Biennale was nearly 1.1 million, the number of fans on the official account of Chengdu Art Museum exceeded 600000, the number of relevant views of the Biennale on Tiktok, Weibo, Little Red Book and other self media platforms exceeded 30 million, and the number of domestic and foreign media communications exceeded 1100. Compared with the commercial art fair, which lasts only 3-5 days, it can really help the public aesthetic education in a region more effectively. As a result, for the public in Chengdu and even in the whole southwest region, the Biennale has become not only an ordinary exhibition, but also an important space for learning, entertainment and social interaction. The creation of this public field has further promoted the development of culture in the southwest region and the enrichment of public spiritual civilization. Therefore, whether it is an art fair or a biennial exhibition, it is an important outlet for a city to show its artistic taste and attitude towards contemporary art.

### **3. The Art Expo Creates a Space for Public Exchange and Learning**

"Our age is a visual age, and we are attacked by pictures from morning till night." The conclusion at the beginning of the article is more accurate in the era of touch screen. The Art Expo is a platform for art exchange and learning. The efforts of this art Chengdu in academic research, art public education, art popularization and other aspects are obvious to all: 7 forum activities with cutting-edge topics and novel perspectives, inviting heavyweight artists to deeply explain the contents of the works on display and the creation process to deepen the public's understanding of the works, the founder of the gallery, the curator of the art gallery, the collector The multilateral dialogue of the CEOs of art institutions expands the possibility of the development of more dimensions of artworks (Figure 2).



Figure 2: 2019 Art Chengdu Forum Site

Among the 46 professional galleries participating in this art exhibition in Chengdu, there are 9 local galleries in Chengdu, and more than 10 excellent galleries from New York, Tokyo, Beijing, Shanghai and other places, including Pace Gallery, Xiangner Gallery and other global top galleries. While bringing more visual experience to the audience, these galleries with international vision and the works they bring will also make this art Chengdu a window to see the global art pulse of the current era; The public art project of this art project in Chengdu presents large-scale public sculpture works of three artists, namely, Sui Jianguo's giant 3D printing work "Garden in Cloud", South Korean artist Jin Binghao's "Garden" created with 216 colored tubes, and artist Zhou Li's "Line" created with steel and baking varnish. These expensive public sculpture projects not only improve the artistic atmosphere of the entire exhibition hall, It is also a way for the audience to experience contemporary art closely and personally. "For those of us who reject the resonance theory, understanding the language of the emotions is much more like any other understanding"[2]. At the same time, the in-depth cooperation between this Art Chengdu and Siku has broken the barrier of high ticket value of the Art Expo. The audience can buy 9.9 yuan tickets (Figure 3) by scanning the number on the site or on the mobile phone WeChat official account. The organizer will give up the ticket income of this Art Chengdu and allow more Chengdu art lovers to participate in the Expo. The total number of visitors to Chengdu reached 58000, which has a positive impact on the art appreciation ability of the public to a certain extent. Of course, the most important group of these visitors are collectors with collection intention. "The artist who has a sponsor only needs to please that sponsor"[3]. The exhibition site is also an excellent learning opportunity for the audience who has a certain degree of artistic self-control and more curiosity. Almost every participating gallery will arrange a professional guide to answer all kinds of inquiries on site, and provide professional information such as artist's album, work creation concept, background and pulse.



Figure 3: In 2019, Art Chengdu and the Temple Library jointly launched the "9.9 yuan ticket free robbery" activity

#### 4. The Art Expo Mode of Viral Spread and the Galleries of Happy Half Participation and Worry

On the other hand, the Art Expo is also an art operation mode with a large number, rapid development and short exhibition period, which is one of the most important art promotion media at present. Arnold Hauzel said: "Without intermediaries, it is impossible to consume purely independent art." The current art fair plays such an important role as an intermediary. It is a comprehensive market operation model formed in the name of "art". "Any comic strip offers examples of these conventions"[4]. These globally integrated art activities "really broke the barriers that were once antagonistic and divisive"[5]. The first art fair in the world was the Cologne International Art Fair held in Cologne, Germany, in 1967. Subsequently, many international big cities launched art fairs named after regions. Among them, the famous "Five World Art Fairs" are: Basel International Art Fair in Switzerland, Cologne International Art Fair in Germany, Chicago International Art Fair in the United States, Paris International Art Fair in France and Madrid International Art Fair in Spain. Since the "First China Art Expo" held in Guangzhou in 1993, China's art fairs have developed rapidly. Over the past 20 years, they have shown a trend of blowout, including Shanghai Art Expo, Guangzhou Art Expo, Art Beijing, Art Xiamen, Art Shenzhen, ART021, West Bank Art Expo, etc. As a new art fair, Art Chengdu is exploring.

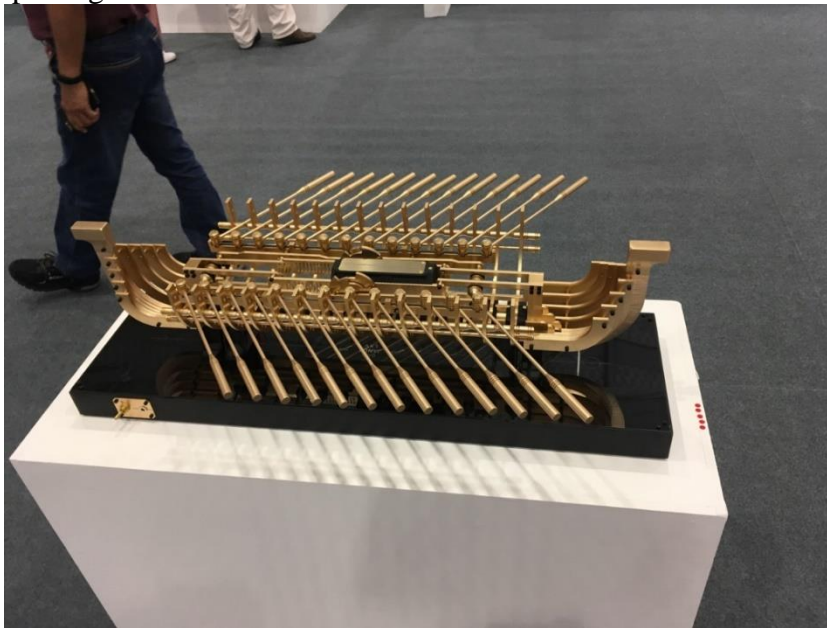


Figure 4: The work JANUS by BDCW, an artist represented by PEACH BLOSSOM SPRING, sold well

Gombrich's "logic of vanity" explains that invention and innovation in the history of art are not determined by abstract concepts such as the spirit of the times, "what is important in our context is that the icon is not an altar painting"[6]. but by the public's demand for novelty with different artistic appreciation abilities. "In an organized art world, many styles and schools compete to attract attention"[7]. Under the current wave of planning and narrative in full swing, the "era of art fair" has come. However, an important criterion for the success of an art fair is the sales of works. Because an art fair is inevitable, it is essentially a platform for art sales. From the result of the sales of works, we can, to a certain extent, reflect the artistic aesthetic taste and art collection tendency of this region. According to the real-time sales list of the works of the art galleries in Chengdu, which were collected by Yachang Art Network, it can be seen that most of the works sold during this art exhibition in

Chengdu are works with more direct visual effects, which can easily impress people. For example, the super flat paintings brought by the Baishi Gallery from Tokyo and the contemporary Tokyo Gallery are very popular among the post-80s and post-90s. At the same time, the medium and small installation works with complex technology and high ornamental value generate good sales, such as the installation work YU, which combines art and technology by BDCW, an artist acting for Taohuayuan Art Center (Figure 4). In terms of price, the unit price of works that can be sold quickly is generally low, mostly around 30000 yuan. However, the sales of more conceptual works brought about by international first-line galleries are quite stagnant, and few galleries can really make profits.



Figure 5: 2019 Art Chengdu Yi Space, B12

“Anxiety is a fear of loss and a manifestation of possessive desire.”[8] In contrast to the popularity of the art fair and the cold reception of the art market, galleries are under heavy economic pressure under the busy scene of rushing to participate in the art fair. The booth fees, work transportation fees and manual travel costs that galleries need to invest in an art fair are quite high, especially for foreign galleries. “It is in such a concrete case that the dangers of the ‘religion of progress’ to the progress of art become most easily demonstrable”[9]. Taking Chengdu local gallery Yi Xuetang (Figure 5) as an example, the total cost of participating in 2019 Art Chengdu is about 150000 yuan. However, in the information age, it is easy to forget without "appearance rate". Many mature galleries participate in at least ten large-scale art fairs a year to maintain their popularity. If the on-site sales of the art fair are not ideal, will it be a potential threat to consume the vitality of the gallery? "But in our era, the main paradigm that is emerging is neither a 'doctrine' nor a series of styles. It is not a new way to manipulate appearances and space, but a fundamental thinking".

## 5. Conclusions

While maintaining its own professional judgment, the gallery will inevitably adjust its works displayed in the art fair to cater to the audience's aesthetic. This brings up the question put forward by American art critic Leo Steinberg (1920-2011): "How many non art fields can art absorb, and how many non art fields can they venture into, but still art?". Then will its impact on artistic creativity become a reverse effect? After all, against the background of fierce market competition and the return of China's contemporary art market itself to rationality, the operation of art Chengdu seems

prosperous, but it is under great pressure. The formation of a high-level art fair cannot be separated from the prosperity of the market, the development of the market cannot be separated from the further improvement of the art appreciation ability of the public, and the attraction of more high-quality galleries to bring high-level works. The huge Chengdu really needs an art feast like art Chengdu.

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