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**DESIGN MUSEUMS IN A “CITY OF DESIGN” IN CHINA**

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**PhD**

**The Hong Kong Polytechnic University**

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School of Design

**Design Museums in a “City of Design” in China**

**Wen Qi**

A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree  
of Doctor of Philosophy

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Wen Qi

## **Abstract**

The thesis examines the cultural phenomenon of the flourishing of design museums in China. The research focuses on the evolution of the concepts of “design” and “museum” in China since the mid-19th century and the process of design musealization in China after the Reform and Opening-up policy. The thesis adopts a sociological methodology to study the cultural phenomenon with an interpretive and historical worldview and employs qualitative methods—including observations, field trips, and interviews—to examine three design museums in Shenzhen as case studies.

The thesis comprises eight chapters, including introductory and closing chapters. It first examines the Design Museum in London, which was the first design museum in the city, with respect to its origins in the *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations* and the Victoria and Albert Museum, and its role as an instrument for shaping a consumer society in Britain. After delving into the history of design museums, the thesis defines the design museum and analyzes consumer capitalism in the 19th and 20th centuries, when design became cultural capital for driving economic growth, and museums were formed as a cultural disseminator and a tool of civil control in regulating the public. As “design” and “museum” were foreign imports, the thesis then reviews how design and museums have developed in China to contextualize the advent of Chinese design museums and the background of modernization in postsocialist China.

The expansion and diversification of museums have become a global phenomenon (Fyfe, 2006), and design museums are a specialized genre of museums that evolved from craft and decorative art museums and have flourished worldwide since 1989. With a special focus on the design museums in Shenzhen, Guangdong, China, the thesis discusses the roles and functions of these design museums in the cultural and urban context of Shenzhen, which has embarked on cultural development and renovation since 2003. Shenzhen was one of the first Special Economic Zones set up

in 1980, when the Reform and Opening-up Policy was inaugurated. The city rose from a socialist experiment of market reform to a model city, and played a leading role in the economy, science, and technology of China. It is also a designated model city and the socialist demonstration city in China. In 2008, it was designated the “City of Design” by UNESCO. Since then, design has been promoted in Shenzhen, with the city designated as a cultural capital to establish an urban cultural characteristic, and numerous design activities (such as design biennales, design weeks, and design competitions) have been organized, and design-related cultural institutions established by the municipal government and local companies. Museums are often instrumentalized in the international campaign of metropolises (Kirchberg, 2015). In the twenty-first century, the Shenzhen government initiated a cultural strategy to establish the city renowned for its culture, and some cultural policies and plans have been promulgated to support cultural development. Being an international and civilized city has become the government’s agenda, and many design museums and related branded exhibitions and programs have flourished in the period to fulfill the ambition of building a cultural Shenzhen. In this period, the intervention of private entities and the shift of government roles has led to changes in the cultural landscape in the city. This thesis examines the functions and roles of these design museums in the postsocialist era and questions whether the new genre of museums has different functions and roles and whether they have brought insights into design and museum theories and practices.

The thesis contributes to disclosing the reasons for establishing design museums and what roles they play in a socialist state in a reformed period by scrutinizing three cases: the Shenzhen Museum of Industry (1985), the OCT Art and Design Gallery (2008), and the Design Society (2017). The establishment of these design-oriented cultural organizations reveals the cultural positioning and strategic shift and demonstrates the cultural ambition of the city. Except for the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, the other two cases are institutions founded by renowned state-owned

enterprises. They were established in different periods and reveal a shift in the museum industry where the government plays a lesser role in cultural undertakings and private sectors intervene in the transformation and commercialization of cultural organizations. The museums serve as cultural infrastructures to fulfill the cultural development of the city and the ambition of the museums' founders to upgrade their commerce. Their functions and roles hereby changed and diversified in line with policy trends and the needs of their founders.

## **Publications**

Wen, Q. & Ng, S. (2021). Participatory Museums: an observatory study of museums in China. Online paper presentation at the Participatory Communication Research Section of the International Association for Media and Communication Research.

Wen, Q., & Ng, S. (2020). Inclusive Design Museums and Social Design. In S. Boess, M. Cheung, & R. Cain (Eds.), Proceedings of DRS2020 International Conference: Synergy (pp. 376–388). the Design Research Society.



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## CHAPTER 1 Overview of the Research

### 1.1 Introduction

Foreshadowed by industrial exhibitions and museums of industrial and decorative arts in the 19th century, the *design museum* was established as a new genre of museums and spread across the world. From industrial expositions to design museums, their development has a relatively short history. There are three noteworthy periods in the formation of design museums (see Appendix I). From the 1850s to 1989, with the establishment of the Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A), which aimed to serve as a model for other industrial and decorative museums in Britain (Goodwin, 1990), many museums of this kind soon spread to other European countries in German-speaking and Scandinavian regions (Pevsner, 2014). A plethora of art museums in the West, such as the Museum of Modern Art, also started collecting and displaying design. In this period, “design” was not widely used in the names of museums. Most included the terms “industrial arts,” “applied arts,” or “decorative arts” in their title. These museums usually had a large and versatile collection of manufacturing goods as well as arts and crafts, such as tapestries, glassware, ironware, furniture, jewelry, ceramics, costumes, posters, decorated panels, and contemporary design. The primary functions of these museums were to educate the public in order to foster “good taste” (Weddell, 2016, p. 17) and to promote manufacturing products as a national strategy for supporting commerce and industry.

In the second period, since the establishment of the Design Museum London and the German Vitra Design Museum in 1989, many newly founded museums began to use the term “design”. Uncoincidentally, museums were enjoying a golden age on an international scale around this period, and many new museums were established (Conn, 2010). Some existing museums changed their strategy, as exemplified by the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) in Vienna and the V&A Museum, which contemporized their collections and branded themselves as art and design museums,



while some museums, such as the Design Museum Gent<sup>1</sup>, renamed themselves museums of “design.” Such renaming is a strategic shift from managerial philosophy to organizational practice. It also signifies a new direction for traditional decorative and industrial arts museums.

In the new millennium, a new period began in the history of design museums in Asia, culminating in the establishment of museums such as the Red Dot Design Museum in Singapore and the 21\_21 Design Sight in Tokyo. Until then, most design museums in Asia had been founded in China in the 2010s. These new museums were built in countries or cities with significant economic strength, and which have developed or been developing design and industry in the new century.

However, the design museum as a developing phenomenon remains an undefined typology in museum studies. From a global perspective, the short description of the “design museum” in *Design: The Key Concepts* (McDermott, 2007) briefly provides information regarding the Design Museum in London; but this cannot provide a complete picture of this field. In 2003, the Neues Museum held an exhibition called *Design Museums of the World* (September 17 – November 03, 2003), inviting 29 design museums from across the world to participate by including one design work from their collections. *Design Museums of the World* was a rare exhibition that focused on institutions themselves. The Neues Museum is a state museum for art and design established in 2000. The host institutions invited design museums in various forms. Some are art museums, such as the National Museum of Modern Art in Tokyo,

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<sup>1</sup> The Design Museum Gent is a compelling case that has been renamed and shifted its focus. It has changed its name several times. It started out as the Museum of Decorative Arts (Museum voor Sierkunst). In 1995, it added “design” to its title as the Ghent Museum of Decorative Arts and Design, and in 2002, it dashed out “decorative arts” and became the Design Museum Gent (Gimeno-Martínez & Verlinden, 2010). According to Javier Gimeno-Martínez and Jasmijn Verlinden, the change in the museum’s name from “Museum of Decorative Arts” to “Design Museum” demonstrated its intention to be “modern and international”(2010, p. 264). These alterations were related to changes in the developing strategy of the institution. Flemish language only accepted the word “design” in 1974. The authors point out that “design” has a broader meaning than “decorative arts” and is an international English word that links this type of museums together as “a constellation of institutions” worldwide (Gimeno-Martínez & Verlinden, 2010, p. 265). The case of the Design Museum Gent also confirms that the word “design” implies contemporaneity.

which have a distinctive collection of paintings, drawings, and sculptures, and some are science museums that aim to showcase the advancement of science and technology. The exhibition outlined a vague image of the design museum and proposed design museums with different acquisition strategies. It also implicated the ever-changing way design museums see themselves (NeuesMuseum, 2004).

This unusual exhibition reflected an increasing interest in design museums in this century. For instance, several doctoral theses addressed specific issues, such as design museum education (Charman, 2011), design museum structure and policy (Lee, 2007), the shift of interpreting design from the past to the present (Bisson, 2000), and design curation (Bletcher, 2016). Gonzaga's (2012) thesis was a comprehensive study of strategies of developing European design culture by engaging design museums with festivals, weeks, and biennales. She studied the main agents (design museums, design weeks, and design districts) in the conservation, dissemination, exhibition, and promotion of European design. Maddalena Dalla Mura's essays, which were a part of her doctoral research and which reflected on the "museality" (2009, p. 267) of design and its cultural and social significance, questioned the relation between art museums and design museums (2008) and provided an inspirational angle of design in Science and Technology Museums (2009). Both essays called for "an integrative approach" that incorporates design in various kinds of museums, and to advance the position of design in the museum world (Mura, 2009, p. 260, 2008, p. 136).

Conferences that focus on the relationship between museums and design have been held since 2011; for example, the *Museum and Design Disciplines* conference (2011, University Iuav of Venice) and *Design Objects - Musealization, Documentation and Interpretation* (2017, Biblioteca Municipal Almeida Garrett). The former highlighted the relationship between the museum and design disciplines and discussed how the two subjects supported each other and how they might contribute to society from the perspective of urban planning, cultural development, and public participation (Mura

& Ballarin, 2012), whereas the latter focused on design objects in a museological context concerning issues of documenting and interpreting design (*Design Objects Conference*, 2017). In addition, anthologies such as the *Design Objects and the Museum* (Farrelly & Weddell, 2016) were published to discuss varied issues of design in the milieu of world fairs, exhibitions, design centers, and museums. Several authors in the first section provided historical studies on the early practices of design exhibitions and museums (Ryan, 2016; Weddell, 2016). Authors in later chapters made an arguable point that the displaying of design differed from art because of the functionality of design (Charman, 2016; Taylor, 2016).

On the other side of the world, a rapidly growing trend for design museum construction was identified in Asia, particularly in China, at the turn of the new century (see Appendix I). The recent two decades have been design-centric with the upsurge of design competitions, fairs, exhibitions, biennales, and museums. So far, there have been approximately 10 design museums in China, and this number is growing. The abiding interest in the establishment of design museums in China began with several designers and enterprises and concomitantly drew the attention of the municipal authorities. These museums are primarily located in cities such as Shenzhen, Shanghai, and Hangzhou, which have considerable strength in manufacturing and industry, and which have been successively included within the Creative Cities Network of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

Academia also notices the booming of design museums in China. In 2013, *Zhuangshi* (a Chinese Journal) published a special issue on design museums, which discussed their importance from the perspective of design scholars and educators. Three articles respectively introduced cases in Milan, New York, and London (Jiang & Li, 2013; Li, 2013; Zhou, 2013). Another three discussed design museums in Shanghai, Guangzhou, and Hangzhou respectively (Tang et al., 2013; Tian et al., 2013; Zhao,

2013), and one included the interview with Álvaro Siza: the architect of China Design Museum in Hangzhou, Zhejiang (Castanheira & Li, 2013). Later, researcher Zara Arshad adopted this focus on Chinese design museums and published works on the China Design Museum (2017, 2018), providing an inspiring account on how the museum aimed to construct design histories and serve as a transnational model.



Figure 1. The China Design Museum in Hangzhou, Zhejiang

However, given the increasingly strong connection between museums and the design discipline (*Design Objects Conference*, 2017; Farrelly & Weddell, 2016; Mura & Ballarin, 2012) and the increasing interest in design museums in academia, limited research has delved into the intricate social relations of, and the reasons behind the design museum fetish, which has been particularly prevalent in China in recent years. Since museums in different contexts serve different purposes and functions, and each museum type evokes a specific set of questions and reflects cultural and societal changes (Denton, 2014), it is essential to understand the reasons for establishing design museums and the roles that they now play.

Specifically, museums are an indicator of tensions and relations in culture and society. In Asia, museums are a Western import that have been popularized through

an intricate process of modernization and colonization (Kahn, 1998; Wang, 2017; Xu, 2016). In the case of China, Wang Shu-li (2017) explored the process of localizing the museum from the West to Japan and China as an outcome of cultural flow and transnational exchange. In this process, China adapted the museum practices from European and Japanese models to incorporate its own social and cultural contexts.

Besides the notion of the museum, design was also an imported idea that has continuously adapted to the Chinese context. Design is also a modern production in the industrial capitalist world. Some scholars have argued that no design existed “outside the modern, industrialized capitalist nations” (Turner, 1989, p. 79). However, evidence has proven that design has evolved in China in the process of modernization, which was challengingly formulated in a Westernized and colonialized<sup>2</sup> period at the end of the 19th century (Guo & Su, 2008). The notion of design in China keeps evolving to adapt to its own assumptions according to political, social, and cultural needs.

China now is in an epoch that embraces market-oriented economy and infinite creativity. In terms of the contemporary context in China, as Denton (2014) indicated in his monograph on history museums in China, began from the inauguration of the Reform and Opening-up Policy in 1978 and continuous endorsement on free-trade, private business, and open market, the nation today adheres to the socialist ideology but in a distant and paradoxical way. He refers to it as the postsocialist era of China. The phenomenon of the establishment and growth of the design museum in this period has triggered thoughts on the reasons for their establishment and on how they contribute to a socialist country like China in a postsocialist era.

According to the data collected in the research (see Appendix I), approximately half of all design museums are located in Shenzhen. The density of design museums in

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<sup>2</sup> China was a semi-colony that was partially colonized with many concessions.

this city is very unusual, given that there were only 50 registered museums and memorial sites and 11 art museums in Shenzhen in 2018 (“Statistical bulletin of Shenzhen’s national economic and social development in 2018,” 2019). It mirrors the boom in design and cultural industries in Shenzhen, which is often mentioned because of its short but impressive history.

Shenzhen was the first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in 1980 when the Reform and Opening-up Policy was inaugurated. It functioned as a Petri dish that incorporated a market economy in a socialist system. Loosening constraints legitimated capitalist practices in Shenzhen, which was able to play an intermediary role in global production chains, while at the same time establishing similar processing chains on its own (Huang, 2016). With its preferential economic treatment, Shenzhen attracted foreign investors and manufacturers and accumulated wealth and strength as an industry economy at the early stage. In order to upgrade the traditional manufacturing, Shenzhen is transitioning towards the knowledge economy that is dependent on innovation and technologic advancement. In the past 40 years, Shenzhen has grown from an experiment to a “model city” that practices socialism with Chinese characteristics, or what is called “Chinese socialist capitalism.”<sup>3</sup> Economic development was the core agenda of this concept, and societal and cultural development was intended to complement the practice of the new Chinese socialist theory.

Shenzhen is the epitome of a modern metropolis in the “Chinese Dream”: a concept defined by Chairman Xi Jinping to revive the nation. On August 18, 2019, Shenzhen was built into a pilot demonstration area of socialism with Chinese characteristics. This designation reinforced the ambition of China to continue with socialist reforms

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<sup>3</sup> The concept of socialism with Chinese characteristics was raised by Deng Xiaoping, the chief planner of China’s reformation, a former president, and a general secretary of China. It integrated the socialist theory with China’s current situation, with the aim of building a prosperous and modern society in many aspects and reviving the Chinese nation.

and with the role of Shenzhen as a model metropolis (“China to build Shenzhen into socialist demonstration area,” 2019). In 2003, the Shenzhen government determined to promote the culture of Shenzhen, which became a strategy that was as important as promoting economics and science and passing legislation (Peng, 2003). The goal of the strategy was to build a city of culture, cultivate citizens with high art, satisfy the cultural needs of citizens, and improve the city’s cultural profile on the global stage (Hu, 2005; Wang, 2005).

When UNESCO set up the Creative Cities Network in 2004, Shenzhen began working for the application of a “City of Design” (CoD) and made it part of their cultural strategy. Regulations and policies were promulgated to develop and support cultural industries and creative design. Like Paris and London in the 19th and 20th centuries, Shenzhen has been flooded with international exhibitions, world fairs, design competitions, architecture biennales, and maker festivals. When Shenzhen was designated as a CoD by UNESCO in 2008, an Art and Design Gallery that is affiliated with the state-owned enterprise Overseas Chinese Town Group opened. It claimed to be the first museum devoted to design. After that, more design museums were established. What are the political and social relations behind the phenomenon? What roles do design museums in China play in society? Since the “exhibitionary complex” is associated with the power apparatus of the authorities (Bennett, 1995), the industrial exhibitions and museums of the 19th century glorified the value of commercial products and created a modern vision of a capitalist metropolis. Is the musealization of design in China undertaken with a similar assumption? How do design museums practice their roles and functions in a socialist city in a postsocialist era? Would the establishment of design museums contribute to the cultural environment of the city along with its economic development?

## 1.2 Research Aims and Questions

The research aims to investigate the reasons for, and implications of, establishing design museums in China in the postsocialist era, and explores the social roles and functions of design museums in a changing China. The research does not intend to generalize a universal knowledge but rather to study the phenomenon anchored in the present. The research describes the social reality through personal interaction, communication, and observation, and develops an interpretive analysis of the phenomenon. The research inquires into the following:

- a. What is the reason for the formation of design museums in China?
- b. What are the implications of the establishment of design museums?
- c. What are the functions of Chinese design museums in the postsocialist era?

With a special focus on the cases in Shenzhen, a modern Chinese metropolis and a designated model city, the thesis explores the roles and functions of these design museums in the cultural and urban context of Shenzhen, which has embarked on cultural development and renovation since 2003. These cases were established in different periods and differ in modes of management and sources of funding. Through analyzing and comparing three cases, the research investigates the shift of museum roles and functions in relation to the cultural ambition and strategic transformation of Shenzhen.

## 1.3 Research Methodology

The research follows an interpretive and constructive paradigm and adopts a qualitative approach to studying design museums in China in a postsocialist era. Qualitative research intends to understand social realities and “forms of action” and to help to understand the structures and patterns of social reproduction and its rationale



(Flick et al., 2004a, p. 65). It requires research to be undertaken through a contextual lens and to develop a holistic understanding of research issues. The functions of museums in society are relational, as society constantly changes (Kirchberg, 2015), and so the cases will be examined within the political and cultural, as well as the industrial, setting of the city in a postsocialist context.

According to Yanow and Ybema (2009, p. 40), organizational research is “ontologically constructivist (rather than realist) and epistemologically interpretive (rather than objectivist)”. Taking a constructivist stance, the researcher empirically explores the “subjective meanings” connected with specific research topics within social, cultural and historical settings (Creswell, 2007, p. 20). Social reality is constructed, relative, and subject to change over time and space (Mertens, 2009). For qualitative research, processes of social construction and the interaction between the meanings and contexts can lead to an understanding of social reality (Flick et al., 2004b). Interpretivism helps to generate meanings of design museums through the points of view of different individuals (Creswell, 2007). In contrast to positivism, research from the interpretivist perspective acknowledges that realities have various potentials and are intersubjective (Schwartz-Shea & Yanow, 2011), and that the logic of this is to construct knowledge inductively.

The case study was also adopted as a research strategy. Case study research is a qualitative methodology that investigates an issue by intensively studying one or several cases in a fixed context, and using detailed description (Creswell, 2007). The cases selected should have rich information that can “manifest the phenomenon intensely” (Creswell, 2007, p. 127), as well as be typical and unique in some respect (R. K. Yin, 2003). The OCT Gallery, Design Society, and Shenzhen Museum of Industry are therefore chosen as case studies, as they are typical and manifest models that are distinctive from each other. The selected museums are non-profit museums

that are open to the public and have held regular exhibitions and educational programs for more than three years.

### 1.3.1 The Theoretical Framework

The research focuses on the functional systems within the framework of contextualistic museum sociology. In the 1980s, sociology as a science engaged with museums and assisted museums regarding education, marketing, and visitor services. The advent of the new museology<sup>4</sup> in the 1970s strengthened the relationship between museums and sociology, which was expected to provide theoretical grounds and reliable methods for museology. Accordingly, museums became a part of the sociological sub-field as they induce and stem from social action (Kirchberg, 2015, p. 233). The new museology and museum sociology thus intersected with each other, and together they formed a theoretical foundation and rationale for museums. At the turn of the century, the cultural turn in sociology began delving into the museal action level and critically reviewing traditional functions of a museum. Cultural sociology expanded a museum's competence, such as being an institution that provided entertaining activities and preserved and communicated collective memory (Kirchberg, 2015). Visitors become the subject in museums, and museums and their exhibitions and contents become polysemic and multiperspectival. The relations between museum, culture and sociology can be seen in the Figure 2.

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<sup>4</sup> The new museology addressed the functions of museums and the relationship between museums and their public on a more philosophical level (McCall & Gray, 2014). It shifts the museum's focus from the technical level to the theoretical and humanistic level and asks about the purposes of museums (Vergo, 1989). This museological change was associated with the interest in sociology in the museum realm.

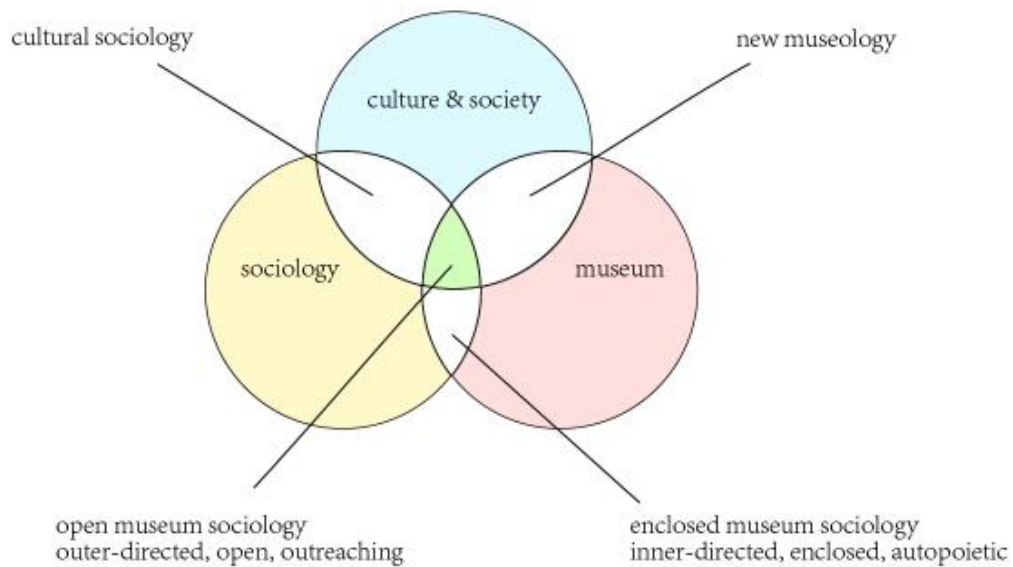


Figure 2. Relations between Museum, Culture and Sociology based on Kirchberg's Theory (Kirchberg, 2015)

Kirchberg (2015) distinguishes the contextualistic as open museum sociology and the textualistic as enclosed museum sociology. The former concerns outer-directed and contextualistic analyses based on politics, which focus on the production, distribution, organization, and consumption of exhibitions and museums in their social contexts. The latter involves an autopoietic and textualistic analysis of poetics, which is embedded in hermeneutic sociology and looks into the analysis of the inherent order of the museums, exhibitions, collections and their programs from an inner-directed perspective. The display of objects, narratives of texts and labels, exhibition design, the acquisition of collections, and marketing and education activities, are all symbols with signified meanings.

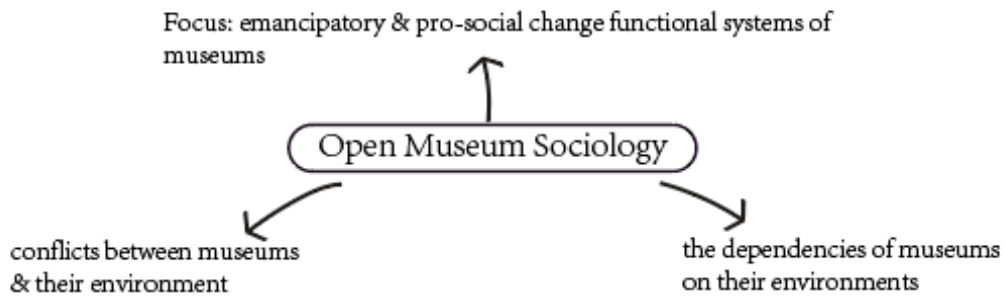


Figure 3. Politics of Open Museum Sociology

Museums in contextualistic sociology are interpreted as “a palimpsest of the influences of museum producers, museum consumers, and other social institutions influencing the museum from the outside” (Kirchberg, 2015, p. 242). This outer-directed, open museum sociology explores museums in a polyvalent, diachronic and contingent context. The politics of contextualistic analysis also focus on the conflicts between museums and their environments and the reliance of museums on their environments. As social agents, social power relations and the emancipatory role of museums for social change are often discussed in this open museum sociology as well. This concerns the functional systems of museums, which is one of the central discourses in the politics of contextualistic museum sociology (Kirchberg, 2015).

In sociology, function is “a mode of social action” (Munch, 1976, p. 209). This means, in a social system, that function is considered to be features of a social unit and its effect, consequence, intention, or purpose. Museums have traditional and internal functions of collecting, preserving, researching and displaying that are institutionalized with fixed rules (Kirchberg, 2003). They also confront external demands from social actors and the public.

Borrowing Robert Merton’s theory of functions, Kirchberg dichotomized museums’ functions into manifest functions and latent functions. Manifest functions are consequences that are intended and anticipated by a unit, and latent functions are the

opposite—they are hidden from the public. This means, for museums, that manifest functions are often the propagated functions, such as educating the public, marketing the city, and promoting certain cultural and political ideology, while latent functions are concealed from the public and concerned with sociology as they are subject to personal ideas and decisions (Kirchberg, 2003). Although latent functions are sometimes unexpected, they can be neutral, beneficial, or negative.

The research into the cases considers the relationships between museums and their social environment and is inspired by Kirchberg’s taxonomic framework of museum functions. In this framework, Kirchberg (2003) concludes there are multiple manifest and latent functions of museums in terms of urban planning, architecture, urban imagineering, urban policy and new museology in his examination of museums’ functions in the post-industrial city. These factors are considered in the design of interviews and questionnaires. However, the results may not fit perfectly into his argument, and more factors would be explored and examined when conducting archival research and field trips.

### 1.3.2 Research Process and Data Collection Methods

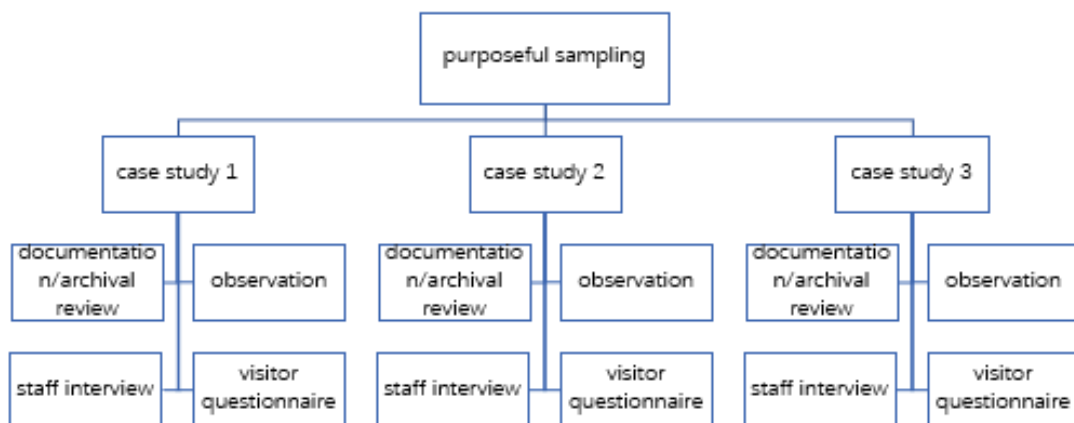


Diagram 1. Research Process

Before starting the case study, the contextualization process traced back the advent of design museums, the historical changes of design and museums, and trends in national and municipal strategies in China. In the case study stage, multiple sources of evidence were collected to construct validity. The research follows a research design as above (Diagram 1). In qualitative research, the researcher collects data in a natural setting by interacting with research subjects (Creswell, 2007). One tactic for constructing the validity of case study research involves using different sources of evidence (R. K. Yin, 2003). There are generally six sources of evidence: “documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, participant-observation, and physical artifacts” (R. K. Yin, 2003, p. 85). In this research, documentation, archival records, interviews, direct observations, and visitor questionnaires were identified as key sources of evidence which combine the primary and secondary information and would be synthesized when analyzing case studies. The reasons for this are given below:

#### *Documentation and Archival Records*

Documentation and archival records are considered secondary data, and include museum’ websites, official accounts in social media (in this case, WeChat),<sup>5</sup> reports, newsletters, newspaper clippings, exhibition catalogs, and publications in journals or monographs. As museums have an effect on their visitors, they may also have an impact on non-visitors through media presence, advertising campaigns, and symbolic power (Kirchberg, 2015). Both the WeChat official accounts of museums and the official websites of the museums and their founders contain valuable information that indicates how they convey their activities and ideas to the public, and a museum’s social relations with different parties. Museum annual reports, policies, newsletters, newspaper clippings, and publications are examined, as they sometimes indicate how

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<sup>5</sup> WeChat is commonly used as a platform for museums in China to disseminate museum information to the public.

the museum functions and operates. In addition, reports of related entities and governmental documents for policies are also imperative so as to find clues to a museum's sociopolitical environment, social connections, and public activities and to observe the evolving attitudes of these social entities. Desk research assembles valuable information and is crucial to build a picture of the case studies and social environment, such as the needs of related social entities and trends of governmental policies. Documentation or archival records cannot reveal the truth, however, because they are indirect evidence, and sometimes they are written for some specific reasons (R. K. Yin, 2003). Analysis of the content of secondary sources is necessary to correlate with the firsthand materials, and therefore interviews and observation were conducted in order to establish connections between different sources of evidence.

### *Observation*

Field visits are frequently undertaken, along with observation during the research period. The researcher also participates in some public programs organized by the museums as participant-observation. The purposes are to: (a) examine the curation and arrangement of museums' exhibitions and events, (b) observe their interaction with the communities, and (c) identify the differences between their exhibitions and events and what they claimed in social media. Exhibitions' catalogs or leaflets will be kept as archives; photographs and memos will be taken during visits. Since observation is easily affected by personal experiences and biased opinions, other sources of evidence are thus needed.

### *Semi-structured Interviews*

As the museum sociology questions the relationship between museums and society, what concerns the research are museum's social relations as well as their social practices and actions. The research conducts semi-structured interviews with these museum staff, for instance, the organizers of exhibitions and public programs. The

results of interviews are crucial to understanding the museum's internal mechanism and their opinions toward the public which might not be revealed publicly. In many situations, the managerial works or the choices of exhibitions may be interfered with by some exogenous pressures. In addition, subjective bias or misunderstandings during interviewing could also happen from time to time, but an interview is still a crucial approach that can provide imperative information supplemental to documentation review.

### *Visitor Questionnaire*

The visitor questionnaire helps to identify who visits museums, and for understanding the opinions that visitors have of museums and how museums function and contribute to the public in reality. They are a common approach in museum visitor studies (Sheng & Chen, 2012). The demographic information, attitudes, and preferences of visitors are seen as symbols that signify a wide range of means. In general, there are structural factors and agent-specific factors in museum sociology (Kirchberg, 2015). The poles of dichotomy, however, are inseparable and complementary. Structural factors generally include visitors' socio-economic and demographic information, such as gender and educational background, which may indicate their interest in attending, or not attending museums, while agent-specific factors include the voluntariness and autonomous and proactive will of visitors when visiting museums (Kirchberg, 2015).

This research collects on-site questionnaires in each museum. A sample of the questionnaire is presented in Appendix III. Of the factors (such as age range, gender, occupation, reasons for visit, frequency of visits, enjoyment of visit, and suggestions) indicated by Ambrose and Paine (2018), the questionnaire considers two dichotomic factors, and asks about the basic background of the visitors—the demographic information will reflect the diversity of visitors, and their needs, evaluations, and expectations of the museums. Both five-point rating scales and open-ended questions will be used. The former method gathers relative information about visitor



expectations and evaluations; the latter allows visitors to provide answers that are related to their background and personal experiences. The study aims to collect around 200 valid questionnaires for each museum as a sample size above 200 can increase reliability (Ambrose & Paine, 2018; Sheng & Chen, 2012). The goal of the research is to build up a picture of museum visitors and understand how visitors perceive and evaluate the performance of the museums. The opinions of these visitors, along with the results of the researcher’s observations, will create a general evaluation of the museums’ social functions and roles, which is connected to answering part of the third research question.

Table 1.

*The Linkage between the Sources of Evidence*

Research questions	Staff interview	Observation	Visitor questionnaire
History and reasons for opening	Q1. What is the reason/background for opening the museum?	Research combined with documentations	
Internal responsibilities related to the expectation of their founders	Q2. What is the mission of the museum/department?	Research combined with documentations	
	Q3. How does it organize activities and curate exhibitions? Q4. What are the criteria for selecting objects for display or collections? Q5. Who are its target audiences?	Examine the curatorial and organizing mechanisms. Would it consider including opinions from the public? (Connected with Q7 and Q8)	
Social functions and roles	Q6. How does it acquire funding and support from its founders, government funds, or social entities?	Examine relations and social networks of the museums.	

	Q.7 What is the museum’s commitment to society and its visitors? Q8. How does it achieve it? Are there any difficulties?	Does the museum fulfill its missions? What are its social contributions? (Connected with Q7 and Q2)	Background of visitors  Their expectations and evaluations of the museum
	Q.9 What messages does it want to convey to the public through its exhibitions and activities?	Evaluate visitors’ opinions.	

A link between the sources of information is shown in Table 1. The interview questions and visitor questionnaires served to correlate with the research questions and observations. These textual records and transcripts of interviews (interview questions are presented in Appendix II) were reviewed closely, and MAXQDA<sup>6</sup> was used as a coding tool. The codes focused on several aspects: background of the founding and governing party, museum missions and strategies, location and building, museum personnel, exhibitions, educational programming, public services and facilities, sources of funds, and social relations. The codes were considered with reference to the *Accreditation and Assessment Standard* issued by the State Administration of Cultural Heritage (*The Decision of Publishing the Museum Accreditation and Assessment Standard by the State Administration of Cultural Relics*, 2020) and the *Important Art Museums Assessment Standard* issued by the State Bureau of Culture (*The Announcement of Publishing the Important Art Museums Assessment Standard (Revised Version) by the State Bureau of Culture*, 2014). These standards and programs are released by qualified organizations that serve to evaluate and assess museum performance and capacity.

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<sup>6</sup> MAXQDA is a widely used software for collecting and organizing unstructured data in qualitative research.

### 1.3.3 Data Collection

Data collection was undertaken from September 2020 to August 2021. A large number of documents and archival records, including articles from the official websites of museums and their founders, press releases, media reports, publications, and articles from their WeChat account, were collected (Table 2). Several aspects related to the museums, such as the background of the founding and governing party, museum missions and strategies, location and building, museum personnel, exhibitions, educational programming, public services and facilities, sources of funds, and social relations, were closely scrutinized.

Table 2.

#### *Data Collected During Research*

Case study	OCT Art and Design Gallery	Design Society	Shenzhen Museum of Industry
Documentations and archival records	Articles from the official website of the museum and its founder, press releases, media reports, publications, and 1,084 articles from its WeChat account published from July 4, 2013, to November 20, 2020	Articles from the official website of the museum and its founder, press releases, media reports, publications, annual reviews, blogs of the V&A team, and 476 articles from its WeChat account published from December 12, 2017, to November 13, 2020.	Articles from the official website of the museum and its governing body, press releases, media reports, and 781 articles from its WeChat account published from March 26, 2015, to January 29, 2021
Semi-structured interviews	Interview with two staff members from the education and curatorial departments  Informal conversation with a former staff member	Interview with the deputy director and two staff members from the education and curatorial departments  Informal conversation with two former staff members	Interview with two staff members from the administrative office

Visitor questionnaires	154 (collected from August 4, 2021, to August 19, 2021)	202 (collected from July 15, 2021, to July 23, 2021)	202 (collected from August 5, 2021, to August 13, 2021)
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All the collected data will be synthesized alongside the case studies analysis in the Chapter 5, 6, and 7. Interviews with museum staff were conducted during the data collection period, and visitor questionnaires were collected in each museum from July to August 2021 (Table 2). Both the Museum of Industry and DS collected 202 valid questionnaires within two weeks, and the OCT Gallery collected 154 valid questionnaires in 15 days. The study aimed to retrieve 200 valid questionnaires for each museum, however, the number of samples in the OCT Gallery was less than expected. The data collection might have been affected by the COVID-19 situation, as the COVID-19 outbreak recurred in several provinces around July 2021, and Guangdong implemented restrictions for controlling visitors to public organizations. As the gallery is in the OCT region for culture and tourism, the number of travelers might have decreased. Moreover, the opening ceremony of a new exhibition in OCT Gallery and one public lecture were cancelled, and this could have affected media visibility and public communication, and reduced visitor numbers.

As suggested by Diamond (1999), the minimum random sample size of 96 visitors is adequate to make generalization about a museum with 50,000 visitors per year if 10 percent sampling error is tolerated. The sample size is the same even if the museum has more visitors (Diamond, 1999). Although the number of visitors to the OCT Gallery is not revealed, and given that the average number of local museum visitors was 46,730—the number was generated by the total annual attendance of visitors (2,523,400) in 54 Shenzhen museums according to the data collected in 2020 (The Department of Culture and Tourism of Guangdong Province, 2021), the research considered the 154 samples collected in the OCT Gallery as acceptable.

#### 1.4 Scope, Outline, and Contribution of the Research

The thesis defines the design museum as a research, educational, cultural, and non-profit institution that is dedicated to design and its related issues. The definition includes non-commercial museal institutions, such as design centers and galleries, as long as they serve similar functions as museums.

The next chapter traces back the history of the design museum and examines the Design Museum in London in relation to its origins from the *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations* and the V&A Museum, and its role as an instrument for shaping a consumer society in Britain. The chapter reviews and analyzes commodity fetishism and consumer capitalism in the 19th and 20th centuries, when design became cultural capital in driving economic growth and the design museum was formed as a cultural disseminator and a tool of civil control in the capitalist economy.

Before delving into the case studies, the third chapter reviews how design and museums have developed in China since the mid-19th century in order to contextualize the advent of Chinese design museums as both concepts of “design” and “museum” were foreign transplants. The chapter also discusses how the development of design and museums might be closely related to the modernization of China.

The fourth chapter discusses how Shenzhen, the first designated CoD and model city in China, rose from a socialist experiment of market reform to a model city playing a leading role in the economy, science, and technology of China and how it began its cultural reformation and development in this century. Shenzhen was the first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in 1980, established in the early reformation period. It has grown from an experiment to a “model city” that practices a market economy and has accumulated wealth and economic strength in the past 40 years. It is the epitome of a

modern Chinese metropolis. Three case studies are selected in Shenzhen, China, using methods including observations, field trips, interviews, and questionnaires.

The fifth to seventh chapter respectively focuses on three cases: the Shenzhen Museum of Industry (1985), the OCT Art and Design Gallery (2008), and the Design Society (2017). The establishment of the design-oriented cultural organizations reveals Shenzhen's cultural positioning and strategic turn, and demonstrates its cultural ambition. The cases were established by different sectors and periods, and reveal a shift in the museum realm, where the government plays a lesser role in cultural undertakings and private sectors intervene in the transformation and commercialization of cultural organizations. Museum functions and roles thus changed and diversified in line with policy trends, as well as the needs of patrons such as the government and private parties who intervened.

The last chapter synthesizes the thesis contents and answers the research questions. The research limitations and directions for possible future research are also included in the chapter.

The research primarily contributes to disclosing the reasons for establishing design museums and what roles they play in a socialist state in a postsocialist period. Second, it evaluates and reflects on the current practices of design museums in Shenzhen as part of cultural development and renovation in China. Thirdly, the study contributes to understanding design in a cultural perspective and discuss how design museums provide a scenario of design, not as commodities for exchange, but as cultural items and ideas that are reflective, speculative, and critical. Fourth, since there were few studies delving into cases in China, the research hence contributes to the literature of design museum studies with the cases from China.

## CHAPTER 2 Design Museums and their Critical Discourses

### 2.1 Introduction

The origin of design museums has been intertwined in history with fairs, expos, and cultural diplomacy (Williams, 2016). This chapter reviews the history of design museums in order to understand the social and cultural background of the new genre of museums. The chapter will define the design museum accordingly and discuss related critical discourses of museums and international exhibitions that are dominant in the recent decades.

### 2.2 From World Exhibitions to Design Museums

Industrial fairs can be traced back to the 1790s, with France being an enthusiastic pioneer in displaying national economic power and technological development (Greenhalgh, 1988). Subsequently, many fairs and exhibitions were organized to present the latest design and manufacturing in industrial countries such as Germany and the UK. The *Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations (Great Exhibition)* in 1851 was historically important in the history of world exhibitions. After the first industrial revolution derived from England in the 1760s, Great Britain became a free-trade nation in the 1840s and made it possible to compete economically with other countries such as France. During a half-century of rapid evolution in industry, the British saw the need and proposed to organize the exhibition for the purposes of presenting and competing for the development of scientific and industrial progress.



Figure 4. The *Great Exhibition* of the Works of Industry of All Nations, 1851

The *Great Exhibition* was intended to expand the economic market to the rest of the world. It was an overwhelming event that presented over 10,000 of the latest industrial products, such as steam engines and looms from 25 countries. Around six million people from different countries attended this exhibition. The architecture itself, the Crystal Palace, was also a revolutionary miracle that used new material, new techniques, and new forms of that time. It created a “phantasmagoria,” as Walter Benjamin (1999, p. 7) termed it.

These international industrial exhibitions marked the beginning of exhibitions of design and went on to become a cultural phenomenon in Europe. However, they were more than spaces to display objects from their inception. They were seen as a tool with which to enhance commerce, promote new technology, educate the middle class, and elaborate a political stance (Greenhalgh, 1988). The displayed objects and the four themes of peace, trade, education, and progress in the *Great Exhibition* reflected the spirit of the time and the state-of-the-art industries and technologies, while it implemented the modern strategy of cultural diplomacy and an intention to construct national identity. Taking the *All German Exhibition* (1844) as an example, Gareth Williams (2016) points out that displays of design objects were considered to be cultural and political agents and embodiments of national identities.



### 2.2.1 The V&A Museum as a Model for Design Museums

After the *Great Exhibition*, one of its initiators, Sir Henry Cole, collected outstanding products of the exhibition and, in 1852, founded the Museum of Manufactures, which later split into the V&A Museum, which focused on decorative arts and the Science Museum, which focused on science and technology. The incentives of the Museum of Decorative Arts were economic development, civic improvement, and social betterment under the national crisis of industrialization. The museum had proved to be effective in improving the taste of manufacturers, artists and the public by presenting the achievements of the past (Pevsner, 2014).

Following the model of the V&A Museum, many museums dedicated to decorative arts and applied arts were set up, beginning in central Europe and spreading to other countries in the world. Many of them combined museums with schools of design, which became a significant phenomenon in the second half of the 19th century. There were also some art museums, such as the Museum of Modern Art (MoMA) in New York and the Centre Pompidou in Paris that started collecting design works and creating design exhibitions after the 1930s.

A large number of decorative arts in the *Great Exhibition* formed the nucleus of the V&A Museum. Although today the V&A Museum positions itself as a leading museum of art and design, there were controversies over the Museum collection for quite a period, because both the patrons and academies valued fine art or high art, which has been the canon in the history of collecting, and at the same time, downgraded the value of collecting design. There was disagreement between administrators, such as Henry Cole, who was an advocate of manufactural objects and objects of daily use, and curators, such as John Charles Robinson, who placed value on the standards of aesthetic art. As Mark Goodwin (1990) states, the Museum, in the

beginning, intended to collect and display manufactured objects for contemporary industrial interest and their didactic function rather than their visual appearances and styles. Later, the principle changed and manufactured design or even contemporary art gave way to objects of European culture and British art (Goodwin, 1990).

The Circulation Department (Circ) played an important role in developing design collections for the V&A Museum (Weddell, 2012; 2016). It was initiated in 1848 as part of the Design Reform movement, aiming to improve the national industrial design so as to compete with foreign peers. It initiated the first kinds of touring exhibitions that loaned objects to regional museums, libraries, schools, and colleges. Apart from collecting some important historical works, Circ made a great contribution to collecting contemporary international and British design—Victorian and Edwardian design, as educational materials for manufacturers, designers and the public (Weddell, 2012). The ethos of Circ was coherent with Henry Cole’s dictum. After the Second World War, Circ commissioned permanent collections to encourage design and industry. The department provided unprecedented and imaginative foresight in collecting contemporary materials and, as Weddell (2012) states, it was regarded as “a museum within a museum”.

According to Weddell (2016), Circ functioned as a bridge connecting nation and regions, domestic and international, design and industry, and public and the market. Three principles guided the practices of Circ:

...on scholarship, for unique, securely provenance, aesthetic objects; on material and process, supporting students, industry, export and commerce; and on contemporary design, shaping the “good taste” of the ideal citizen as an arm of progressive government (2016, p. 17).

From the statement, it is clear that the department not only served an educational function but also played a political role in regulating the actions of citizens and an

economic role in promoting commerce and industry. When it was disbanded in the mid-1970s due to institutional changes, artists, critics and educators bemoaned the loss of the Museum, which “would become just another passive, metropolitan monolith, to be visited by out-of-towners once or twice a year” (As quoted in Weddell, 2012). By that time, many were criticizing the V&A as “failing to be a Museum of Modern Design” (Weddell, 2018, p. 124). In 1978 Dorothy Reynolds (1978) wrote a short article *Do We Need A Museum of Modern Design?* lamenting the closure of Circ and criticizing the restriction of study facilities as well as the indeterminacy of the V&A in opening a 20th century gallery.

### 2.2.2 The Design Museum London

During the years 1981 to 1986, the Boilerhouse Project was established by the Conran Foundation, initiated by Terence Conran, who is a trained designer, Chair of Habitat/Mothercare and a member of the Advisory Council of the V&A, to exhibit and promote design as an educational platform for students, practitioners, and industry (Bayley, 1983). The project was independent of the V&A, housed in a refurbished building of the Museum’s boilerhouse yard. Similar to the objectives of Circ and the V&A, the project aimed to use design to serve the public and the industry and reinforce British design as a leading creative economy (Wilson, 2016).

The 1980s was the “design decade” (as quoted in Twemlow, 2017, p. 139). Design played an imperative role in constructing the consumer society of the UK. It was “an economic weapon and a ‘key to national salvation’” (Twemlow, 2017, p. 139), because British industry was experiencing a crisis of malaise and there was hostility towards the importation of products, such as cars, telecommunications and domestic appliances (Bayley, 1983; Reynolds, 1978). In fact, the crisis had existed for a century, because the UK was competing with France in the mid-19th century, and in

the 1980s, with Germany and Japan. Until then, the advent of the new “machine art, ‘gute Form,’ or craft-based production” became norms for industrial design, and designers were eager to find new examples to guide them. Many design exhibitions, trade fairs, design competitions, and design festivals were organized by the British government, impelled by the desire to promote the national creative industry (Twemlow, 2017). The Conran Foundation was founded and served to educate the public about “industrial and manufacturing art and design in its historical, social, artistic, industrial and commercial contexts,” as well as to sponsor design schools such as the Royal College of Art and Central St. Martin (*The Conran Foundation*, n.d.). The seminal project concerned material culture that involved all aspects of mass production and held around 20 design exhibitions in six years.

From the very beginning, Conran was considering finding a permanent site for this project and provide design examples for industry and guiding students and young designers (Bayley, 1983). By that time, as many established museums of applied art began collecting modern objects, being a museum of modern design was not a fresh idea, but it was a competitive one. The Foundation’s exhibitions embraced not only objects and images but also the raw material involved in design processes and aimed to change the prejudice against mass-production (Bayley, 1983).

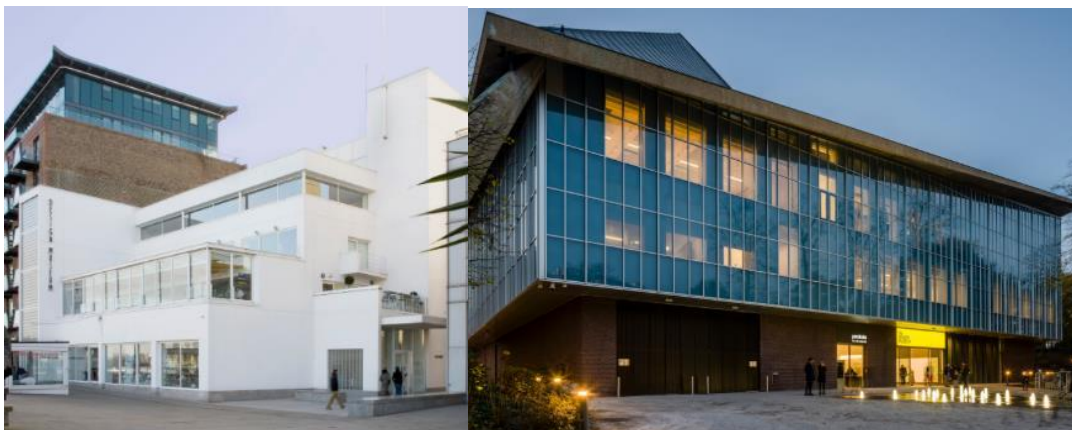


Figure 5. The Design Museum in London (1989-2016)

Figure 6. The New Building (2016- )

In 1989, a home for this project was settled on the South Bank of the Thames River, and it was officially named the Design Museum. It is the first museum that has been exclusively dedicated to design. In the early days, the scope of the Design Museum was narrowly limited to graphic design and mass-produced industrial design, such as chairs, radios, and telephones. Customized design, engineering design, fashion and textile design, and environmental design were downplayed. The exhibitions were arranged chronologically (Usherwood, 1991) and grounded in modernist historical narratives that had hitherto dominated in art museums (Ryan, 2016). Now, it has developed into a museum that offers multiple perspectives on design and the ever-changing landscape it resides in.

## 2.3 The Design Museum and its Discourses

### 2.3.1 Defining Design and its Musealization

“Design” is a term with more than one meaning. As a verb, it means the action of creating, intending, sketching or conceiving; as a noun, it means the conception of planning, scheming, pattern-decorating or plotting (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). The *Design Dictionary* links design with “a great number of human activities,” “a defined and professional practice,” “art-making and the construction of objects and spaces,” “craftsmanship,” and in the industrial age, engineering-based and mass-produced items (Erlhoff et al., 2008, p. 105). They acknowledge that the meaning of design is complex and evolving, and it is difficult to have a standard and authoritative definition of the term.

Generally, there are several features of design. Firstly, design is a social practice rooted in the industrial revolution (Parsons, 2016) with the rise of capitalism and consumerism. Sparke (1986) characterizes design in alliance with mass production

and the 20<sup>th</sup> century in the UK. As she illustrates, although the notion of “mass” took root before the 19th century, it was the 20th century, when mechanization was widely accomplished along with the increasing population and rising middle class, which provided a hotbed for the unprecedented scale of manufacturing and consumption. In this regard, design serves capitalism in association with markets and industrialization.

Secondly, design is a problem-solving mental activity that generates plausible plans for a new thing (Parsons, 2016). Similarly, as Anne-Marie Willis (2019) illustrates, design, out of the desire for change, transfers conceptual ideas into tangible commercial products or intangible services and experiences:

...design focuses, crystallizes, channels and directs yearning, aspirations, feelings—noble and venal, reasonable and trivial—toward purchasable things, commodities, products, services, experiences (2019, p. 3).

This resonates with Herbert Simon’s (1996) notion that design is expected to devise a set of intended actions to transform or improve existing objects. These explanations denote the utilitarian and commercial aspects of design.

Moreover, being aesthetically pleasing is also crucial to design. But this feature has been disputed, as the standard of beauty is contingent and transient through time and space. There was a modernist distaste towards ornament in early 20th century Europe, exemplified by Adolf Loos’s manifesto *Ornament and Crime* (1908). Many designers and critics from his time also attacked the use of ornament in daily design objects, as ornament shrouded the functionality of design (Long, 2009). However, as Long (2009) points out, Loos did not lose faith in ornament, just as he was confident of the traditional crafts-making. Instead, he emancipated ornament and created a new aesthetic value. Besides, the aestheticization of design as in “the aestheticization of everyday life”—a term introduced by Mike Featherstone—is more than necessary in a consumer society (Williams, 2009, p. 17). In an era that witnesses “the rise of look

and feel,” stylization of design thus can attract the consumer and stimulate the commercial market (Postrel, 2003, p. 34).

Based on the above understanding of design, it is a creation of capitalism and industrialization that intends to transform desirable concepts into consumable objects, experiences or services with the market as a target. It is, in general, aesthetic, commercial, and functional. However, as design evolves rapidly, its territory has expanded and somehow breached the previous rules and assumptions. Academia and industry attempted to categorize design into more specific areas, such as product design, fashion design, graphic design, interior design, engineering design, and architecture design. This demarcation is problematic as design today is a collaborative and interdisciplinary practice that creates hybrid objects (Lees-Maffei & Sandino, 2004) or services.

The 20th century has witnessed design growing from a commercial activity into a profession (Buchanan, 1992). The Bauhaus in Weimar embodied the beginning of modern design education. There were some training schools of industrial design in the first half of the 19th century in some industrialized European countries, but they were not very different from those schools of arts and crafts that offered drawing and imitation courses (Pevsner, 1940/2014). But it was Bauhaus that combined art and crafts training and concomitantly embraced machines. In Bauhaus, artists, artisan, and architects were working together, and artisanship blended with machinery production. Bauhaus succeeded not only in theory but also in practice. Their products were iconic design examples after the First World War. This successful model of design education, after its closure, had expanded its impact on other areas of the world.

Since the 1960s, many design societies and organizations, such as the Design Research Society (1966), the Design Management Institute (1975), and the Design History Society (1997) were founded by design researchers and practitioners. In the 1980s and 1990s, more academic journals of design theory, research, and

methodology were published, further establishing design’s professional place in academia. In this context, Bruce Archer (1979) proposed establishing design as a discipline based on the fact that design had been tightly interconnected with science and technology in the second half of the 20th century.

Nigel Cross (2001, 2006) proposed design as a third area in education, separating from science and the humanities. In the past, design had been regarded as industrial art or applied art, which is a matter of styling—“the application [of Fine Art] to the needs of everyday life” (Rudolf Eitelberger, as quoted by Pevsner, 2014, p. 258). Cross defines design as an artificial science that aims to deal with “ill-defined problems” with creative “solution-focused cognitive strategies” (2006, p. vi). It is distinct from sciences and humanities (Table 3) while at the same time interdisciplinary with them.

Table 3.

*Nigel Cross’s Differentiation of Design, Sciences, and Humanities.*

	Design	Sciences	Humanities
Subjects	the artificial world	the natural world	human experience
Methods	modeling, pattern-formation, synthesis	controlled experiment, classification, analysis	analogy, metaphor, evaluation
Values	practicality, ingenuity, empathy, and concern for “appropriateness.”	objectivity, rationality, neutrality, and concern for ‘truth.’	subjectivity, imagination, commitment, and concern for “justice.”

Meanwhile, design plays an increasingly important role in contemporary life (Buchanan, 1992). To be specific, there are four broad areas: “the design of symbolic and visual communications,” “the design of material objects,” “the design of activities and organized services,” and “the design of complex systems or environments for living, working, playing, and learning” (Buchanan, 1992, pp. 9–10). Design’s



intimacy with daily life and society provides rich information worth research in cultural studies. Academia further argues that there should be a place for design culture, which is different from visual culture and material culture (Julier et al., 2019). Visual culture and material culture were two academic disciplines dominant in past decades (Julier, 2006). The former primarily focuses on images and the latter on material objects. But both of them expose limitations for studying design, as design is not just about a visual artifact to be used or “read,” it also deals with objects, images, and spaces within the system of interrelationships of designers, production, and consumption (Julier, 2006).

In addition, since many new visual technologies, such as virtual reality emerge, the focus of study shifts from ocularcentrism to issues of engagement that shape spatial, temporal and visual cognition and experience (Julier, 2006), which challenge the study of design within the visual cultural theory. Design culture is needed to concentrate on fast-changing contemporary meanings of design in association with expanded fields of academic inquiry and design practices that were grounded by a historical understanding of design (Julier et al., 2019). The establishment of design culture provides justification and rich context for academic institutions, such as universities and museums to study design.

Functionalism is a feature that was advocated by the 20th century modernists. In the 1990s, there are critical interventions of design that challenge the original notion of design and speculate on the role of design in culture, society, and daily life. This notion of design is not product-oriented and does not apply to mass production and consumption. This is distinct from the functionalism in the 20th century (NeuesMuseum, 2004). This so-called critical design, or speculative design, as opposed to affirmative design, is one form of design criticism developed by Anthony Dunne and Fiona Raby (Dunne & Raby, n.d.; Russell, 2016). It is related to conceptual design, design fiction, and radical design. It is critical, attitudinal,

expressive, and reflective of social problems and design ideologies. Since it works beyond the consumer market and domestic consumption, design researchers, such as Gillian Russell (2007, 2016) and Alice Twemlow (2017), who studied design exhibitions in the museum context, argue that design exhibitions are embodiments of criticality and an approach of addressing design criticism. According to Twemlow (2017), in 1990s London, an anti-consumerism and anti-lifestyle exhibition of critical design provided a distinctive type of design exhibition that was different from the promotional exhibitions organized by the government. Moreover, this exhibition presented an alternative understanding of design as embodied criticality and as objects that resonated emotionally with their designers and their users (Twemlow, 2017). This understanding would prove to be thought-provoking in the setting of design exhibitions when the field was dominated by the governmental promotional exhibitions and the stylish taste in living.

When designers and scholars were debating the independence of design disciplines, professions began to reflect on whether a museum of design should be established (Reynolds, 1978), and soon the Design Museum London was initiated. The Conran Foundation established the museum to conform with, and primarily provide support for, the birth of a new set of knowledges (Bennett, 1995), each of which is deployable in a museum that can classify and order the objects and peoples in their interrelations. This professional turn uplifts the status of design and enriches the educational and cultural value of collecting and displaying design. At the same time, it provides a justification for the establishment of a museum of design.

### 2.3.2 Defining the Design Museum

As indicated in Appendix I and mentioned in the previous chapter, museums based on the V&A model flourished in European countries from the 1850s to 1989. Many

museums of this kind began collecting design as part of their collection development scheme, however, they seldom paid attention exclusively to the subject of design. It was around the 1980s that many such museums started adapting their strategy and enacting a new mission which specifically focused on design and its related issues.

Although the establishment of the Design Museum London in 1989 marked the beginning of design museums, the design museum is not yet a defined classification in museum studies, and people have different attitudes towards it. For architect and designer Sam Jacob, the design museum is a museum of commodity, of techniques and of anthropology; it presents objects that people are sometimes very familiar with (Jacob, 2017). Moreover, it is:

a place where the processes, ideologies and products of consumerism itself are displayed, and where we might see how design condenses vast systems, global supply chains, ideas of labour, relationships to natural resources, economics and more into things. The function of the display of things becomes a way to stage encounters with multiple ideas of what objects have been, are or might yet become (Jacob, 2017, p. 31).

Jacob briefly points out the different forms of design and the relationships of design with commerce, economics, and society. While Jacob's notion of design links with things might sound limited, Susana Gonzaga (2012), in her Ph.D. thesis, categorized various design museums by classification, such as architecture + design, applied art + design, product design, graphic design, and science + design. Gonzaga defined a design museum as:

any institution that by their means conserve, exhibit and communicate the nature of design discipline, throughout the ways of its own expression, the Design Culture in all its field of activity and manifestation (Gonzaga, 2012, p. 48).

Gonzaga's understanding of design museums is more comprehensive and inclusive. She acknowledges that design museums have various ways of expressing and practicing. In terms of the definition of "museum," a standard definition adopted by the International Council of Museums (ICOM) Statutes is:

A museum is a non-profit, permanent institution in the service of society and its development, open to the public, which acquires, conserves, researches, communicates and exhibits the tangible and intangible heritage of humanity and its environment for the purposes of education, study and enjoyment. (ICOM, n.d.)

This authorized definition shortlists the general requirements and functions of an ordinary museum. The ICOM's definition of the museum is an idealistic assumption of museums. Although it has been revised several times to adapt to the changes in museums, it is not undisputed. As Hooper-Greenhill points out, there is not only one form or one operating mode of museums, and museums' practices may have to be modified "according to the context, the plays of power and the social, economic, and political imperatives that surrounded them" (1992, p. 1). In other words, the museum is a barometer of changes in society, technology, culture and ideology (Hein, 2000), and it is mutable and could be affected by various factors and changed in different environments.

In the 1970s, museums, following the philosophy of the new museology, were driven by the public and social concerns and functioned beyond the boundary of a physical building (Harrison, 1993). The importance of collecting and conserving diminished. As Malcolm Mcleod (2012) suggests, museums, under some cultural circumstances, may not need to have collections<sup>7</sup>, and objects may fail to be meaningful and useful in

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<sup>7</sup> It is noteworthy that from the 1970s to the 1980s, the American Association of Museums (AAM) debated whether museums should have collections. The AAM compromised to include science museums and education museums without collections (Xu, 2016).

museums if their social role becomes inconsistent with the traditional values of museums. This means the definition of ICOM is not always applicable. Many new Chinese museums abandoned the function of collecting and have become more determined to be community- and visitor-centered under the impact of new museology.

Peter van Mensch stated that, by the end of the 20th century, museums were places that generate (new) ideas and knowledge and that the museum had been decentralized from a national machine to an institution for the local community (Chung, 2019).

Ideas in museums, rather than the objects, became the subject of museums.

Particularly when the development of digital and reproductive techniques challenge the values of collecting and the museum objects are restructured as “sites of experience,” museums become places for “delivering experiences” (Hein, 2000, p. 5).

This is more evident in new types of museums like design museums and science museums; as designers embrace new digital technology and science, especially virtual reality and artificial intelligence, design can refer to non-object, fictional and a constitution of experiences.

In this context, museums have expanded their emphasis from collecting, preserving, and displaying to researching, educating, and entertaining. More diverse forms of museums emerge and challenge the existing definition of ICOM. In this regard, the research sees the physical collection as an optional requirement when defining the design museum. Instead, the collection could be intangible concepts and cultural values that are associated with design and design culture. Based on this definition, a design museum is:

a non-profit, exhibitionary institution that is dedicated to issues of design and its environment for the sake of society. It includes other non-commercial museal institutions, such as design centers and galleries as long as they serve similar objectives.

### 2.3.3 Design Museums, Art Museums or Science Museums?

Due to the versatile and everchanging museum practices and collections shortlisted in the *Design Museums of the World* exhibition, it seems a somewhat elusive task to demarcate design museums and art museums. As Alice Rawsthorn comments:

Historically, design museums have tended to come in two guises. Some of the oldest, including the Museum of Applied Arts (MAK) in Vienna, Musée des Arts Décoratifs in Paris and the V&A, were founded in the 1800s as decorative arts museums ... The second model is that of the modern and contemporary art museums, which have embraced industrial design, inspired by Philip Johnson's work at MoMA in the mid-1900s (Rawsthorn, 2014).

The former put design into the category of industrial and decorative arts, while the latter saw the aesthetics in machines—the so-called “utilitarian beauty” in industrial manufactures and started the history of collecting design in art museums. Looking back to the statement of the Neues Museum, its practices follow an overlapping scheme of modern art museums and design museums (NeuesMuseum, 2004).

In the history and relationship between the V&A and the Design Museum London, the design museum is more like a biological child of the decorative arts museum, which falls into a more extensively categorized system of art museums. Since the 1930s, many art museums, such as MoMA, the Centre Pompidou, Museum of Applied Arts and Sciences in Sydney, and the National Gallery of Victoria in Melbourne set up departments of design and began systematically collecting design. The nascent design museum is a more specialized type of museum for the discipline of design and the design industry.

Historically, museums have rarely acquired works made by contemporary designers. Between 1975 and 1980, many one-offs and small-scale products from the first half of the 20th century were added to the collections. In the new century, collecting the 20th century and contemporary design became the primary target in decorative art museums, while some old decorative pieces in the collection were auctioned (Gimeno-Martínez & Verlinden, 2010).

As design engages more with science and technology, some design museums appear to be like science and technology museums or vice versa.<sup>8</sup> The hybridity of design museums may be due to the hybridity of design, which overlaps with the idea of decorating, utility, and technique. As Vilém Flusser (1999) claims, the words “design,” “mechanics,” “machine,” “technology,” and “art” are etymologically connected. Design is located in an “age of entanglement,” a concept that Neri Oxman used brilliantly to describe the interrelations between design, art, science, and engineering (2016). The Powerhouse Museum (originally the Technological, Industrial and Sanitary Museum) in Sydney, Australia, is an example. The Canada Science and Technology Museum in Ottawa also began a program of acquiring and displaying industrial design based on the fact that design was becoming an interdisciplinary subject between technology and society (Mura, 2009). In fact, museums that specialize in science and technology do not have a longer history than that of the decorative art museums—they were established in the late 19th century (Morton, 1988). Interestingly, both the Science Museum and the V&A Museum in London were split from the South Kensington Museum.

Hein (2000) discusses several museum typological prototypes in Western countries (primarily in America): art museums, science museums, and history museums. Art

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<sup>8</sup> Maddalena Dalla Mura sees the potential of engaging design in Science and Technology Museums as design is interrelated with technique, manufacturing and society. For detail, please see *Another Name for Design: Words for Creation*, Proceedings of the Sixth ICDHS, Osaka University Communication-Design Center, 2008; Design in Museums: Towards an Integrative Approach: The Potential of Science and Technology Museums. *Journal of Design History*, 22(3), 259–270.

museums collect “fine art,” which ranges from painting and sculpture to expressive and even functional objects, which are rare, valued, unique, and venerable (Hein, 2000). Science museums contain science centers, natural history museums and museums of industry and technology. Natural history museums collect exotic and sometimes peculiar natural specimens and objects, while museums of industry and technology acquire apparatus, machines, and something representative of technological advancement. History museums, including historical sites, are the predominant types in America. They usually collect important objects of the past that can tell a story.

Alan Morton claims that the difference between art museums and science museums is that art museums incorporate “emblems of wealth,” while science museums concern “the means of producing wealth” (1988, p. 140). His illustration of science museums also seems appropriate for design museums. He thinks there are two spectrums of commodities, one is decorative items for art museums, while the other is functional and mass-produced objects in science museums. But he continues that some objects can have both features at the same time; hence there is no need to reinforce the difference between them. Similarly, Hein (2000) considers it brittle to define the museum according to the thematic frameworks, because taxonomic systems are conceptual tools for creating order. He is reluctant to bind museums with a single definition, and believes the way of classifying museums will change when museum objectives alter.

The making of museums of new themes came about by selective chance determined by several consequences, such as the status of the discipline and pressures from the outside (Fyfe, 2006). A political power of the “cultural arbitrary,” from Bourdieu’s point of view (1991, p. 109) that was imposed by the authorities was evident in the making of design museums. Borrowing Michel Foucault’s theory, the museum, analogously to the prison and the clinic, involves institutionalized “power and



knowledge relations” (Bennett, 1995, p. 59), through which the new museum reflects the new social order and creates “new forms of authority” and a “new space of consumption” (Fyfe, 2006, pp. 40–41). In this case of Design Museum London, with the encouragement of design professions and the government, the design industry engaged in the establishment of the design museum, which is to serve as a place for developing and circulating the design discipline and its discursive formation, legitimizing the industrial and design heritage, and becoming a new consumable space. This specialization also happened when the discipline of art history was shaped in the late 18th century and a new order of knowledge was needed—with the museum as a medium—to restructure the new understanding (Lui, 2005).

#### 2.4 Sociological Discourses of Design Museums

Although the museum realm encompasses not only sociology but also other disciplines, such as psychology, philosophy, marketing, and pedagogy, the sociological turn is one of the most important discourses in museum studies. Museum sociology deals primarily with museums and their social consequences (Kirchberg, 2015). Critical theorists regarded the modern museum as an outcome of chained events of the Industrial Revolution, capitalism, democracy, and revolutionary movements in the 19th century. The modern states have taken advantage of public museums as vehicles of the civilization of their citizens since the late 18th century (Hooper-Greenhill, 1992). Hooper-Greenhill (1992), Foucault (2008), and Bennett (1995) regard museums as disciplinary and heterotopic institutions that dispose hegemonic power and reinforce structural social constraints. This is because museums, like universities, are research institutions that are associated with knowledge production and dissemination; they strengthen and expand their power over society by generating knowledge and attempting to regulate the conduct of the citizens.

Museums and their hegemonic functions had been receiving critical assessments. Adorno and Horkheimer (2002) characterized them as deceptive because the exhibitions of products, claimed to be in public service, were indirectly paid for by the manufacturers and by the audiences—the laboring classes—as citizens who consume the commoditized culture. Culture has been industrialized and commodified as the constitution of the capitalist economy (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002). They see museums as part of the cultural industry and institutions of suppression that dominate society and individuals. Adorno and Horkheimer argue that the museum, as a disseminator of culture, along with the industries of mass culture, such as movies and television, causes culture to surpass the economy, becoming an important factor in society; culture then dominates people and turns them into consumers. The criticism above posed doubts about museums' social legitimacy, hegemonic ideologies, determined information and values they promoted, and their regulatory power.

In the case of world exhibitions and design museums in the 19th century, Walter Benjamin claims that world exhibitions were “places of pilgrimage to the commodity fetish” (1999, p. 7). The 19th century was a century of world exhibitions that came after national industrial exhibitions. Numerous commodities from different nations were juxtaposed, but they were not for sale. They were to be glorified and concomitantly would entertain and distract people. World exhibitions were “the enthronement of the commodity” (Benjamin, 1999, p. 18) and “secret blueprint of museums” (p.176). Exemplified by the case of the *Great Exhibition*, many of the exhibits were later turned into museum collections. The “civilization” and “progress” propagated in the exhibits “shaped both the form and substance of the modern world” (Rydell, 2006, p. 136). These exhibitions and displayed *spécialités* were symbols of capitalist modernity that created a great vision of a modern nation and metropolis; while those new museums formed after the world exhibitions legitimized the regime of nation-states, constructed a new urbanscape, and promoted an identity of citizenship for cities and nations in the 19th century (Lui, 2005).

In the 1980s, many new museums were established on an international scale (Conn, 2010). As Gordon Fyfe (2006) scrutinizes, the expansion and diversification of museums is a global phenomenon of post-industrialism, post-capitalism, and postmodernism. The design industry has been promoted by governments, enterprises, and design practitioners as part of cultural industry to develop the new creative economy. Commercial exhibitions are venues to market products and approach potential consumers; promotional design exhibitions and world expositions prevailed.

However, museums are contested places that are often in a more complicated situation than commercial exhibitions. They are claimed to be nonprofit public institutions but sometimes function in a way that is contradictory to their roles and missions. This echoes Kirchberg's (2003) demarcation of the museum's manifest and latent functions. He argues that one museum has different identities that serve different groups of people; therefore, hidden and sometimes arbitrary and personal interests and decisions might lead to the latent and multiple functions of a museum.

As a consequence of the world exhibition, the design museum was originated as an educational device to educate the general public and present good design to design professionals and students. It historicized design movements and exerted their power over design principles and contemporary taste (Erlhoff et al., 2008). However, Herbert Marcuse (1991) criticizes advanced industrial society for being haunted by consumerism and dominated by the interests and capital of the upper class.

Baudrillard (2017) points out the capitalists changed their focus from controlling society's labors to controlling its consumption. Primarily intended by the funder or owner of the museum, the edifying function of the design museum—to shape “good taste”—implies control over the public as consumers, with the museum teaching them how to be good consumers.

The design museum as a “driving force for local business development” (Erlhoff et al., 2008, p. 122) is also associated with a capitalist and bourgeois assumption. This

critique can find clues in the founding reason and goals of international industrial exhibitions, the V&A Museum, and the Design Museum London, which aimed to promote the manufacturing industry and the national economy. Since the beginning of the exhibitions of manufactures, displaying design had been linked with commercial and political implications (Greenhalgh, 1988). For instance, the initiative of Henry Cole for the V&A Museum was to be a stimulus for the industry and commerce and concomitantly for civic improvement and social betterment (Pevsner, 2014). The defunctionalized commodities in design museums became tools of education and information that regulated visitors and educated them about what good design should be like and owned.

There are also critiques of design museums' representation of design. As scrutinized by curator Deborah Sugg Ryan (2016), there were two primary ways of representing design in design museums, which still prevail. The first one was analog to the traditional ways of art museums that were dominated by historians and grounded in historical narratives and featured dominant figures or events. Art museums, such as MoMA, were accustomed to emphasizing the aesthetic and iconic values of designed artifacts as they applied to fine arts. This is a modernist way of exhibiting design that simply put design in the white cube. The other was a consumeristic approach that was subject to the academic trends whose emphasis had transformed from production to consumption in the 1990s. In contrast, Ryan advocated that design objects be viewed as "bearers of social relations" (2016, p. 51), with a symbolic function in society, and, at the same time, to make the exhibition more thought-provoking. For example, in the *Ideal Home Exhibition*<sup>9</sup> of 1908, she critically examined the implications that women were consumers of home and domestic products in the museum by inviting women to participate in competitions for designing the home. She also criticized the conspiracy of those "labor-saving gadgets" (2016, p. 54) that implicitly cause more work.

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<sup>9</sup> The *Ideal Home Exhibition* was an annual commercial project initiated in London in 1908 and aimed to promote a modern lifestyle to the British middle class.

Appealing to those who bought these ephemeral products in the *Ideal Home Exhibition*, she displayed these objects in the exhibition and invited debates on the functionality of design.

By the second half of the 20th century, museums were looking for emancipatory, communicating, variant, and mediating roles in society (Kirchberg, 2015; Macdonald, 1996; Xu, 2016). Traditional relationships between museums, visitors, society, and professional authorities have changed, and functions of museums of acquiring, conserving, researching, and exhibiting were critically reviewed and expanded with new objectives of educating, entertaining, and even socially regenerating (Fyfe, 2006). Kirchberg re-examines the disciplinary function of museums and argues that museums are becoming non-heterotopic and popular institutions with pluralist contents and meanings (2015). Museums today took up the role of agents of civil society and social change, and become more reflexive and multiperspectival (Kirchberg, 2015).

In the meantime, there is a global trend as museums become tradable “content” on the commercial market in the knowledge economy (Jimenez & Lord, 2019). The museum as content does not mean it becomes an economic capital that can be directly trade for profit. For Bourdieu, cultural capital can be conceived as knowledge, tastes, and cultural dispositions that can be converted into “economic capital and may be institutionalized in the form of educational qualifications” (1986, p. 16). There are three forms of cultural capital: the embodied, the institutionalized, and the objectified. The museum is an institutionalized form of cultural capital for their patrons, as well as a field for individuals to assimilate or be cultivated to accumulate cultural capital in the embodied state. The cultural items in museums, such as the collections and the objects on displays, can be understood as the objectified cultural capital. The Design Museum London was the result of investment of the private sector in the cultural realm.

## 2.5 Summary

This chapter discussed the history of the design museum in the UK from the 1850s to the new millennium. It can be traced back to the *Great Exhibition* of 1851 in London, which led to the founding of the V&A Museum and whose products formed the central collection of the museum. But the principle of the museum to collect contemporary utilitarian design was not determined, as collecting fine arts had been dominant in the art world for centuries. Nevertheless, the Circulation Department played an important role in building contemporary design collections for the museum and sending touring design exhibitions to the regional areas. It connected the nation and the regions, domestic and international markets, design, public, and the industry. After its closure, a new project was initiated in the basement of the V&A Museum, continuing Circ's unfinished mission to promote contemporary design. The design project later moved into its own building and was officially named the Design Museum.

The Design Museum London was established as a model for a museum of its kind. Subsequently, many new museums of contemporary design were built, and an upsurge has been identified in Asia in recent decades. Concomitantly, many well-established museums of applied and decorative arts, such as the Design Museum Gent, accepted the term "design" and renamed themselves as museums of "design" (Gimeno-Martínez & Verlinden, 2010).

Design is a creation of capitalism in the industrial age that intends to transform desirable concepts into objects, experiences, or services that can be tradeable in the market. In the last century, design has gained a place in academia and culture, and it became an independent subject and "a new set of knowledges" (Bennett, 1995, p. 96) worth studying and researching. This phenomenon of establishing design museums is

partly due to the fact that design has evolved to be a professional discipline jointly promoted by the government, industry, and academia; a new systematic order is needed to restructure the knowledge of design, and the potential of design, in the case of the Design Museum London, and to support national economy and industry.

However, museums constantly confront doubts over their hegemonic, heterotopic, and affirmative roles, the monosemic information they disseminate and their social legitimacy. World exhibitions and new museums envisioned an image of progress, modernity, and a highly industrialized profile of urbanity, but they were considered as places for celebrating the commodity fetish and glorifying and historicizing the value of the commodity (Benjamin, 1999). Their roles of regulating “good” consumers and fostering “good taste,” as well as modernist ways of representing design masters and emphasizing commercial values of design, also received stern critiques.

Nevertheless, museums gradually shifted their focus from objects to society, became self-reflective, non-heterotopic and popular with pluralist contents and meanings (Kirchberg, 2015). Many museums take up the emancipatory role of agents of civil society and social change. Meanwhile, museums entered a golden period on an international scale around the 1980s (Conn, 2010; Jimenez & Lord, 2019), and this is associated with the phenomenon where museums become consumable “content” in the knowledge economy (Jimenez & Lord, 2019). The commercial and neoliberalist ideologies have had a great impact on museums (Kirchberg, 2015), as everything can be turned into cultural capital, however, how did China, a socialist country, get involved in the ideologies and fascinate at establishing design museums?

## **CHAPTER 3 Design and Museums in China: Historical Background**

### 3.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the development of design and museums in China in tandem with the Chinese history of modernization from the late 19th century to the present. Some scholars have argued that the history of collecting objects in China dates back to ancient times and that the Confucius temple was a rudimentary museum (Ma, 1994; Wang, 2001); others have also suggested that there was design in historical craft making (Justice, 2012). However, the notion of modern museums and design, as well as their modern usages, did not begin until the second half of the 19th century in China (Guo & Su, 2008; Lu, 2014; Varutti, 2014).

The boom in design museums is a contemporary phenomenon of this century. However, trails of evidence show that expositions and museums in the early 20th century displayed and collected industrial and commercial products. Industrial expositions and museums are an “exhibitionary complex” that is associated with the power apparatus of the authorities (Bennett, 1995). They are also subject to changes in the sociopolitical environment. The early industrial expositions and museums initiated by Chinese social elites and officials were concerned with the desire to promote the industry and the search for modernity. When China began market reform and transitioned from a socialist to a postsocialist era, it provided strong support for cultural industries through legislation, subsidies, and policies. After the market reform, China adhered to its socialist ideology while intensively pursuing economic development. In this period, design regained its importance in industry, economies, and society, and the development of museums also flourished. All these developments paved the way for establishing design museums in China.



## 3.2 Design, Expositions, and Museums in China from the late 19th Century to the 1980s

### 3.2.1 Design and Early Industrial Expositions

The modern usage of design originated in England when the industrial revolution began in the middle of the 18th century. The *Great Exhibition* of 1851 was a climax of the revolution and a trigger of the Arts and Crafts Movement. These seminal events played a crucial role in British design history and in that of other European and non-European countries. However, design is an Anglicism word, there are different processes in the reception of this exotic word. For instance, in Belgium, it was not accepted as a Flemish word until 1974 (Gimeno-Martínez & Verlinden, 2010).

Design in Chinese, as Wong (2011), Guo and Su (2008) indicate, was an imported concept from the West. Some design historians trace the history of Chinese design back to the ancient archeological past and view design history as a history of making objects (Justice, 2012), whereas Guo Enci (2008) argue that Chinese design history began after the First Opium War (1840–1842), as design was associated with industrialization and capitalism.<sup>10</sup> In agreement with Immanuel Chung-yueh Hsu, who considered the Opium War as the beginning of modernization in China, Guo and Su (2008) mark the period 1842–1895 as the gestation period of design in China. Since then, China has gone through a turbulent transformation and reformation in politics, economics, society, and culture.

After the failure of the Self-Strengthening movement (*Yangwu yundong*, 1861-1895), some government officials and social elites realized the importance of design (which they referred to as *gongyi* at that time) in improving domestic products and

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<sup>10</sup> According to *New keywords: a revised vocabulary of culture and society* (Bennett et al., 2005), capitalism is a term of the late 19th century. It derives from a notion of financial ownership or investment as a form of private property in the seventeenth century and is related to “the system that combined industrialized or factory production with a “free market” for the exchange of money and commodities that developed in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century” (p. 23).

developing the national economy. In 1892, Zheng Guanying indicated in his book *Words of Warning in a Flourishing Age (Shengshi weiyan)* that Western invaders had defeated China not only by military wars but also through trade wars (Wu, 2010). Zheng acknowledged the importance of design in the process of production and the development of economics and advocated the opening of industrial expositions and design schools (Guo & Su, 2008).

The Qing government was invited to participate in the industrial exposition in Paris in 1866; however, the government regarded industrial products as somethings novel and entertaining and did not participate. Beginning with the industrial exposition in Vienne in 1873, independent businessmen began to participate with the permission of the government (Guo & Su, 2008). In contrast to the Qing government, the Japanese government treated industrial expositions seriously and gestated the concept of design, translated as *tu'an*. At the end of the 19th century, industrial design education began to be set up in Japanese universities.

The practices of manufacturing industries, school education, and museums in Japan impressed Chinese reformers and businessmen such as Zhang Jian (1853–1926). He traveled and visited factories, schools, industrial expositions, and museums in Japan in 1903 for 2 months. By comparing the exhibits from China and from other nations in the Fifth Industrial Exposition (i.e., the Osaka Exposition), Zhang understood the difference between antique crafts and industrial works and realized the importance for developing *shiyè*: a combined concept of industry, business, and agriculture (Ma, 2001; Yao, 2004). After that trip, Zhang proposed establishing manufacturing industries, schools, and museums in China.

In 1910, the *Nanyang Industrial Exposition (Nanyang quan ye hui)*, the first international industrial exposition in China, was held in Nanking by the Qing government with the help of Zhang Jian and other Chinese entrepreneurs. This exposition displayed millions of items, including 24 departments, 420 genres, and

separate pavilions of education, transportation, craft, agriculture, arts, and weapons, and so on (Su & Chen, 2010). After the exposition, Zhang set up a research institute for studying and improving the quality of products (Su & Chen, 2010).



Figure 7. The Nanyang Industrial Exposition (Nanyang Quan Ye Hui)

During these years, many exhibitions were organized by societies or associations, such as the Society of Domestic Products (*Guohuo weichihui*) and the Shanghai General Chamber of Commerce for promoting domestic commodities. The Shanghai Association of Machine-made National Products (*Shanghai jizhi guohuo gongchang lianhehui*) was founded in 1927. The association had actively promoted national products and design by organizing national exhibitions, putting advertisements in newspapers and billboards, and establishing galleries of national products in each province (Guo & Su, 2008). More exhibitions, such as the National Commodities Exhibition<sup>11</sup> (1928) and the Exhibition of Chinese Industrial and Commercial Art<sup>12</sup> (1934), were organized (Guo & Su, 2008).

In the following year, the Nationalist government hosted the *West Lake Exposition* in Hangzhou in order to promote domestic industries and to develop the economy. The

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<sup>11</sup> The National Commodities Exhibition was an event organized by the Ministry of Industry and Commerce of the Republican government on November 1<sup>st</sup>, 1928. It aimed to promote domestic products and featured machine-made commodities that were manufactured by domestic factories.

<sup>12</sup> The Exhibition of Chinese Industrial and Commercial Art was organized by the Society of Chinese Industrial and Commercial Artists and Writers in 1934. It primarily focused on commercial and decorative art and design.

exposition displayed industrial products of daily life, including clothing, stationery, furniture, toys, and electronic products, and it was regarded as the first design exhibition in China (Guo & Su, 2008). Reports that analyzed and researched the techniques, patterns, and styles were released after the exposition for learning and improvement. Furthermore, the structure and layout, promotion strategy, and the visual identity of the exposition were designed by professionals. For example, the interior and architecture were designed by a team from the Hangzhou National College of Art, which was later known as the China Academy of Art. However, it was interrupted by the wars. In 2000, the local government decided to resume the *West Lake Exposition* every year, and the original building became a memorial museum.



Figure 8. The West Lake Exposition Museum, Hangzhou, Zhejiang

Along with the prosperity of industrial exhibitions and commercial activities, calendar posters and package design as a new type of advertisement and commercial design thrived in Shanghai, marking the beginning of Chinese design (Guo & Su, 2008). Around the mid-1930s, some Chinese designers established their own companies and attracted numerous domestic and Japanese clients. Some of these designers had an educational background from the West and Japan; some worked in local printing houses founded by foreign publishers. Graphic design was well developed with typical western styles such as art nouveau and art deco. Chen Zhifo (1895-1963) was

one of the early pioneers that had been sent to Japan to study design in 1918. When he came back in 1923, he established *Shangmei tu'an guan*, an institute of commercial design and design education. He defined the modern craft—by that time, the translation of *sheji* had not been used—as something related to daily life, such as interior decoration, furniture, clothing, theater, city planning, and transportation (Guo & Su, 2008). He believed it important to improve domestic products by establishing craft schools and museums and organizing craft art exhibitions.



Figure 9. Logo of *Shangmei Tu'an Guan*

Western urban design styles were also introduced in foreign concession regions in cities like Shanghai, Guangzhou, Tianjin, and Nanjing. The foreign building style had an impact on vernacular design, which were exemplified by low-cost apartments—inspired by the Western townhouse—in Shanghai (Wang, 1989). However, the transient, prosperous scene was interrupted by societal turbulence and wars. The domestic market was destroyed, and many entrepreneurs transferred their businesses to the Southeastern market.

The decades after the 1940s saw the rise of propaganda poster design, which was tied with the social mission to serve political and national needs. This political function of

design and art in the communist, socialist state was confirmed at the *Yan'an* Forum on Literature and Art in 1942 (Varutti, 2014). Before the establishment of the People's Republic of China (PRC), public and private business coexisted in China's market. In the 1950s, China transformed and established a socialist market that eliminated private ownership based on the Soviet Union model. Production and supply were strictly controlled, and art and design were mainly used for propagandizing national ideologies and patriotism. Under the constraints of the Command Economy and political ideology, the development of design was suspended, and related commercial activities and exhibitions were limited.

### 3.2.2 Early Museums in China

The notion of museums in China was shaped concurrently with that of industrial expositions during the late 19th century. *Bowuguan*, as the Chinese translation of "museum," is also a Japanese imported term *Hakubutsukan*, which uses the same Chinese characters (Varutti, 2014). Literally, it means a place housing encyclopedic objects. The Japanese term appeared in the 1860s and was used formally in 1867 when the Universal Exhibition in Paris was held (Wang, 2017). It was an outcome of cultural appropriation and transnational exchange between Europe, Japan, and China. In this process of exchange, China adapted the museum practices from Europe and Japan to incorporate its own sociopolitical and cultural contexts.

There were several stages in the history of museums in China, and in each stage, museums were established by different actors for different purposes. By the late 19th century, Western missionaries, Chinese social elites, and governments were primary agents of establishing museums. Western missionaries established museums in China to collect scientific data, preaching Christianity to Chinese social elites and the ordinary masses, and representing a Western civilization blessed by the God. By

contrast, Chinese intellectuals believed it was crucial to educate the public to save the nation, and museums could serve as an instrument to help broaden their horizon and increase their intellectuality (Lu, 2014). Zhang Jian, after visiting museums and expositions in Japan, twice proposed to the Qing government establishing a national museum, but he failed. Thus, Zhang founded the Nantong Museum in 1905 to realize his nationalism and patriotic objective. Inspired by the New Culture Movement in 1919, more scholars and social elites advocated for and established museums for social education (Xu, 2016). This role of museums was further confirmed when the Department of Education took charge of museums, libraries, and other educational institutes in 1929 (Lu, 2014).

The 1920–1930 period represented the first golden period for Chinese museums, and many museums of history, natural science, and antiques were established (Lu, 2014). Under the impact of the expositions and industrial concerns, some museums developed an interest in industrial artifacts. The Shanghai Museum was one of the early museums that collected industrial products and organized architecture exhibitions (Xu, 2016).

Derived from the Tianjin Institute of Commercial Products (*Shangye chenliesuo*) and the industrial expositions affiliated to the Technology Bureau, Hebei Museum had a direct interest in industrial development. It was created during the Tianjin Industrial Promotion Movement, and was founded by its director Yan Zhiyi (1882-1935), who was also the head of the Institute of Commercial Products and the Director-General of the Department of Industry and the Department of Education (Xu, 2016). Yan studied in Japan from 1903 to 1907 and worked closely with industrial sectors after he returned to China (Hou, 2018). He had organized various expositions that featured agricultural and commercial products, industrial products, and crafts. Yan attended and had been impressed by the Taishō exposition and the Panama-Pacific International Exposition in 1914 (Xu, 2016). After he returned from America, he

proposed the establishment of Tianjin Museum, which opened its first exhibition in 1918. The exhibition had different exhibition galleries and entertaining rooms and attracted approximately 28,000 visitors, but it was an imitation of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition (Chen & Guo, 2018).



Figure 10. The Preparatory Office of Tianjin Museum. The Man in a Suit was Yan Zhiyi.

Yan's proposal for museums was directed by his experiences while studying in Japan. Tianjin Museum had been prepared for several years and opened in 1923. It had been renamed several times and finally settled for Hebei Museum. However, like the destiny of the Nantong Museum, the museum was destroyed after Yan passed away in 1935. The Institute of Commercial Products, which had been reformed as Hebei Museum of Domestic Products, was also destroyed by the fall of Tianjin in the same year (Xu, 2016).

The 1949–1980 period represented the revitalization period of Chinese museums. Because of the Sino-Japanese War and the civil war, the development of museums was interrupted until 1949 when museums were taken over by the PRC government. Chinese museums were instrumental in consolidating the regime and promoting the ideology of the new government (Varutti, 2014). The former Union of Soviet



Socialist Republics (USSR), which had several revolutionary, memorial, and historical museums, had significant impacts on Chinese museums between the 1950s and 1960s. Many museums were established to fulfill the political, economic and social needs of the national or regional governments under the nationalistic and patriotic ideological framework of Marxism, Leninism, and Maoism, and workers and farmers were the primary target audiences (Lu, 2014). Later, the emphasis shifted to the progressiveness and greatness of the nation, particularly in the aspects of agricultural, scientific, and technological development.

### 3.3 Design and Museums after the Reform and Opening-up Policy

#### 3.3.1 Development of Design after the 1980s and Innovation Design Strategy in *Made in China 2025*

As China transitioned from a command economy to a market-oriented economy, the commercial market gained a certain autonomy, and individuals and even foreigners were allowed to do business in China. In 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization, signifying that it had opened its market to the world and welcomed competition and opportunities from the rest of the world. Because Chinese labor, land, and raw material were inexpensive, many foreign companies (some were moved from Hong Kong) set their manufacturing factories in the Pearl River Delta (PRD) of China. Some existing domestic companies ceased their design activities and began to produce for foreign companies (Justice, 2012). China soon became the world's factory.

Design education and cultural activities resumed. However, the development of Chinese design had fallen behind that of other countries. According to Wang Shouzhi (1989), the poor packaging design in the 1980s resulted in losses worth billions of

Chinese Yuan. Some design exhibitions were held in China in the eighties, probably aimed at solving this problem. During the early opening-up period, some innovation projects were suspended and gave way to original equipment manufacturing for the West (Justice, 2012). Furthermore, the high demand for products made it difficult for design development to catch up with consumer needs. Chinese factories are also reluctant to invest in establishing their own design. Many domestic factories imitated the products of renowned companies to complete commissions from clients (Wang, 1989), and they were criticized for lacking originality (Siu & Contreras, 2017).

The situation also reflected the problem of lacking both professional designers and the awareness of intellectual rights. Therefore, with the official endorsement and support of design scholars and professional designers, manufacturing or industrial arts programs in higher education began in 1977. Ten years later, the term “industrial design” was officially adopted in higher education (He & Xiao, 2014). A boom in design education and design students was witnessed in the 2000s (Siu & Contreras, 2017; Wong, 2010). The design programs were primarily divided into industrial design, fashion, animation, visual communication design, and environmental design. In 1987, China Industrial Design Association was established by the state government to promote product design. According to Liu (2018), design has been included in national strategies since 2008. Afterward, a series of design policies were issued by the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) and National Development and Reform Committee (NDRC). This development indicated that design had gained official recognition at the national level. In addition, a series of laws and regulations regarding copyright, patents, trademarks, and contracts were amended and adopted after the 1980s. The first Patent Law of the People's Republic of China and Copyright Law was issued in 1984 and in 1991, respectively.

It is noteworthy that when commercial design was suspended after the 1950s, some mainland designers continued their practices in Hong Kong. They as well as Hong

Kong designers incorporated Western style with Chinese elements. In the late 1970s, design activities and designers from Hong Kong in return played an influential role in mainland China's design through cross-cultural exchanges (Wong, 2001). Design exhibitions were held in Guangzhou, Beijing, and Hong Kong. By the mid-1980s, exhibitions of Hong Kong designers were regularly held in mainland cities (Wong, 2001). In the inaugurated exhibition of the first design museum<sup>13</sup> in Beijing in 1998, the curator He Yuehua invited several Hong Kong designers and their students to present their works (*The Birth of Beijing Museum of Art and Design*, 2000), indicating the dynamic interregional communication between the mainland and Hong Kong.

Because Shenzhen benefited from its geographic nearness to Hong Kong, it became the birthplace of the first graphic design association (1996) in the mainland. In the 1990s, the future members of Shenzhen Graphic Design Association (SGDA) began organizing design competitions and exhibitions in Shenzhen; for example, the Graphic Design in China (GDC) (Wong, 2001), which has been a featured competition and exhibition held biennially since 1992. When UNESCO established the Creative Cities Network, Shenzhen actively joined the CoD category and used design as a cultural symbol to define and brand the city.



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<sup>13</sup> The Beijing Museum of Art and Design was founded by designer He Yuehua at the end of 1998 and closed in 2002. It was the first Chinese design museum on record, but it was seldom mentioned.

Figure 11. The First Graphic Design Exhibition in China in 1992 in Shenzhen,  
Guangdong

Although many Chinese designers are still finding a way to articulate “Chineseness” in their design (Wong, 2010), design is believed to be crucial for China to shape contemporary national identity and to promote economics (Wong, 2011). The boom in design education in China in the 2000s fostered a new generation of designers. Some designers received design training in universities abroad and absorbed international design ideas and styles. These provided Chinese designers opportunities to compete with Western counterparts on an equal level. An increasing number of Chinese designers have gained world-renowned awards (He & Xiao, 2014) and have been featured in international exhibitions, markets, and competitions. Chinese enterprises, such as Lenovo, Huawei, Alibaba, and Xiaomi, have also adapted to the global market with their advanced high technology and design.

Design is closely associated with creativity and innovation (Fung & Lo, 2001; Sarkar & Chakrabarti, 2011). It is also regarded as the key driver of creative industries in China, which can add value to low-cost manufacturing (Keane, 2013). “Creative industry” was a concept that originated in the UK in 1997 and came to China in 2004. Officials and policymakers hoped that the development of creative industries could shift the identity of the nation to that of a “creative nation” and “radiate its ‘soft power’ to the world” (Keane, 2013, p. 4). In the following years, numerous creative industrial parks were established in several cities and design and creative companies were also clustered. When the UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) was established in 2004 to promote creative cities, cities such as Shenzhen have actively applied and joined the network since 2008. So far, 12 Chinese cities have joined the UCCN in different categories.

China's manufacturing infrastructure gradually changed. Rural labor, land, and material resources become expensive, and process manufacturing is a low-value business (Zeng, 2017). As Dilnot (2003) suggests, being an export-oriented manufacturing center outsourced by Western countries means being dependent on demand from outside. It makes the nation's economy insecure and leaves very little space for creating original design (Dilnot, 2003). Around 2015, China's economic growth slowed down (Zeng, 2017), indicating that China's economic model, which once created the "Chinese Economic Miracle," needed to be upgraded (Siu & Contreras, 2017, p. xiii).

In a speech in Henan Province in 2014, Chairman Xi Jinping emphasized "three transitions"—from "Made in China" to "Created by China," from "China's speed" to "China's quality," from "China's product" to "China's brand"—should be promoted to help transform current manufacturing structure and system (*Tuidong Zhongguo Zhizhao Shixian "San Ge Zuanbian,"* 2018). In tandem with the "three transitions" was the "Chinese Dream": national rejuvenation, which has been a national agenda under the leadership of Xi.

In this context, the Chinese government initiated *Made in China 2025*, a 10-year master plan aiming to upgrade the existing manufacturing industries as well as to promote innovative start-ups. The primary objective is to transform China, particularly the PRD region, from a center of manufacturing to one of creativity. Developing innovation design is an imperative part of the master plan that can convert technology into a productive force in the knowledge economy (Liu, 2016). Innovation design, as defined by Sylvia Liu, the author of the Innovation Design chapter of *Made in China 2025*, primarily integrates the manufacturing and service industry. It combines science and technology with arts and culture, and covers engineering, industrial design, and service design (Liu, 2016). This definition has raised the status of design beyond being a decorative practice. Traditional industrial design used to be

a part of the production process. Now, it spans strategically from the first step of an early proposition to the establishment of a business model to the last step in markets. It focuses on innovation on four levels: process, product, policy, and ecosystem. It is conducive to transforming scientific and technological research into productive outcomes (Liu et al., 2018) and plays an imperative role in transformation and innovation (Liu, 2016). Most cities in China remain situated at the levels of the industry economy and experience economy; only some developed major cities are transitioning towards the knowledge economy, which focuses more on creativity, high-technology, and openness. This strategy hereby proposes guiding regional governments and local industries to realize the three transitions and constructing strong national identity in China.

### 3.3.2 Museums in China after the 1980s

Chinese museums entered a period of prosperity from the 1980s. After the Reform and Opening-up Policy, the national economic and social life of the Chinese people developed rapidly. The increasing capital of China was accompanied by the desire for cultural development. An Laishun, the Vice-President and Secretary-General of the Chinese Museums Association, claimed that with “China’s increasing economic power comes a new demand for diverse cultural products” (Lord et al., 2019, p. 3). A balance between economy and cultural facilities—or “soft power” –was sought by the Chinese government (An, 2019, p. 3). Cultural and financial policies were implemented to endorse museum development (Bollo & Zhang, 2019). Although the quality of several museums suffered and museum collection, staffing, and funding remained vexed issues, from 2006 to 2013, state investment in cultural heritage had increased six-fold (An, 2019). New museums and large scale international exhibitions were created to pursue cultural cosmopolitanism (Shao, 2004).

In this period, two noteworthy phenomena occurred in museums. First, the themes of the new museums were diversified and began to include (but were not limited to) industries and services, urban planning, design, contemporary art, science, and technology (Varutti, 2014). Design museums, a popular genre of museums, were established by designers or cultural enterprises along with the growing design industries and design education. Denton described them as “specialty or niche museums” (2014, p. 24) that serve different functions. Some of these museums were oriented towards national pride and scientific achievements and were dedicated to educating the young generation (Varutti, 2014), whereas some, such as museums of urban planning, represented a modern image of urbanscape with audio-visual and interactive technologies, which aimed to attract foreign and domestic investors by displaying past achievements and the future plans of local governments (Vickers, 2007). The industrial museums, as Varutti (2014) indicates, were a new type of museum after the economic reformation. Most of them were supervised by the MIIT and ran by state-owned enterprises. These museums were supported by industries and served as showcases presenting the achievements of corporations and industries, increasing visibility to more audiences and customers and contributing to Chinese modernization (Varutti, 2014).

Second, the number of private collectors and privately owned and privately funded museums increased. Before this period, private museums were rare because regulations issued by the State Council prevented private ownership of cultural heritage and antiquities (Lu, 2014). Social transformation acted as an initiative for early private museums (Song, 2008). Jason McGrath (2008) also contended that the increasing number of private museums could be explained by the intervention of capital in the cultural realm as a result of market reforms.

Some museums were established by state-owned industrial enterprises which have been one of prominent actors since the 1980s. The reformation period also provided

an open environment for private collectors, many of whom, out of a desire to publicize their collections, later played a crucial role in the development of private museums (Song, 2008). The accumulated wealth of the private sector during this reform provided powerful motivation to establish their own museums (Song, 2008). This development can be explained by the fact that for private collectors, most of whom are businessmen, museums act as “cultural enterprises” and help to develop business culture (Song, 2008, p. 47). Significantly, the real estate industry actively participated in establishing museums. By supporting private museums, the government can be released from the burden of subsidizing them and transfer this responsibility to private actors. Furthermore, the number of museums can increase, which would meet the goals of the nation because the number of museums signifies the country’s level of civilization (Varutti, 2014).

Behind this phenomenon is China’s reform of cultural undertakings<sup>14</sup> following the Reform and Opening-up policy. In 1992, the Ministry of Culture issued a document *Opinions of Deepening Reform, Expanding Opening and Accelerating the Prosperity and Development of Socialist Cultural Undertakings*. The reformation of cultural undertakings ranged from personnel to wage, managerial, assessment, and supervision systems. Content production and distribution were no longer a monopoly for governmental departments. In this process, cultural undertakings such as theaters, performance troupes, and the film industry first accomplished their transformation and increased their economic values by generating profits with their services and content (Zheng, 1993). In essence, it was through marketization, that these organizations could serve a wider audience and pluralize their social functions.

Meanwhile, the museum realm was being reformed at a slower pace until China encouraged private sectors to establish museums and issued more beneficial policies

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<sup>14</sup> The cultural undertaking (Wenhua Shiye) refers to not-for-profit cultural and social organisations fully sponsored, supported, and supervised by the Chinese government. The concept is a form of work unit under China’s bureaucratic system.



to legitimize and support the injection of private capital into the development of museums. Seven ministries collaborated to release a policy in 2010 to facilitate professional training and financial support for private museums through legislation and other favorable policies (State Administration of Cultural Heritage et al., 2010). More non-governmental museums began to flourish hereafter.

### 3.4 Design, Museums, and Chinese Modernity

#### 3.4.1 Design and Museums in the Early Process of Modernization

The notion of modernity is associated with tensions and relationships between the center and the periphery, between the dominant “we” and the “others,” and between the colonizers and the colonized. It is disputable that modernity for some is a European phenomenon that would emancipate the colonized, the inferiors, and the others because the belief in “emancipation” conceals “an irrational myth” that justifies destructive and genocide violence (Dussel, 1995, p. 66). The conquest of Asia, Africa, and Latin America by Europeans was not only represented in wars and military conquest but also through culture. As Sun (2019) notes, Asia not only lost its territorial sovereignty and material resources in the process of colonization but also lost its dignity, tradition, and culture. The colonizers established a “universal cultural model” that was characterized by their own patterns of knowledge production and that tended to eliminate non-European cultures (Quijano, 2007, p. 169).

Modernity in Asia is often described as imitating the West (Wang, 1977) or the painful process of Westernization and colonization (Guo & Su, 2008; King, 2002). However, scholars have noted that modernization is not simply a persistent reaction of impelling and response. Rather, it includes multi-layered and hybrid interactions between Asia and Europe from artistic, academic, and religious perspectives (Stolte & Kikuchi, 2017). In other words, there are multiple modernities as the phenomenon is

no longer dominated by the Western world but is becoming a global discourse. Hence, alternative claims have produced different approaches within their vernacular sociopolitical frameworks (Dirlik, 2002; King, 2002).

In this discussion, both design and museums are modern creations that have been domesticated in China from the West since the mid-19th century. China adopted the Western concepts with Japan as an intermediary during the early process of cultural transmission and later adapted them into its own social and political contexts. Early Chinese museums and industrial expositions were somewhat mimics of those in the West and Japan and demonstrated a desire to be modern (Shao, 2004; Wang, 2017). When the early officials and elites visited industrial expositions and museums in Japan, Europe, and the United States, they were impressed by the displayed objects as well as by the implication of progress and development. They wrote about such trips in their diaries, travelogues, geographic treatises, and books (Wang, 2017).

However, the rise of industrial expositions was shaped by an increasing consciousness of nationalism. *Shiye jiuguo*, which was meant to save the nation with commerce, industry, and agriculture, was an important concept prevailed around the early 20th century for patriots, nationalists, and social elites to address national crisis (Yao, 2004). Some, like Zhang Jian, oversaw the roles of museums and industries in national reformation and salvation and practiced their ideas by establishing their own museums and organizing industrial expositions. The appropriation of the exhibitionary complex was accompanied by a desire for economic success, industrialization, and modernity. The *Nanyang Industrial Exposition* and the *West Lake Exposition* were early efforts to promote industries, improve national design, and develop the economy. Design associations, such as the Shanghai Association of Machine-made National Products, were founded to promote national products by organizing exhibitions, putting advertisements in newspapers and billboards, and establishing galleries of domestic products in different provinces (Guo & Su, 2008).

The Nantong Museum, the first museum established by China, was a Westernized Museum with a Chinese garden. It adopted Western approaches to producing catalogs, used Western nomenclature, and collected and categorized its collections, the majority of which were natural specimens. Zhang Jian aimed to strengthen and modernize the nation with science and industry. Through his observations of Japanese practices and by being indirectly affected by museums established by Westerners in Shanghai, the Nantong Museum became a modern Chinese museum model and constructed a modern image for Nantong city (Shao, 2004).

Museums are a form of social instrument that crafts modern communities. In a general sense, they are cultural technologies that “regulate the field of social behavior” (Bennett, 1995, p. 20). For Bennett (1995), who examined the origin of modern museums, modern public institutions, such as museums and libraries constitute the exhibitionary complex that represents their subjects and disseminate power and knowledge to the society. European museums in the 19th and 20th centuries were established to educate the public, to display power, and to construct a national identity. In essence, they were the governing instruments of enlightening, reforming, and edifying the public. However, the purposes of museums in different nations include nuanced distinctions. As a Western concept in Asia, Japan’s museums and expositions were associated with Westernization movements and served political and economic objectives to strengthen the nation, encourage new industries and construct an image of modern colonial power (Wang, 2017). In comparison, early museums in China adapted the Western and Japanese models and emphasized the educational role in transmitting knowledge and civilizing the public, as well as the political objective of modernizing the nation. More importantly, a strong nationalistic ideology was shaped in the practices of industrial exhibitions and museums, as many, such as the exhibitions of domestic products, were established to vitalize national industry, develop domestic commodities, and resist foreign products (Ma & Hong, 2009).

Differing from the practices of Chinese museums, the Chinese understanding of design has been ambiguous. This is not a uniquely Chinese phenomenon. For instance, design has diversified meanings in different regions in Italy (Lucarelli, 2016). The appropriation of design in Flemish culture also encountered debates and negotiations (Gimeno-Martínez & Verlinden, 2010). In China, design, art, pattern, and craft (or *sheji*, *meishu*, *tu'an* and *gongyi*) in Chinese are concepts that have been intertwined for a long time. The idea of *gongyi* was associated with arts and skills of making; it both referred to the practice of designing and the skills of making handicrafts. The late Qing officials and elites vaguely conceived design (*gongyi*) as techniques that made Western weapons and industrial products around the late 19th century.

During the Republican era (1912-1949), the Republican government and social elites perceived the importance of design in promoting the economy and improving products, and they began displaying and collecting industrial commodities in expositions and museums. A variety of terms of related concepts appeared along with the prosperity of graphic design, for instance, *meishu* (fine arts) and *tu'an* (pattern or design) were initially translated from English into Japanese and later introduced to China. According to Wong, *gongyi meishu* (craft arts) was employed to refer to decorative arts and crafts since the establishment of PRC in 1949 (2011). Graphic design and posters design were prevailing. However, the discipline of design did not gain governmental endorsement from the 1950s to the 1970s because their practices were considered downgraded labor for styling and decoration and commercial design practices were criticized as representing Western lifestyle; thus, the development of design was suspended (Wang, 1989).

Table 4.

*The Evolving Understanding of Design*

Chinese translation	Meaning
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The late 19th century to the early 20th century	<i>gongyi</i>	Techniques that made western weapons and industrial products; The skills of making handicraft; Objects in daily life
	<i>tu'an</i>	Pattern, graphics
After 1949	<i>gongyi meishu</i>	Decorative arts and crafts
After 1998	<i>sheji yishu</i>	Design Art
Present	<i>sheji</i>	An interdisciplinary subject

In the first National People's Congress in 1954, former Premier Zhou Enlai (1898-1976) proposed the “Four Modernizations”: modernizing industry, agriculture, national defense, and science. The state established factories for manufacturing and engineering industries, but most of them were produced based on foreign prototypes. It was not until the 1980s that design gradually regained its status in economics, industry, and science. By 1998, *gongyi meishu* was replaced by *sheji yishu* (design art) in higher education. *Sheji* was a term adapted from the Japanese *sekkei* (Wong, 2006). Later, the word “art” was left out in the subject of design.

In 2011, the Ministry of Education announced that five first-level subjects—Art Theory, Music and Dance, Theatre, Film and Television, Fine Art Studies, and Design Studies were included under the umbrella of *yishuxue* (the study of arts). Additionally, the ministry acknowledged Design as an interdisciplinary subject, and students who graduate from this subject can obtain degrees either in Arts or Engineering.



Figure 12. Chinese Design from 1949 to 1979. Photo was Taken in China Industrial Design Museum, Shanghai.

### 3.4.2 The Changing Roles and Functions of Design and Museums in Postsocialist China

The early 20th century witnessed a global power shift from Western-centric to polycentric perspectives (Stolte & Kikuchi, 2017). After its economic reform, China entered a new stage of development and transitioned to a “Socialist Market Economy”. Concurrently, political reforms in areas such as legislation, cadre classification, and recruitment systems and party and leadership systems were also implemented to protect the economic reforms (Zheng, 2020). In this period, China developed rapidly and transformed from a socialist state that prevented any privatization to a postsocialist state that was overwhelmed by consumerism and capitalism.

China has now entered a postsocialist, neoliberal era—“a historical period that is at once starkly different from and yet still very connected to its socialist past” and one that pursues free trade, marketization, privatization and commodification (Denton, 2014, p. 7). Clive Dilnot (2003) argues that China has been transformed by the complex modernization of late capitalism. Scholars such as Wang Hui (2011) also

claim that China has followed the dictates of the capitalist market in various aspects, such as economy, politics, culture, and government behavior, however, the postsocialist era is a paradoxical time that oversees tension between Westernization and economic success (Wakeman, 2002). King (2002) suggests that modernization in East Asia has revived their desire for identity and their own ways of civilization. For China, the socialist modernity that it pursues is not only related to technological advancements in the economy, science, and the nation, and the essences of socialist reform are not only marketization in its economy, but also the penetration of commercialization and consumption in every aspect of social life (Wang & Karl, 2011).

In 2005, the Fifth Plenary Session of the 16th CPC National Congress issued “China’s Eleventh Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development.” This includes a process of Socialist Modernization, an updated version of the “Four Modernizations” as well as the predecessor for *Made in China 2025*. The plan aimed to achieve urbanization, industrialization, marketization, and internationalization to restructure industrial infrastructure and ensure economic development in the following 5 years; cultural development was also a key focus. Cultural industries, including the design and museum industries and the phenomenon of musealizing design, have flourished since then.

The concept of modernization changed in this period. From the notion of developing *shiye* (i.e., commerce, industry and agriculture) to the Four Modernizations (i.e., modernizing industry, agriculture, national defense and science) to the goal of urbanization, industrialization, marketization, and internationalization, and now to the three transitions in *Made in China 2025*, the Chinese understanding of modernization and its modernization objectives have evolved constantly.

During the Republican and early PRC era, many social elites and designers, most of whom had studied in advanced industrial countries such as Japan, Germany, Britain,

and America, introduced and promoted modern design to China. Many of them actively engaged with the design industry and established their own design studios or companies. However, China did not have the industrial foundation these countries did, and thus lacked the industrial and technological ground for the development of design (Shen, 2017). Moreover, the lack of a consumption-oriented environment under the strict planned economy before the 1980s left little space for consuming and producing design. With the dramatic rise of the marketized economy, China has been transformed from the factory of the world to a consumer country, and this provides a significant opportunity for the development of industrial design (He & Xiao, 2014). In fact, the transformation not only provides an opportunity for industrial design but also for all cultural industries. In the past few decades, Chinese understanding of design has shifted and has been intertwined with industry, science, and technology. These transformations, as depicted in Table 4, indicate the evolving nature of design and the attitudinal change of the nation. China believes technology is a measure of modernity and that hardware is a means to strengthen national power, and the state government has committed itself to investing in science and technology since 1949, when the Communist Party of China (CPC) took power (Zhao, 2020). However, at that time China regarded design as labor for styling and decoration and thus a representation of a capitalist lifestyle, so the development of design was overlooked for decades. It was not until recent decades that China renewed its attention to design and integrated design with technology in the Innovation Design Strategy, which reveals China's determination to achieve technology-based modernization with the assistance of design.

Cultural consumption becomes a norm, and this is accompanied by the desire for more cultural and entertaining services and products (Geng & Rao, 2020). The principal contradiction of China was once between “the ever-growing material and cultural needs of the people and backward social production” (Xi, 2017). Now, the problem has evolved to one between “unbalanced and inadequate development



and the people's ever-growing needs for a better life," as Chairman Xi Jinping (2017) asserts. In other words, people are making increased demands for material and culture; however, the unbalanced cultural market means the supply of cultural production does not match the demand of the market (Geng & Rao, 2020). The objectives of socialist modernization (i.e., urbanization, industrialization, marketization, and internationalization) are agents that propagate production and consumption. Both the governments at all levels, including governmental work units, as well as private and social entities, are the main bodies of cultural supply. The former provides free public cultural services and products, and the latter offers diverse and customized ones.

Museums are evolving in the new cultural and social environment, however, sometimes in a subtler way. The 1980s was a boom period for museums on a global scale, and this was caused by the need to regenerate the urban space by culture and the rise of a new genre of arts, private collectors, and patrons who invested in culture (Jimenez & Lord, 2019). Museums are cultural producers; they are also products and venues to be consumed. The thriving mass consumer culture in the market economy was an important reason for the booming and diversification of Chinese museums (Denton, 2014) because everything can be musealized and turned into cultural capital. Two dominant factors—economic development and urbanization—laid the groundwork for the development of museums. In the past two decades, China has transitioned from a producer to a consumer society, from industry economy and experience economy to knowledge economy. Jimenez and Lord (2019) suggested that the rise of private actors on a global scale could be explained by the fact that museums have become places for consolation and learning, as well as tradable “content” for accumulating capital in a knowledge economy. In this process, the state government dominates the museum boom and encourages social and private entities to participate in building more museums for cultural consumption.

In addition, as Kirchberg (2015) identifies, museums are instrumentalized in the international urban marketing strategy. City planners and private actors take advantage of this nature and invest in museums largely as a strategy of urban regeneration. This goes along with the promotion of tourism, which is regarded as “one of the fastest-growing economic sectors” (2019, p. 9). It is noteworthy that the State Council united the Ministry of Culture and Ministry of Tourism as the Ministry of Culture and Tourism in 2018, which demonstrated the nation’s ambition to industrialize culture. Coined *the Bilbao effect*<sup>15</sup>, museums as a cultural industry began to function as promoters of cultural tourism. City governments and cultural enterprises invited architects to design museums and sought international cooperation to create blockbuster exhibitions.

In the meantime, as Varutti (2014) observes, Chinese museums have also been inspired by the new museology and motivated by individual well-being since the 1990s. A new direction has turned to make museums visitor-centered, which favors the needs, interests, and expectations of visitors and the community in Chinese museums (Varutti, 2014). In academia, the journal *Chinese Museums* first introduced the new museology to China in 1986 by translating previous research from international journals or publications. More Chinese scholars, such as Yin Kai, Wang Siyu, and Zhen Shuonan, joined the discussion and contributed to the literature of Chinese museology. Wang Siyu (2021) argues that Chinese new museology is associated with a series of chained effects, such as market reformation, the rise of civil participation, and the increasing collaboration between Chinese museums and museums abroad in the context of globalization. Scholars previously tended to equate the practices of the ecomuseums and community museums with the new museology. Wang (2021) claimed that other types of museums, that are reflective of the

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<sup>15</sup> The Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, Spain successfully revived the post-industrial city and became an inspirational model in urban regeneration (Jimenez & Lord, 2019).

collection-centered museology and the traditional hegemonic role of museums, could apply to the new museology as well.

In practical terms, the application of the new museology in museums is reflected in many aspects, such as the curation of exhibitions, the organization of public programs, the management of collection, and the design of the museum building (Yin, 2018). These museums follow a methodology that aims to establish a long-term relationship with the public. There are three types of relationships between these museums and their community: (a) focus on the interaction and communication with visitors from diverse background; (b) explore the potential of museums to be places of entertainment and consumption; and (c) transition museums from inclusive institutions to be engines of social innovation (Yin, 2021). These relations reveal the functions of museums and the roles they play in the society.

### 3.5 Summary

This chapter reviewed the historical appropriation and adaption of the notions of design and museums in China. Although they were transplants from the West, both concepts in China's understanding have been evolving and intertwined with its desire to search for modernity. The process of modernization in China is circuitous. In the late 19th and early 20th centuries, it was shaped by European and Japanese models. Then, in the early PRC era, China followed the Soviet model before their relationship soured. At the early stage of reformation, it studied the practices of Japan, Singapore, and the *Four Dragons*. These models have impacted China in politics, economics, and culture. However, in the process of modernization, China has also searched for its own identity and language. China was reluctant to fully imitate and depend on others; it has been looking for its own modernization method (Wang, 1977; Zhao, 2020). In other words, China has explored an independent path of development that claims to

be socialist with its own characteristics, which is recognized as an alternative modernity (King, 2002).

The global shift of power was gestated in the early process of colonization since the mid-19th century. China's market reform in the late 1970s and early 1980s represented a new stage in the modern history of China. China has now become the second largest economy and a key global player. Its development provides an opportunity for design and museums.

China's understandings of design and museums changed with the shifts in the sociopolitical environment and cultural exchanges. In the early stage, inspired by Japanese practices in museums and industrial expositions, some social elites regarded design as playing a crucial role in promoting industries. Hence, they actively organized expositions and engaged in museum industries with the intention of modernizing the nation, transmitting knowledge, and civilizing the public.

International exhibitions and museums are cultural symbols of power, modernity, and progress (Shao, 2004). Through the establishment of these cultural facilities, China endeavors to construct a modern image of cultural cosmopolitanism, which is mixed with nationalism. The *Nanyang Industrial Exposition* and the *West Lake Exposition* were two successful industrial exhibitions, and the early Shanghai Museum and Hebei Museum were museums that developed a direct interest in industrial collection. They were early efforts to musealizing industrial artifacts. Whereas the Nantong Museum included heterogeneous collections, it was established by Zhang Jian out of an industrial concern and played a crucial role in modernizing Nantong City (Xu, 2016).

After the period dominated by the command economy, the reformation policy enhanced the status of design and shed light on the development of design museums. The revitalization and reinterpretation of design, in turn, revealed a complex change in society. Since the socialist market economy provided a postsocialist and neoliberal context for the market reformation (Denton, 2005; Zheng, 2020), China's ideology of

nationalism surpassed socialism and developed along with the pursuit of economic growth (Vickers, 2007). In the new century, museums have begun to privatize and have been incorporated into cultural tourism to boost the economy.

With the rising status of design and diversifying museum's themes, establishing design museums have become a new cultural phenomenon in China. Museums today are products of state and cultural policy (Fyfe & Jones, 2016). The establishment of design museums is also a state-led phenomenon in China in the postsocialist era as the policies in promoting design and museums offer valuable justification from the authorities. In the next chapters, the research analyses the cultural and urban development in Shenzhen and then discusses and compares the cases with findings.

## CHAPTER 4 Contextualizing Shenzhen and Its Cultural Development

### 4.1 Introduction

Shenzhen became the first Special Economic Zone (SEZ) in 1980, when the Reform and Opening-up Policy was launched. It served as a Petri dish that incorporated a market economy into a socialist system. In the past decades, Shenzhen has grown from an experiment into a “model city” that practices socialism with Chinese characteristics. It is the epitome of a modern metropolis in China. Along with economic and scientific development, the Shenzhen government promotes the culture of Shenzhen, which is as important as promoting the economy, science, and legislation (Peng, 2003). The government promulgated a series of regulations and policies to develop and support cultural development. In 2008, Shenzhen was designated as the CoD. Since then, design museums and exhibitions have flourished in this city. This chapter discusses how Shenzhen developed from a socialist experiment of market reform to a model city that plays a leading role in the economy, science, and technology in China. It also contextualizes the rise of Shenzhen and its cultural strategy and introduces the general situation of design museums in the city.

### 4.2 Shenzhen as a Model City and the Socialist Demonstration Area in China

This young SEZ was inspired by the experiences of developed regions and countries, such as Hong Kong and Singapore, in its infancy (Bach, 2017). Now, Shenzhen has grown from an experiment to a model city in China and has risen to become among the top global cities.<sup>16</sup> Its reformational experiences are presented in *Learning from Shenzhen: China's Post-Mao Experiment from Special Zone to Model City*

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<sup>16</sup> In 2020, Shenzhen was listed as an “alpha” city according to the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) Research Network (*The World According to GaWC 2020*, 2020). In the same year, Shenzhen ranked 37<sup>th</sup> in the annual Global Top 500 Cities ranking released by the Global City Lab (Shenzhen Daily, 2020).

(O'Donnell et al., 2017c). Developing from the Bao'an County, Shenzhen expanded quickly to include rural areas, the process of which is described as “rural urbanization,” and achieved liberalization in the economy during these decades (O'Donnell et al., 2017b, p. 6). Currently, Shenzhen consists of 10 administrative districts and has a population of 10 million.



Figure 13. The territory of Shenzhen

In the 1980s, loosening constraints legitimated commercial practices in Shenzhen, which was able to play an intermediary role in global production chains while simultaneously establishing similar processing chains on its own (Huang, 2016). With preferential treatment in the economy, Shenzhen attracted foreign investors and manufacturers at an early stage and accumulated wealth and strength in the industry economy. When Shenzhen upgraded its economic structure from low-cost, export-oriented manufacturing to high-tech industries, its manufacturing businesses increasingly moved to surrounding cities such as Dongguan (Huang, 2016). High-technology and new industries, such as new energy, e-commerce, and the bio-medical sector, were an important part of Shenzhen during this century (Bach, 2017). Technology and information giant companies, such as Tencent and Huawei, were also

established and became dominant in their fields. Financial services and technological and industrial advancement in the past decades have made Shenzhen a competitive place on the global stage.

Domestically, Shenzhen has pioneered the exploration of market-oriented economic and social systems. This is depicted as a socialist path with Chinese characteristics oriented by the market (Wu, 2020). This means Shenzhen's innovation and exploration complied firmly with the principle of the CPC and the core value of national ideology, which had been adaptively altered in different periods. The former president and general secretary, Deng Xiaoping, referred to the experimental and reformative experiences of Shenzhen as “feeling Rocks to cross the river.”<sup>17</sup> As Shenzhen gained huge success in the economy and society during the reformed socialist period, its experiences were propagated as innovative and miraculous and were promoted to other cities in China.

With the preferential policies of being a SEZ and, later, a model city, Shenzhen enjoyed top priority in its development and reformation in the aspects of economic, political, cultural, and social systems. Shenzhen was listed as the first pilot city in the National Innovative City scheme in 2008, when innovation became a keyword in urban development. Shenzhen anticipated to be one of the first cities to realize the goal of the “three transitions,” from being a center of manufacturing to one of creativity, which was targeted in *Made in China 2025*. In early 2019, the State Council unveiled the *Outline Development Plan for the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area*. The plan aimed to develop the bay area and assemble the strengths of the bay cities in transportation, science and technology, infrastructure building, tourism, industries, ecology, business, and commerce. Shenzhen intended to be the center of economy and culture among the city clusters. In the same year, the

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<sup>17</sup> This refers to the ambiguous future and dangerous path of reformation, as there were critical voices over the fear of being tempted by capitalism.



State Council confirmed support for Shenzhen with an official document establishing Shenzhen as a pilot demonstration area of socialism with Chinese characteristics.

Thus far, Shenzhen is positioned as the National Comprehensive Reform Pilot Zone, the National Economic Center, the National Innovative City, the International City, and a pilot demonstration area of socialism with Chinese characteristics in the schemes enacted by the NDRC (Wu, 2020). Moreover, Shenzhen also serves as a diplomatic city that represents its soft power and cultural influence on the world through its cultural events and foreign trades (Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2012).

#### 4.3 Design, Museums, and Cultural Development in Shenzhen

##### 4.3.1 Establishing a City Renowned for its Culture: Shenzhen Cultural Policies Since 2003

In a governmental meeting in 1995, the authority came up with the idea of establishing Shenzhen as a modern and civilized city to excel in the global campaign of cities, as they realized that cultural development and reformation were imperative indicators of urban development (Wu, 2020). Modern hereby refers to the modernization of cultural infrastructure, cultural perceptions, art genres, and cultural management (Wu, 2020). The idea was formally included later in the strategic planning. The municipal plans in the 1980s and 1990s laid the foundation for the cultural development of Shenzhen. A dozen of cultural infrastructure projects such as Shenzhen Museum, Shenzhen Theater, Shenzhen SEZ Daily, Shenzhen Science Museum, Guang Shanyue Art Museum, and He Xiangning Art Museum were built during these two periods.

In the Sixth Plenary Session of the Third CPC Municipal Congress in 2003, the Shenzhen government decided to promote the culture of Shenzhen, which became an

official strategy that was as important as promoting the economy, science, and legislation (Peng, 2003). The strategy “*Wenhua lishi*” (supporting the city with culture) aimed to improve comprehensive cultural strength, build a city of culture, cultivate citizens with high art, satisfy the cultural needs of citizens, and improve the city’s cultural profile on the global stage (Hu, 2005; Wang, 2005).

Policies are important because they indicate how the government gets involved in the production of culture and allocates and distributes cultural and financial resources to different social parties. The government believed that culture is crucial to support and drive the development of the economy in spirit and intelligence (CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee & Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2005a). In the following years, the CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee, Shenzhen Municipal Government, Bureau of Culture, and Bureau of Development and Reformation issued a series of regulations and policies to develop and support cultural development. Developing cultural industries and cultural undertakings and reforming the stagnant socialist cultural system were the main foci. The ultimate goal of municipal policies was to build an international, modernized, civilized, and high-standard cultural city (CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee & Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2005a). When Shenzhen was appointed as the pilot innovative city, the goal slightly changed to establish a modernized, international, and innovative city (Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2016).

Table 5.

*Cultural Regulations and Policies Issued in Shenzhen Since 2003.*

Year	Regulations/policies	Issued by
Mid-1990s	Three-Year Plan of Developing Shenzhen Cultural Undertakings 1998–2000 and the Vision in 2010 Plan of Shenzhen Cultural Development 1995–2000	

2003	“Support the city with culture”	Sixth Plenary Session of the Third CPC Municipal Congress
2005	Masterplan of the Shenzhen Cultural Development	CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee, Shenzhen Municipal Government
2005	Decision on Developing Cultural Industries in Shenzhen	CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee, Shenzhen Municipal Government
2006	Several Economic Policies of Rapidly Developing Cultural Industries Suggestions for the Implementation of Establishing Cultural Industry Bases Interim Measures for the Special Fund for Developing Cultural Industries in Shenzhen	Shenzhen Municipal Government
2007	The 11 <sup>th</sup> Plan of Developing Shenzhen Cultural Undertakings <sup>18</sup> (2006–2010)	Shenzhen Bureau of Culture and Shenzhen Bureau of Development and Reformation
2008	Masterplan of Developing Shenzhen Cultural Industries (2007–2020)	Shenzhen Bureau of Culture, Broadcast, Tourism, and Sports
2008	Regulation on Promoting Shenzhen Cultural Industries	Shenzhen Bureau of Culture, Broadcast, Tourism, and Sports
2012	Build a strong city with culture	
2012	The 12 <sup>th</sup> Plan of Shenzhen Cultural Development	Shenzhen Municipal Government
2012	Regulation on Supporting Private Museums of Shenzhen	CPC Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Publicity, Shenzhen Bureau of Culture, Broadcast, Tourism and Sports, etc.
2016	The 13 <sup>th</sup> Plan of Shenzhen Cultural Development	Shenzhen Municipal Government
2016	Shenzhen Cultural Creative Development 2020 (Implementation plan)	Shenzhen Bureau of Culture, Broadcast, Tourism, and Sports
2019	Five-Year (2018–2023) Plan of Shenzhen Museums Development and the Vision in 2035	Shenzhen Bureau of Culture, Broadcast, Tourism, and Sports
2020	Regulation on Supporting Non-State-owned Museums of Shenzhen	Shenzhen Bureau of Culture, Broadcast, Tourism, and Sports

The *Masterplan of Shenzhen Cultural Development (2005–2010)* supported not-for-profit cultural undertakings to improve cultural services to the public and to develop

<sup>18</sup> The plan defined cultural undertakings as comprising of culture, arts, filming, broadcasting, publishing, heritages, and museums.

profit-making cultural industries to increase cultural competence. At the same time, it emphasized the reformation of the cultural system to revive culture and emancipate cultural production, which had been constrained by the previous market system (CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee & Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2005a). The plan followed the opinion issued by the State Ministry of Culture in 1992<sup>19</sup> and devised a cultural investment mechanism that consisted of diversified sources of funding. For example, it provided project-based special funds for cultural events, facilitated public donations, and encouraged private capital and privately run foundations to inject capital into the cultural sector to establish private museums and invest in culture. Moreover, it welcomed foreign capital to invest in cultural infrastructure and encouraged collaboration between cultural enterprises and international brands.

Shenzhen acknowledged that developing high technology and new industries were not enough to leave a good impression on the world. The *Masterplan of Developing Shenzhen Cultural Industries (2007–2020)* clarified the significance of developing cultural industries as a catalyst to turn the city from a manufacturing workshop to a creative and modern city. In the information era and in a consumer society, the transformation of Shenzhen industries requires incorporation with value-added cultural elements to drive local innovation and boost economic development. The 2005–2010 masterplan and the *Decision on Developing Cultural Industries* issued in 2005 highlighted cultural industries as a supportive industry to promote the harmonious development of economy and culture. These documents were endorsed, as the 16<sup>th</sup> National People’s Congress in 2002 pointed out that “develop cultural industries was a main approach to flourish socialist culture and satisfy spiritual and cultural needs of the public in the market-oriented economy” (CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee & Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2005b). The decision set

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<sup>19</sup> *The Opinions Concerning Deepening Reform, Expanding Opening and Accelerating the Prosperity, and Development of Socialist Cultural Undertakings.*

a target of 10% added value of cultural industries in the gross domestic product in five years and aimed to increase the proportion of the cultural consumption of urban residences. Cultural enterprises, such as the Overseas Chinese Town Group (the OCT Group), should play a leading role in cultural industries such as tourism, art production, and creative parks. In 2016, more economic policies and regulations were promulgated to encourage the private sector to participate in the investment and establishment of cultural industries and museums.

In the early opening-up period, industries in the PRD region were dominated by original equipment manufacturing, which is a low-value business that depends on demand from the West. The national industrial and economic structures were not balanced and left little space for the development of the original design (Dilnot, 2003). In the industrial stage, what made Shenzhen renowned and hunted was its *shanzhai* (pirating) culture. Some manufacturing companies began their own businesses, which, however, were accused of producing fake and inferior products based on the imitation of foreign design and art.<sup>20</sup>

By 2012, when previous support for cultural development took effect, the “*Wenhua Lishi*” strategy was slightly changed to “*Wenhua qiangshi*” (building a strong city with culture), which means strengthening the competence of the city with culture. The strategy complied with the *Decision on Deepening the Reformation of the Cultural System to Promote the Development and Flourish of Socialist Culture* issued in the Sixth Plenary Session of the 17<sup>th</sup> CPC National Congress in 2011. The following *12<sup>th</sup> Plan of Shenzhen Cultural Development* ascertained the function of culture to

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<sup>20</sup> Two representative places were Huaqiangbei, an area that sold massive digital and electronic products to the global market, and Dafeng Village, a place that assembled many art workers and reproduced Western masterpieces of art in an assembly-line manner. These behaviors were criticized for producing counterfeit products and violating intellectual property rights laws.

When cultural industries were included in the government agenda, Dafeng Village was rebranded as a national model for cultural industries in 2004 through a series of actions, such as promoting originality by disseminating publications on copyright and intellectual property rights and establishing an art museum. Huaqiangbei was also reformed into a technological base and commercial center. In 2021, the Huaqiangbei Museum, which documents the history of the region and the development of the electronics industry, was founded and opened to the public.

transform the industrial infrastructure and upgrade economic structure. Culture was regarded as an imperative power to strengthen urban power and competence, and cultural industries became the strategic new industry that would push creativity and the quality of consumer products. A regulation on supporting private museums and beneficial economic policies on land uses, finance, and revenues were issued to support museums and cultural industries. The Municipal Department of Publicity also set up the Special Fund for Publicity and Cultural Development to support project-based cultural events. It was used to investing in cultural projects, while the government could spare a huge amount of money for sustaining the operation of these cultural organizations. This was crucial to motivate the enthusiasm of cultural organizations and cultural workers and to activate cultural production that had been stagnant in traditional work units. The quality of cultural events could be guaranteed, as the projects were required to be evaluated by experts in the final acceptance stage.

#### 4.3.2 The City of Design and Branding Shenzhen with Exhibitions and Museums

As discussed in Chapter 3, design as a discipline and profession in higher education began in China during the early opening-up period.<sup>21</sup> It was not until the new century that design was recognized as a creative drive in indigenous innovation and an innovation-oriented economy (Liu et al., 2018). At the national level, industrial design was included in the national policy<sup>22</sup> promulgated by the State Council in 2008. Design was anticipated to upgrade Chinese manufacturing industries and support economic development. Subsequently, the MIIT and the NDRC issued several documents and policies to support the development of the design industry.

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<sup>21</sup> Industrial design was the first design program included in higher education in the 1980s. In Shenzhen, the industrial design program in Shenzhen University was set up in 1987.

<sup>22</sup> *The Opinion of the State Council General Office on Implementing the Policy Measurement for Accelerating the Development of the Service Industry*

The history of Shenzhen design began earlier than the national initiative. The development of Hong Kong design had a significant impact on Shenzhen design through cross-cultural and cross-regional exhibitions and communication during the first stage of the opening-up period (Wong, 2001). Some designers began establishing their own companies and design associations in the 1990s (Yao, 2011).

In many publicity documents, Shenzhen was described as the birthplace of graphic design in China. The SGDA, the first design association in China, was established in 1995. The members of the SGDA began organizing the Graphic Design in China (GDC) competition and design exhibitions in Shenzhen several years before the association was established. Other specialized design industries, such as fashion, animation, jewelry, and interior design, have also developed rapidly in the city. According to Yao (2011), 17 design associations were established in Shenzhen, covering the entire spectrum of design, such as graphic design, interior design, industrial design, animation, fashion, jewelry, and package design. The associations were mainly established by non-government bodies and played an active role in promoting specialized design industries, organizing design events and trainings, and integrating design information and resources for companies and practitioners.

When UNESCO set up the Creative Cities Network in 2004, Shenzhen began working on the application of the CoD and listed the task in its cultural agenda (Wang, 2005). It was not only because Shenzhen had a history of design and relatively mature design industries, but also because design is an international language that could connect Shenzhen with the world (Wang, 2005). As the former minister of the Municipal Department of Publicity Wang Jingsheng illustrated, being a city of design could be a characteristic of Shenzhen culture and support the strategy of being a civilized city (2005). Thus, the *Masterplan of Shenzhen Cultural Development (2005–2010)* aimed to develop creative design industries, and the goal of establishing an international city of creative design was later emphasized in the *Masterplan of Developing Shenzhen*

*Cultural Industries (2007–2020)* and the *11<sup>th</sup> Plan of Developing Shenzhen Cultural Undertakings (2006–2010)*. The inclusion of creative design and culture in policies implies that these areas have become an important government agenda in urban development. The governmental authority considered highly qualified design exhibitions are platforms that can connect design with the public and be a manifestation of urban civilization. Organizing design exhibitions, such as the *Shenzhen International Ink Painting Biennale*<sup>23</sup>, *Graphic Design in China*, and *Shenzhen and Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture (UABB)*<sup>24</sup> and design competitions was included in the *11th Plan of Developing Shenzhen Cultural Undertakings (2006–2010)* as a way to promote Shenzhen as a city of design (Shenzhen Bureau of Culture & Shenzhen Bureau of Development and Reformation, 2007).

The municipal government acknowledged the marketing value of the CoD designation, and the *12<sup>th</sup> Plan of Shenzhen Cultural Development* reemphasized the value of design in promoting the city profile and spreading the city's influence domestically and internationally (Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2012). The designation was also conducive to shaping a distinct urban characteristic as one of the targets of the government since 2005. In 2012, Shenzhen became the host of the national triennial event *China Design Exhibition*, which was initiated by the State Ministry of Culture. Now, the triennial exhibition is an official event co-organized by the State Ministry of Culture and Tourism, Guangdong Provincial Government, and Shenzhen Municipal Government. As a platform that assembled and displayed pioneering Chinese design, the previous three exhibitions invited around 1,500 participants from design schools, research institutes, and companies (Yang, 2021).

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<sup>23</sup> *Shenzhen International Ink Painting Biennale* was organized by the Shenzhen Municipal Government and Shenzhen Academy of Art since 1999.

<sup>24</sup> *Shenzhen and Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture* was initiated by the Shenzhen Municipal Government to address issues raised during urbanization in 2005.



In addition, the government set up the Shenzhen Design Award for international young talents. Ambitiously, the award bestowed a generous prize of 1,000,000 CNY and aims to be a “window through which foreign designers and design institutions could enter the huge Chinese market” (Shenzhen Design Awards, n.d.). As hosting global events was imperative for Shenzhen to achieve its goal of becoming an international and modernized city, the international competition aimed to intensify the international process of the city and win the city global prestige. In 2017, the award was included as part of Shenzhen Design Week, another international annual event funded by the Shenzhen government.

When Shenzhen was preparing for the CoD designation, the city had no design museums. The national-level Guan Shanyue Art Museum has been responsible for organizing design exhibitions and collecting design since 2006. It was the venue of the first and second *China Design Exhibitions* (2012 and 2015), *Graphic Design in China 2011* (December 4, 2011 – January 4, 2012), and *Design Shenzhen—the 1<sup>st</sup> Shenzhen Design Exhibition*<sup>25</sup> (June 12 – 17, 2012). The He Xiangning Art Museum, another national-level museum, also prominently collected design objects and held design exhibitions. However, design exhibitions were not consistently held, as these museums have their own specialized focus, and the biennales, such as the UABB, are periodic in time and nomadic in its venues. The OCT Art and Design Gallery established in 2008 by the OCT Group was small in size and could hardly host large design exhibitions. Thus, in the *12<sup>th</sup> Plan*, the authority aimed to establish a new design museum.

Shenzhen now is a base that produces cultural products and services and a place of cultural consumption. On the one hand, the design and cultural industries are supported by the government to supply sufficient services and products to the public.

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<sup>25</sup> *Design Shenzhen—the 1<sup>st</sup> Shenzhen Design Exhibition* was organized by the Shenzhen Creative Culture Center and traced the development of Shenzhen design.

Enhancing both the creativity and quality of cultural production are also of major concern. On the other hand, the government and the industries are ensuring that these cultural consumptions are needed and demanded by the public. They foster and lead the desire for consuming culture and educate the public with a taste of art so the public can appreciate and consume culture.

The government orchestrates the supply of design museums and cultural activities through cultural policies to extend the reach of design to the public. To date, several design museums have been established in Shenzhen since 2008. The density of design museums in this city is unusual, given that there were only 50 registered museums and memorial sites and 11 art museums in Shenzhen in 2018 (“Statistical bulletin of Shenzhen’s national economic and social development in 2018,” 2019). As a result of the reformation of the cultural system, most design museums were founded by enterprises, such as the OCT Group and the China Merchants Group (CMG). The number of design museums in this city mirrored the booming of design and museums in Shenzhen. Following national industrial design policies, the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, which is affiliated with a local governmental department, also began collecting and displaying industrial design products.

#### 4.4 Design Museums in Shenzhen

##### 4.4.1 The CoD Promotion Office and the Shenzhen Modern Design Museum

On December 7, 2008, Shenzhen was designated as a CoD by UNESCO as the first Chinese city included in the Creative Cities Network. The CoD Promotion Office and the Shenzhen Creative Culture Center were established in the same year for the marketing of Shenzhen as a CoD. The organizations aimed to connect Shenzhen with the rest of the world, support design industries, enhance the value of design, and build a creative cultural environment. They released a five-year plan that aimed to hold an

international exposition, build a global professional forum and a professional network, organize a global design award, and found a design museum (Yao, 2011).

The Shenzhen Modern Design Museum was co-established by the CoD Promotion Office and Shenzhen University (SZU). The founding bodies initially wanted to establish a museum that focused on national design; later, they decided to emphasize vernacular design and designers. Registered in the local Bureau of Cultural Heritage as a state-owned industrial museum<sup>26</sup> and affiliated with SZU, the museum officially opened on May 17, 2012, as one of the cultural events during the Shenzhen International Cultural Industry Fair.

The museum was managed by the School of Art and Design at SZU.<sup>27</sup> Under the auspices of the Municipal Department of Publicity and the CoD Promotion Office, and with the help of Shenzhen design associations and the staff of the School of Art and Design, the first exhibition of the museum celebrated the achievements of Shenzhen design in the recent 30 years and gathered around 400 design works, most of which were designed by members of the local design and industrial associations. The second exhibition, held in 2013, featured digital jacquard fabric works from six international textile designers. This exhibition, as well as the two that followed, was in collaboration with international design academies and universities. Exhibitions functioned as a complementary section of exchange programs between SZU and these organizations. All these exhibitions were arranged as additional events during the annual Shenzhen International Cultural Industry Fair. Most importantly, these exhibitions were considered achievements that could manifest the social impact of the collaborating parties and demonstrate that the outcomes of the collaboration were successful.

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<sup>26</sup> There are state-owned and non-state-owned museums in the category of the State Administration of Cultural Heritage. State-owned museums are further divided into industrial museums and museums of cultural heritage.

<sup>27</sup> The author worked for the museum from 2013 to 2017.

The museum's objectives were to develop Shenzhen's creative industry, to be a creative platform of design, and to share accomplishments of vernacular design with the public. It also aimed to research, acquire, and exhibit vernacular design products. However, as a reformed cultural institution, the museum had many insufficiencies in its funding sources and managerial structures. On the one hand, the museum was not an independent "*Shiye danwei*"—a work unit that is fully funded and governed by the government. It was requested to apply for project-based government funding from the Special Fund for Publicity and Cultural Development of Shenzhen. However, government funding set limits on covering expenses related to exhibitions and collections; thus, it did not allow paying for full-time staff, and the university was not willing to offer a position for the museum. On the other hand, it did not have support from the private sector, such as other privately owned museums. As the museum relied on school staff to work on the side, who could barely spare the time to curate exhibitions and maintain its daily tasks, the claimed museum mission and duty hence could hardly be fulfilled. When the exhibition space was withdrawn by the university, the museum was further marginalized and had to be closed down.

#### 4.4.2 Shenzhen Museum of Industry

The Shenzhen Museum of Industry is a government museum that receives full funding from the government. It was established in 1985 and moved to the Civic Center in Futian District, a central district of Shenzhen City, in 2011. It occupies the 2<sup>nd</sup>–10<sup>th</sup> floors and comprises eight exhibitions and one multifunctional hall. Under the auspices of the Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology<sup>28</sup> (SZBIIT, re-organized from Shenzhen Economy, Trade and Information Commission), it was the only channel that publicized Shenzhen industrial policies when it was open. Currently, it is not only an important organization for negotiating

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<sup>28</sup> This government department is mainly responsible for developing local industrial and informative technology and business.

industrial projects and holding exhibitions of industrial products but also a reception place for Shenzhen foreign affairs for receiving diplomatic visits from important political figures from China and overseas (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2020).



Figure 14. Shenzhen Museum of Industry

As the publicity platform of the SZBIIT, the Shenzhen Museum of Industry showcases Shenzhen's industrial profile and promotes its industrial achievements to the world. As defined by the SZBIIT, the museum aims

- a. To collect local industrial products and disseminate industrial information,
- b. To display Shenzhen's industrial achievements and publicize Shenzhen's investment destination,
- c. To organize domestic and international exhibitions, fairs, and investment promotion activities, and
- d. To provide economic information to domestic and international investors (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2020).

The museum focuses on local industrial and informative technology that could be supportive to the economic development of Shenzhen. It endeavors to help local enterprises build their brands, establish a profile, and expand the market.

Commissioned by the Shenzhen government, the museum also organized exhibitions and trade fairs, such as the China High-Tech Fair and the China International Industry Fair, as well as commercial negotiations, meetings, and conferences.

Apart from these objectives, the museum's goals change according to the guidelines and policies of state and municipal governments. For example, it began displaying and promoting industrial design in 2013, such as exhibiting design works from the German iF Design Award, national and local companies, and designers. As industrial culture has become a focus of the SZBIIT in recent years, one of the primary responsibilities of museums now is to promote the development of the local industrial culture. Thus, the museum was approved as the “Center of Shenzhen's Industrial Culture Development.”

#### 4.4.3 OCT Art and Design Gallery



Figure 15. OCT Art and Design Gallery

The OCT Art and Design Gallery (OCT Gallery) was established in 2008 in the same year that Shenzhen gained the CoD designation. It was the first of its kind in Shenzhen and the second after the Beijing Museum of Art and Design in China. Different from the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, the gallery was founded by the state-own enterprise OCT Group. The OCT Group is a Shenzhen-based enterprise that was founded in 1985, and its businesses range from real estate to tourism and cultural industries.

At the center of the residential and cultural industries of the OCT Group in Nanshan, the gallery is located on the south side of Shennan Avenue, between the InterContinental Hotel and the He Xiangning Art Museum, and in front of the “Splendid China” theme park. The gallery is composed of two parts: a three-story main building and an individual, single-layered building. The main building was built on an old laundry factory building from the 1980s, and the other building was a boiler house. It occupies a 3,000 square meters architecture space with a 2,000 square meters exhibition space and a 600 square meters art salon.

Initially, the gallery was affiliated with and received funding from the InterContinental Hotel, a branch company under the OCT Group. In 2012, the gallery was included in the museum cluster of the OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT) as a branch dedicated to design, but it remained independent in administration to some extent. Together with the OCAT and the He Xiangning Art Museum, the OCT Gallery shapes an art delta that aims to revive the OCT region with art.

#### 4.4.4 Design Society

Design Society (DS), run by the China Merchants Shekou Industrial Zone Holdings Co., Ltd. (CMSK)<sup>29</sup> in cooperation with the V&A Museum, is another museal institution that opened in October 2017. The Chinese name of DS, “*sheji hulian*,” literally means connection by/with design, and it believes that design is “a key factor for societal, ecological, and economic renewal in China” (Design Society, n.d.-a). It aims to serve society and function as a cultural hub to “combine, connect, cross-fertilize and, by doing so, transcend cultural territories and boundaries” (Design Society, n.d.-a) and to revive the 40-year-old industrial region with design and creativity.

DS was founded by the CMG, a state-owned enterprise headquartered in Hong Kong. Since the opening-up period, the enterprise has been dominant in developing and managing the Shekou peninsula. The enterprise can be traced back to 1872, when it played an imperative role in the Self-strengthening Movement in the Late Qing. The business scope of the enterprise is diverse, ranging from integrated transportation to specialty finance and integrated urban and industrial park development and operation.



Figure 16. Location of Design Society. Photo credit: Design Society

<sup>29</sup> CMSK conducts many projects related to urban development and regeneration under the China Merchants Group.



DS is a brand of the exhibitionary project of the Sea World Culture and Arts Center (SWCAC). The center is found in the landfill zone of Shekou, where an early industrial zone established during the reform and opening-up period is located. The 71,000 square meters SWCAC is a cultural complex designed by Fumihiko Maki's studio. It is a "culture + enterprise" model that aims to sustain not-for-profit cultural activities with income from commercial operations. According to its media information in 2018, it initially included the DS's main gallery, the V&A gallery, Park View gallery, Guanfu Museum,<sup>30</sup> the Shekou Reform and Opening-up Museum,<sup>31</sup> the UNESCO Center for Design Gallery, several commercial art galleries, a theatre, an art training school, and several restaurants.

#### 4.4.5 Other Design-focused Institutions

The Shenzhen iADC Design Museum is a new design museum that opened in 2019. The museum belongs to Shenzhen Man Jinghua Investment Group Co. Ltd., a 23-year-old company that specializes in urban regeneration, cultural management, land development, asset operation management, and automobiles. In 2004, the company began its business in the cultural industry and took full ownership of the Shenzhen Art and Design Center, a shopping mall and trade center for decorative and interior arts and furniture (Shenzhen Man Jinghua Investment Group, n.d.). When the Shenzhen World Exhibition and Convention Center was relocated to the northwest corner of Shenzhen, Man Jinghua founded the International Art and Design Center

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<sup>30</sup> The Guanfu Museum is a private museum of ancient Chinese antique arts and crafts founded by the collector Ma Weidu. Its Shenzhen branch has signed an eight-year leasing contract. The museum was announced to open in June 2018. However, it was not open when the research was conducted.

<sup>31</sup> The Shekou Reform and Opening-up Museum was opened on December 26, 2017. It was represented as a typical case in the history of reformation, celebrating how the Shekou industrial zone was developed and renovated to be a modernized area by the China Merchants Group. The museum was closed in 2019.

(iADC Center) and established the museum near the new convention center in Bao'an District, which is far away from the city center.

The museum was designed by Rocco Design Architects, a Hong Kong studio. The iconic building is intended to be a landmark of the region. When the museum was open, it hosted a new media art exhibition and organized public programs. The second exhibition featured the furniture of the Italian design brand Kartell, and it became the venue of the subsections of the 2019 UABB and Shenzhen Design Week. However, according to a former staff member, the museum was poorly managed and became inactive after the pandemic in 2020.

Aside from these design museums, several design institutions functioned as mobile platforms and actively organized design exhibitions and programs. Some institutions were established by non-government bodies. As they gained a high reputation in the field, many exhibitions and related programs became featured events in the government's cultural agenda. GDC is a design competition and exhibition set up in Shenzhen in 1992, even earlier than the establishment of the SGDA. The first exhibition invited renowned designers, such as Henry Steiner, Kan Tai-Keung, and Alan Chan, as juries and boosted the cross-regional communication between Hong Kong and the mainland. The second exhibition was organized four years later. Since 2003, the GDC has been hosted biennially, and it aims to support and promote international creative designers (Graphic Design in China, n.d.). As a professional platform for promoting the Chinese graphic design industry and designers, it has been featured and supported by Shenzhen government departments.

Some exhibitionary projects, such as the UABB, were initiated by the government sector to address issues raised during urbanization (Shenzhen and Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture, n.d.). To date, UABB has become an important cultural event in branding the city. The biennale chose different venues each time, and it moved its scope from the city center to the periphery of Shenzhen. Through its

exhibitions, it drew public attention to urban issues and, in many cases, turned former industrial lands or inopportune urban villages into cultural spaces (Zhou, 2021). For example, the first and second UABB in 2005 and 2007 were held in the OCAT and the OCT Loft, respectively, by the time the region had just been explored and had not yet become a creative cluster. Since these two biennales, the UABB began its role in regenerating post-industrial districts through exhibition making. The 2013 and 2015 UABB chose several former factories in Shekou as venues, which later became the base of creative companies and a cultural and tourism site near DS. In addition to the UABB, the CoD Promotion Office and the Shenzhen Design Promotion Association also initiated the *Hong Kong—Shenzhen Design Biennale* in collaboration with the Hong Kong Federation of Design Associations to promote the co-development and collaboration of creative and commercial industries in the two cities.

The nascent Shenzhen Design Week is an annual project that was set up by the Shenzhen government in 2017 (Shenzhen Design Week, n.d.). This is a specialized event co-hosted by the Shenzhen Creative Design Office, the SZBIIT, and several government associations and departments related to foreign affairs, education, and culture. Following the Shenzhen Culture Week<sup>32</sup> and the Shenzhen–International Friendship Cities Culture Week,<sup>33</sup> the Shenzhen Design Week is geared toward international standards and invites international designers to participate in themed exhibitions and programs. As it is nomadic like the UABB, this event is presented in different cultural venues each year. It intends to display excellent design works from all over the world, boost cross-national communication, and most importantly, shape the identity of the “Shenzhen design” and introduce Shenzhen to the world.

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<sup>32</sup> The Shenzhen Culture Week is a brand activity listed in the *Masterplan of Shenzhen Cultural Development* 2005. This event aims to promote Shenzhen to the world and raise the international profile and influence of Shenzhen.

<sup>33</sup> The Shenzhen--International Friendship Cities Culture Week is a biannual diplomatic event inaugurated in 2007 by Shenzhen Foreign Affair Office, Shenzhen Bureau of Culture, Broadcast, Tourism and Sports and two associations.

In 2019, the government authority released a five-year plan for museum development (Shenzhen Bureau of Culture, Broadcast, Tourism, and Sports, 2019), which intended to build the Shenzhen Innovation Design Museum in Shenzhen Bay Cultural Square in the Houhai central region of Nanshan District. The initial goal of the museum was to hold national design exhibitions, conduct design research, collect international design works and those that received renowned design awards, and educate the general public. Although it was a cultural infrastructure initiated by the government, it could be managed by an enterprise.<sup>34</sup> The establishment of a new design museum is listed in the new “Top Ten Cultural Infrastructure Projects” on the government agenda. The square, where the new museum will be located, is in the new district center of Nanshan. It will assume diverse functions of culture, ecology, commerce, living, and leisure, and is anticipated to serve as a platform that displays the new image of a creative Shenzhen (Shenzhen Government of Nanshan District, 2020). This reaffirms the government’s initiative to develop culture for boosting the local economy.

#### 4.5 Summary

Shenzhen used to be considered a cultural desert, referring to its barrenness in cultural infrastructure and cultural production. As a young city, culture was nascent compared with economic development during the early opening-up period. Since 2003, as the authority established the cultural strategy of supporting the city with culture, culture has become a crucial indicator of the comprehensive development of Shenzhen. This follows the city’s goal of being an international, modern, and civilized city that can excel in the global competition of cities. Moreover, this ambition follows the national plan to liberalize the market and economy, strengthen the national soft power, and, in

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<sup>34</sup> Interview with the Head of the Administrative Office in the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, Ye Tao, on July 27, 2021.

one word, modernize, with Shenzhen playing the leading role in the socialism experiment with Chinese characteristics.

In the new century, the authority earnestly discovered Shenzhen's history, explored new cultural elements, and established a unique Shenzhen culture. A series of plans and policies was announced to support and facilitate the cultural development of Shenzhen. The government schemes, following the cultural agenda of the state government as stated in Section 3.3.2, have two major tasks: (a) reform cultural undertakings (e.g., museums) and cultural systems and (b) develop cultural industries to "flourish socialist culture and satisfy spiritual and cultural needs of the general public in the market-oriented economy" (CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee & Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2005b).

China's intensified pursuit of economic development corresponds to that of the United Kingdom and France in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Similar to Paris and London in the 19th and 20th centuries, Shenzhen is flooded with international exhibitions, world fairs, design competitions, architecture biennales, and maker festivals. Many museums, libraries, theaters, and other cultural infrastructures have been built over the past two decades, along with large shopping centers, theme parks, plazas, and financial centers. However, Shenzhen is not Paris or London. Its phantasmagoria is not built on the shadow of the past but on the contemporary achievement of reformation and the futurist envision.

An implicit reason behind the market-oriented socialist objective is that the authorities see the potential and huge consumer market for culture. This is not unique in Shenzhen, not even in China. According to Weil, three-quarters of museums around the world were established after the second half of the 20th century, and the phenomenon behind this is growing consumerism for culture on a global scale (2002, as cited in Denton, 2014). Museums are instrumentalized in the global campaign of cities (Kirchberg, 2015). City planners and private actors invest largely in museums

as part of their cultural and urban regeneration strategies. Along with the rise of the design discipline and the creative and commercial meanings it carries, design museums also flourish and play a crucial role in constructing a modern city.

In the reformed market system, two predominant changes in the cultural reformation were the intervention of the private sector in cultural infrastructure and the changing role of the government in cultural development. However, the government did not completely withdraw from the cultural establishment. The cultural mechanism is that culture is “supervised by the government under the leadership of the CPC committee and managed by private enterprises or government work units in accordance with laws and regulations” (CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee & Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2005a). It reduces the manipulating role of the government to some extent and endorses the free market by issuing policies and regulations to provide an open environment for the accumulation of cultural capital. Culture has become an imperative component of economic development (Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2012), and the market plays a dominant role in transferring the intangible values of culture into tradable assets.

This change can be witnessed in the aforementioned museums. Before the Reform and Opening-up period, museums were socialist work units that belonged to national or local governments, and they were fully funded and governed by the governments. Except for the Museum of Industry established in 1985 by the SZBIIT, the newly founded museums are no longer government-owned work units. The Shenzhen Modern Design Museum was an early practice of government reformation that hoped to collaborate with a local university. However, this strategy was not sustainable because of the restrictions on personnel and sources of funding and the lack of an effective managerial system. The rest of the design museums were founded by enterprises such as the OCT Group, China Merchants, and Man Jinghua. This is similar to the history of the 1910s, when social entities and individuals engaged

actively in establishing early Chinese museums. However, the social environment, the background of the enterprises, and the internal mechanisms of the institutions are totally different. In this spatial and temporal context, what are the roles and functions of design museums in society? Are they still hegemonic and regulatory institutions, as claimed by Foucault and Bennett, or emancipatory places for the public? How do these design museums disseminate the meaning of design and contribute to society? In the following chapters, this study explores the background of the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, DS, and the OCT galley, examines how they fulfill their functions, and compares the three examples with the findings collected during the study.

## CHAPTER 5 Case Study One: Shenzhen Museum of Industry

### 5.1 Background

The Shenzhen Museum of Industry was established in 1985, two years after Shenzhen began establishing its cultural infrastructure.<sup>35</sup> It is a governmental museum under the auspices of the SZBIIT, which is a municipal department supervised by the MIIT (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2021b). The SZBIIT, a new department that is responsible for issues related to local industrial and information technologies, was divested from the Shenzhen Economy, Trade, and Information Commission in 2019.

Although the associated departments have changed and regrouped several times, the museum's goal of promoting industrial technologies, industrial products, and the Shenzhen industrial business environment has generally remained unaltered. Being a governmental museum, it keeps up-to-date with policy trends and the instructions of its superior departments and accommodates some adjustments to its role. For instance, the MIIT issued a document on promoting industrial culture in January 2017. Since 2018, researching and promoting industrial culture has been one of the major tasks of the museum. The museum joined the Alliance of Industrial Museums of China, a not-for-profit organization initiated and supervised by the MIIT Center of Industrial Culture Development, as the deputy president unit. The alliance assembles industrial museums nationwide, including the China Design Museum in Hangzhou, to co-develop and carry forward industrial culture, promote industrial culture industries, and support national development (Alliance of Industrial Museums of China, n.d.). In 2020, the museum was designated the Center of Shenzhen Industrial Culture Development by the Office of Institutional Establishment Committee of Shenzhen

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<sup>35</sup> In 1983, Shenzhen listed the first series of the Top Eight cultural infrastructure projects on the government's agenda: Shenzhen Museum, Shenzhen Theater, Shenzhen Library, Shenzhen Science Museum, Shenzhen Stadium, Shenzhen TV Station, Shenzhen News Center, and Shenzhen University. This marked the beginning of Shenzhen's cultural development.



Municipal Committee of the CPC, which means that it becomes Shenzhen's leading and managerial institution that liaises with local industrial institutions, conducts research and promotes local industrial heritage and industrial tourism (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2021b).



Figure 17. Shenzhen Museum of Industry

## 5.2 A Platform to Showcase Shenzhen Industry

The Museum of Industry is located in the Shenzhen Civic Center in the Futian Central District. The center is a giant architectural complex, which was designed by the American architectural firm Lee/Timchula Architecture. Although the center is an urban landmark that was constructed in 1998, its symbolic significance as the political and cultural center of Shenzhen is greater than the architecture per se. The complex is home to the Shenzhen Municipal Government, the Municipal People's Congress, several governmental work units, exhibition galleries, and a civic square. On the other side of the street is early cultural infrastructure, including the Shenzhen Museum, the Shenzhen Music Concert Hall, the Shenzhen Library, and the Shenzhen Children's Center. The civic center has been the representative landmark of Shenzhen for a long

time. The museum's location at the center of power renders the museum a site for diplomatic visits and signifies its importance for publicizing Shenzhen industries.

Before the museum moved to the civic center in 2011, it was located in Huaqiangbei, the center of the electronic information industry. At the time, the museum was merely a showroom of local industrial achievements and the only channel that publicized Shenzhen industrial development and attracted investment from overseas. Since there was lack of cultural infrastructure in the early period of the SEZ, the municipal government saw the need to establish a museum of this kind to demonstrate the city's industrial and economic achievements when there were diplomatic visits by foreign dignitaries and Chinese officials from the central and provincial governments.<sup>36</sup> It was also a site of visit in the training programs of cadres who worked in government departments. In 1994, the museum was officially listed as a government work unit for receiving diplomatic visits. This has remained part of its function, and it is thus a landmark site for diplomatic visits from important domestic and international political figures (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2021b).

Apart from the museum's diplomatic role in foreign affairs, the Shenzhen Museum of Industry is also the publicity instrument of the SZBIIT. The museum distributes information about the Shenzhen industrial sector and publicizes its industrial achievements to its superior departments, competitors, and potential investors through exhibitions. Additionally, the Shenzhen Museum of Industry has an open WeChat publicity channel for the public. This channel has actively disseminated news of the museum, related articles, and official industrial and economic information, such as announcements and policies issued by the SZBIIT, the MIIT, and other related authorities, on a weekly basis since 2015.

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<sup>36</sup> Interview with the Head of the Administrative Office in the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, Ye Tao, on July 27, 2021.

However, analogous to some Chinese museums in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, the museum was previously not open to either the public or visitors from non-governmental units unless they had obtained official authorization to visit.<sup>37</sup> It was only in 2011 when the museum moved to the Shenzhen Civic Center in the Futian Central District that it opened its doors to the public and became a public museum. By then it had a larger space for exhibitions and was able to host varied exhibitions and organize industrial fairs and public activities for local enterprises.

### 5.3 Museum Collections and Exhibitions

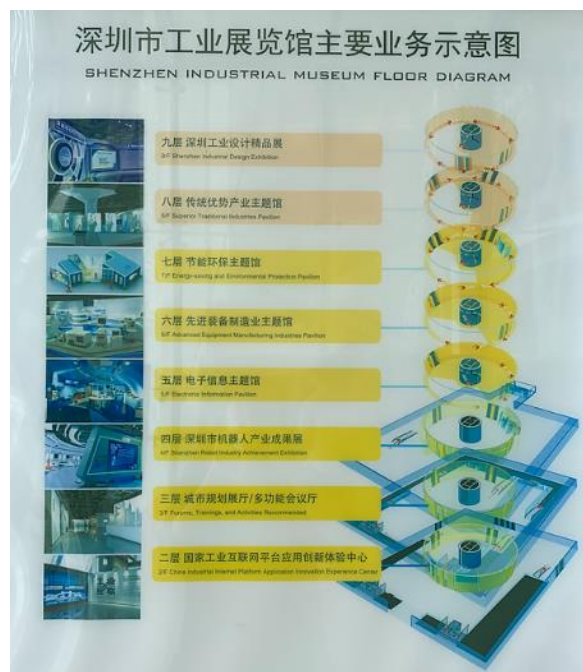


Figure 18. Floorplan of the Shenzhen Museum of Industry

The museum's managerial structure is a typical socialist work unit which comprises one administrative office and three functional departments that are respectively responsible for planning, displays, and promotions. The planning department

<sup>37</sup> Interview with the Head of the Administrative Office in the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, Ye Tao, on July 27, 2021.

conducts research on the museum content, the displays department is responsible for the management of and displays in the galleries, and the promotions department handles visitor receptions and museum publicity issues.<sup>38</sup>

With 10,000 square meters exhibition spaces, the museum hosts permanent and semi-permanent exhibitions on seven floors, which focus on award-winning Shenzhen industrial design and products from traditional industries,<sup>39</sup> energy-efficient and environmentally friendly industries, advanced equipment manufacturing, digital information, the Shenzhen robot industry, and the 5G application industry and include an experience center of national internet industrial platforms (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2020). Although the museum serves to promote new technologies and industries, the display of traditional manufacturing industries illustrates the important role that Shenzhen has played in manufacturing worldwide. This display provides a simultaneous contrast with the other galleries to demonstrate Shenzhen's achievements in transforming from original equipment manufacturing to a new industrial model. In addition, as the museum used to be a site for promoting Shenzhen's business environment to visitors for investment purposes, it had a gallery of urban planning on the third floor; however, this gallery became defunct after the new Shenzhen Museum of Contemporary Art and Urban Planning opened in 2020.

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<sup>38</sup> Interview with the Head of the Administrative Office in the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, Ye Tao, on July 27, 2021.

<sup>39</sup> The traditional industrial gallery displays products from industries such as fashion, leather, printing, craft, animation, and toys.



Figure 19. The experience center of national internet industrial platforms

Rather than offering a storytelling narrative, the current exhibitions are categorized according to their functions and manufacturing techniques. Objects are displayed randomly without any correlation to each other. Since the museum aims to promote local industrial and information technological development and support Shenzhen enterprises (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2020), criticality and storytelling are no longer the focus of the curation. Instead, the technologies and mechanisms behind the objects are emphasized on the labels and videos, which also feature an introduction to the attributed enterprises. Most of the exhibitions and objects on display remain in place for years. For example, the second floor used to host the *German iF* exhibition (2013–2020) until it was replaced by the experience center of national internet industrial platforms.

According to visitors' responses in the questionnaire conducted in the study, 51% of visitors thought it very easy to understand the arrangement and content of the exhibitions, and 91.1% were satisfied with their visiting experience as they had gained a greater understanding of Shenzhen's design and industrial achievements (see Appendix IV). Visitors considered the museum to be good because the displayed objects were highly technological, pioneering, scientific, and diverse. However, some visitors regarded the products and exhibitions as being out of date and lacking in

interpretation and opportunities for interactive experiences. They therefore hoped that the museum would update its exhibitions more frequently and have more interactive facilities to help visitors understand the museum content better.



Figure 20. Award-winning design in the ninth-floor exhibition of Shenzhen industrial design

Aside from the regular displays inside the institution, the museum also provides spaces for exhibitions and trade fairs of industrial products for local enterprises. In addition, collecting industrial products and conducting research on local industries became a new but major task of the museum since 2016, and the museum has collected more than 3000 pieces of work from Shenzhen-based industrial enterprises (Shenzhen Museum of Industry, 2017a). Some of these collections were acquired directly from such enterprises, while others were selected from among products that have received industrial and design awards. For instance, the museum collaborated with the Association of Shenzhen Automatic Electronic Industry and acquired 10 award-winning products as the museum's permanent collection (Shenzhen Museum of Industry, 2016). To upgrade the exhibition areas, the museum set up a specialized

team in 2019 to research on recent industrial developments in Shenzhen and to collect local industrial products. The team liaises with local representative enterprises and updates the existing galleries with new acquisitions from these enterprises, which range from smart city applications, to augmented reality interactive products, fashion, timepieces, and products from emerging sectors of strategic importance (Shenzhen Museum of Industry, 2019b). Collecting such up-to-date products and displaying them in the museum are endeavors to document the history of Shenzhen industry. Most importantly, the aim is to increase the products' visibility to the public, and to help local enterprises establish a profile and expand their markets.

As the head of the museum administrative office, Ye Tao has emphasized that the museum has different criteria for exhibiting and collecting industrial products compared to design museums as it values new technological inventions and the advancement of the mechanisms in products more than their appearance.<sup>40</sup> Because the mechanism behind the inventions can hardly be understood by the general public without professional knowledge, as Ye confirmed, the museum has to target a highly specialized public audiences in addition to the aforementioned diplomats, officials, and cadres. Moreover, as indicated by the museum's WeChat articles and confirmed by Ye, the museum rarely organizes activities for the general public and students under primary and secondary levels. Aside from some occasions, in its capacity as an authorized patriotic education base, the museum arranges docents when it receives applications for group visits from local high schools and educational organizations such as the Hong Kong Education Bureau.

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<sup>40</sup> Interview with the Head of the Administrative Office in the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, Ye Tao, on July 27, 2021.



Figure 21. Exhibition of Shenzhen industrial design

After the MIIT issued several documents on promoting industrial design in the early 2010s, the museum began focusing on industrial design and hosted exhibitions that featured the design set of the German iF Design Award, as well as other award-winning design products from domestic companies and designers from 2013 onward. The *German iF Design Award* exhibition in Shenzhen was the first international showroom set by the award committee and was regarded as a good opportunity for the public and designers to learning about international design. Later, the Alliance of China Innovation Design Industry and China Engineering Science Knowledge Center considered it necessary to establish a Chinese standard and to promote design in China in support of the *Made in China 2025* strategy. The two organizations therefore initiated the China Good Design Award, established a center, and held exhibitions in the museum (Shenzhen Museum of Industry, 2017b).

A nationalistic spectacle is conveyed in the exhibition and selection of objects that are identically Chinese or vernacular. The award-winning products on display are regarded as design models to inspire the design industry and raise the competence levels of national and local industries and, as representatives of the local design, to promote the notion of “Shenzhen design.” More profoundly, the display of China Good Design awarded products in the latest exhibition of Shenzhen industrial design



offers the symbolic branding of the city and helps publicize the influence of vernacular design. It serves as a manifestation of “created by Shenzhen,” a concept that has transited from “manufactured by Shenzhen.”

#### 5.4 Establishment of a New National Museum of Industry

In 2019, the museum was commissioned to prepare for the construction and planning of a new Museum of Industry, and this was listed as one of the important tasks in the municipal agenda of the year (Shenzhen Museum of Industry, 2019a). The new museum is expected to assemble domestic and international industrial resources and support local industrial development by promoting industrial culture and industrial tourism (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2021a). It is not intended to replace the original museum, but rather to establish a new national-level Museum of Industry that will be benchmarked against other world-class museums (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2021b). Although these other world-class museums have not been identified, the renovation of this and other existing museums and the construction of the new museums are being carried out vigorously throughout the city in line with the *Five-Year (2018–2023) Plan of Shenzhen Museums Development and the Vision in 2035*.<sup>41</sup> The new museums, which include the Science Museum, the Nature Museum, the Maritime Museum, and the Innovative Design Museum, have also been positioned to be world-class museums that will serve to as cultural landmarks with impressive architectures and would be located in different administrative districts. Although the final details of the new Museum of Industry have not been decided, it will likely to be situated along the west coastal line close to the new commercial center, the West Bay Park, and the

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<sup>41</sup> The *Five-Year (2018–2023) Plan of Shenzhen Museums Development and the Vision in 2035* not only endeavors to triple the number of museums by 2035 but also increase their quality. Moreover, it aims to innovate the mechanism of museum operations by encouraging collaboration between the government and social sector.

international airport in Bao'an district.<sup>42</sup> The coastal area is not far from the new Shenzhen International Convention Center, so together with the new cultural infrastructure, the Bao'an district will be another cultural and economic center with a diverse urban landscape comprising culture, nature, commerce, and tourism.

In terms of the operation of the new museum, it is not likely to follow the mechanism of traditional cultural undertakings like the existing one, which primarily depends on government support for funding. The government encourages diverse sources of funding to support art organizations (CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee & Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2005a), so the existing museum used to hold commissioned and commercial exhibitions and trade fairs, such as the China High-Tech Fair and China International Industry Fair, and host commercial negotiations and conferences to generate revenue. While this is also common to other governmental museums nowadays, the museum is still investigating different approaches (e.g., activating private capital investment) for the new museum to further reform its operational mechanisms while at the same time maintaining its not-for-profit status as a governmental cultural undertaking.<sup>43</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> Interview with the Head of the Administrative Office in the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, Ye Tao, on July 27, 2021.

<sup>43</sup> Interview with the Head of the Administrative Office in the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, Ye Tao, on July 27, 2021.

## **CHAPTER 6 Case Study Two: OCT Art and Design Gallery**

### **6.1 Background to the OCT Group and its Cultural Scheme**

The OCT Gallery was the only museum in Shenzhen that dedicated to design when it was established in 2008 by the OCT Group. The OCT Group is a state-owned enterprise that was launched in Shenzhen Bay in 1985. The gallery is an example of one of the early museal institutions that was founded by the private sector in Shenzhen.

In the early 1980s, the central government decided to develop the Shahe Industrial Region to be an area that combined industrial, commercial, tourism, real estate, and cultural functions. In 1985, following approval by the state council, the China National Travel Service (HK) Group Corporation assumed responsibility for developing the region and established the OCT Group (Wu, 2020). The tourism and cultural sectors are the OCT's core focus. The founding team embarked on a study trip to Europe and was inspired by the Madurodam miniature park in the Netherlands, so they decided to build a similar theme park that condensed the tourist resorts of China. In 1987, construction was started on the first theme park, Splendid China Miniature Scenic Spots, and soon three more theme parks, namely, the Chinese Folk Culture Village, the Window of the World, and Happy Valley, were built successively. The complex of the tourist resorts serves as a theme park model nationwide and has received official awards and certificates, including the 5A Scenic Spots in China, the highest rating criteria set out by the State Ministry of Culture and Tourism (OCT Group, n.d.). The tourist resorts further formed a series of chains, similar to Disneyland, and launched in other cities in China in line with the enterprise's strategy of urbanization. The OCT Group has since become a cross-regional and cross-business enterprise that specializes in tourism and cultural industries, real estate, hotels, and digital and packaging manufacturing businesses.

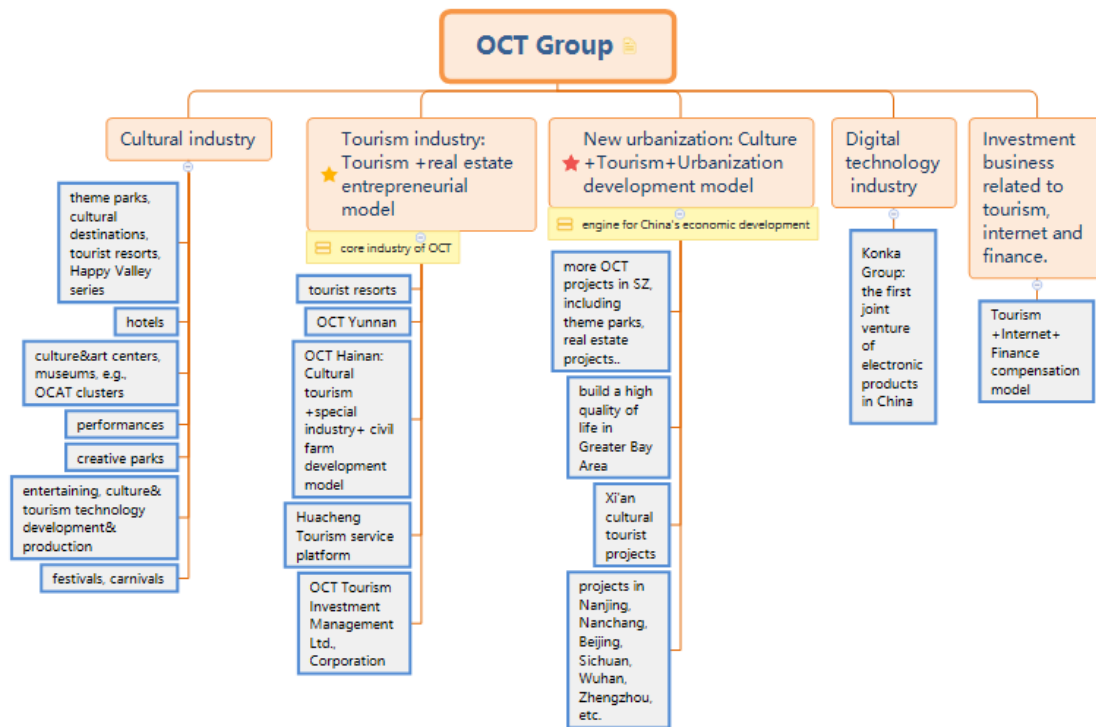


Figure 22. Development scheme of the OCT Group

The OCT Shenzhen area is located in the center of Shenzhen city. It is a multi-layered complex that includes dwelling clusters, the OCT Loft Creative Culture Park, several museums and galleries, a hospital, a shopping mall, an ecological park, and the four theme parks mentioned previously. Since 2006, the OCT has positioned itself as “the creator of a good quality of life” (*About OCT Group*, n.d.). The district planning is the embodiment of its “culture + tourism + urbanization” scheme, which is compliant with the 2014 national strategy that aims to develop “new urbanization” and incorporate culture into tourism to build “a high quality of living circle that is suitable for living, working and traveling” (*About OCT Group*, n.d.). Feng Hui, the deputy manager of the OCT South China Company and manager of OCT Shunde in Foshan city, Guangdong, once said:

The OCT emphasizes the long-term value of the project. The OCT area in Shenzhen has established a canon, not as a real estate project, but as a

community that has evolved for a long time. It is a model of a beautiful life, it is a lifestyle. (Feng & Lin, 2021)

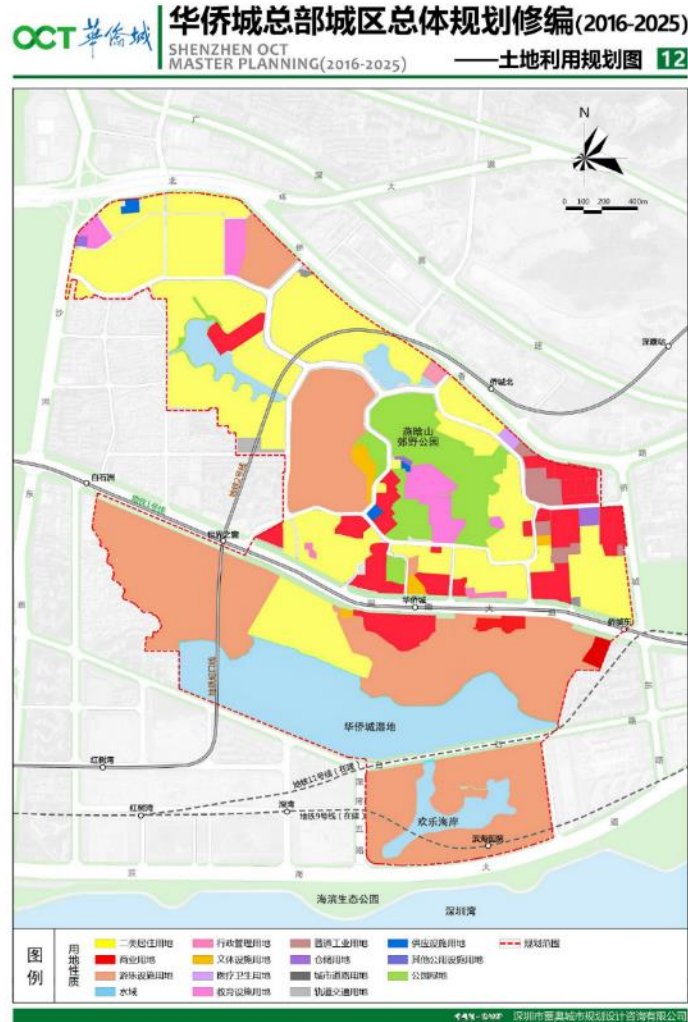


Figure 23. Shenzhen OCT Master Plan (2016–2020)

However, the practice of the OCT cultural scheme began much earlier than the launch of these national strategies. Since the 1990s, the organization of art activities has been the focus of the OCT’s cultural agenda. For instance, the Huaxia Art Center, which hosts performances, theater, and films, opened its doors in 1991. In 1997, the He Xiangning Art Museum<sup>44</sup> (HXN Museum), a national-level art museum under the

<sup>44</sup> He Xiangning Art Museum is named after the female artist and patriot He Xiangning. It was under the auspice of the Overseas Chinese Affairs Office of the State Council before being transferred to the State United Front Work Department. It is held in trust by the OCT Group.

auspices of the State United Front Work Department, opened in Shennan Avenue. In the following year, the first *Contemporary Sculpture Public Art Exhibition* (November 21, 1998 – November 21, 1999) was hosted in the OCT area (OCT Group, n.d.). In 2005, the OCAT (formerly known as the OCT Contemporary Center), which focuses on contemporary Chinese art, was established as an affiliated institution of the HXN Museum. After becoming independent, it incorporated the OCT Gallery and was registered officially as a not-for-profit art museum by the Bureau of Culture in 2012 (*About OCAT*, n.d.). In the following years, several new OCAT galleries were opened in four cities: Shanghai, Xi'an, Beijing, and Wuhan.<sup>45</sup> These galleries together formed the OCAT Museum Cluster.

## 6.2 The OCAT Museum Cluster and the OCT Art and Design Gallery

The general manager of the OCT Group Ren Kelei and the deputy general manager, Chen Jian,<sup>46</sup> supported in the establishment of these art programs. Before 2003, inspired by the model of the 798 Art District in Beijing<sup>47</sup> and that of SoHo in New York, the OCT Group decided to renovate its industrial district in the eastern part of the OCT district (Ai & Fang, 2018; Le & Fang, 2018).<sup>48</sup> Le Zhengwei, the director of the HXN Museum, was also looking for an opportunity to create a contemporary branch of the museum. Ren considered Le's proposal and decided to establish a contemporary art center in the industrial district (Ai & Fang, 2018). The HXN Museum subsequently led a research team and negotiated with the OCT Real Estate Company and the Bureau of City Planning. This led to the development of the OCT

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<sup>45</sup> The OCAT Wuhan was closed during the research period.

<sup>46</sup> In the 1990s, Chen Jian was responsible for OCT district planning and construction. He was also the general manager of the OCT Real Estate Company. He planned a tourist aisle that connected the Window of the World theme park, the Splendid China theme park, and the HXN Museum.

<sup>47</sup> The 798 is an art district that was renovated from an industrial district.

<sup>48</sup> In this renovation project, Chen Jian proposed transforming the industrial district into a creative park (Chen & Fang, 2018).

Creative Park in 2007. The OCAT is located at the center of the Loft and surrounded by a number of creative industrial organizations and offices, art galleries, a small concert hall, restaurants, and cafés.

Huang Zhuan (1958–2016) was a crucial figure in the establishment of the OCAT. He was a professor from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts and was engaged in curating and promoting contemporary Chinese art. In 1997, he was invited to join the HXN Museum as a researcher and curator. Huang developed the mission statement, objectives, structure, and working plan of the OCAT with the aim of turning it into a world-class contemporary art institution and promoting communication between the Chinese contemporary art and international art sectors through exhibitions and international art projects. In addition, it aimed to energize the district economically with art to meet the marketing expectations of the funders (Le & Fang, 2018). In 2005, the renovation project was finished, and the OCAT made its debut as the OCT Contemporary Center, an art center and independent branch of the HXN Museum (Ai & Fang, 2018).

Art is at the core of the OCT Group as well as its real estate projects. The OCT Contemporary Center is an imperative segment of the OCT's cultural strategy to upgrade the district and stimulate consumption. In an interview with the former OCT Gallery director, Ruan Qian, which was conducted by the OCAT deputy director Fang Lihua, she stated:

There were dozens of factories in this area. People living here are girls and lads that work in factories—this is why commercial activities are not thriving here. They do not consume: they wear uniforms customized by factories, dine in canteens, and live in dormitories. Businesses cannot develop here if these people do not change. The district planning needs to be changed and upgraded, so (the OCT Group) considered turning it into the Loft with cultural and artistic facilities (Ruan & Fang, 2018, p. 348).

Business development was one of the key reasons for the OCT in renovating the post-industrial district with art. As the former designer of Ai An recalled, the art center plays a leading role in driving the economic development and enrich commercial activities in the district (Ai & Fang, 2018). Accordingly, the function of the art center is to gentrify the OCT district in Shenzhen.<sup>49</sup> This idea of renovating the district with art prove to be successful. Afterward, restaurants, café, book shops, design companies, commercial galleries, and music concerts mushroomed in the creative park and attracted young and creative people to consume.

When the OCT Gallery was established in 2008, the contemporary art center was still affiliated to the HXN Museum even though they are located on the different sides of Shennan Avenue. As the founding party, the OCT Group defined, their proximity as an “art delta” of the OCT area, and each has different functions: the HXN Museum focuses on the works of He Xiangning and contemporary female artists, the contemporary art center focuses on Chinese Avant-garde, and the OCT Gallery on design (Su, 2008).

The structure of the institutions later altered, and the OCAT became an art cluster that included the design gallery. Since the contemporary art center played a leading and pioneering role in contemporary art institutions and academia and was successful in reviving the post-industrial area, it became a supplemental cultural model that spurred the OCT’s urban projects in other cities, such as Beijing, Shanghai, Xi’an, Wuhan, and Chengdu. There are also seven exhibition spaces in different cities that are project-based and host tour exhibitions from the branches. As Ruan Qian said, the way of incorporating art into real estate projects has become part of the art ecology of

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<sup>49</sup> However, they were not sure whether this would be successful. It was an early practice and an experiment for an entrepreneur to establish a contemporary art museum. In a discussion between the OCT Group and URBANUS, they decided to take it on as a pilot project, and if the project turned out to be unsuccessful, they would refurbish it for accommodation purposes (Meng & Fang, 2018).



the OCT Group, and the goal of increasing the number of art spaces is to “promote contemporary art to a wider public” (Liu, 2019, p. 43).

In the beginning, the operation of the art projects in other cities was disputable due to the low quality of the exhibitions, so in 2010 Ren Kelei invited Huang Zhuan to develop a feasible working plan of the projects (Ruan & Fang, 2018). The OCAT Museum Cluster was subsequently formed. It is headed by one director from the OCT Group, and each branch has its own director from the OCT’s subsidiary companies and an executive director from the academia and contemporary art sector. The OCAT head office is located in Shenzhen and governs and supervises the other divisions, including the OCT Gallery. The OCT office administrator, Ruan Qian, was appointed as the first main director, and the CEOs of the OCT’s subsidiary companies became the directors of each division.<sup>50</sup> While the branch executive directors are prominent artists, curators, and professors from academia, they respectively lead the branches in their areas of specialization as these branches have different missions and objectives.

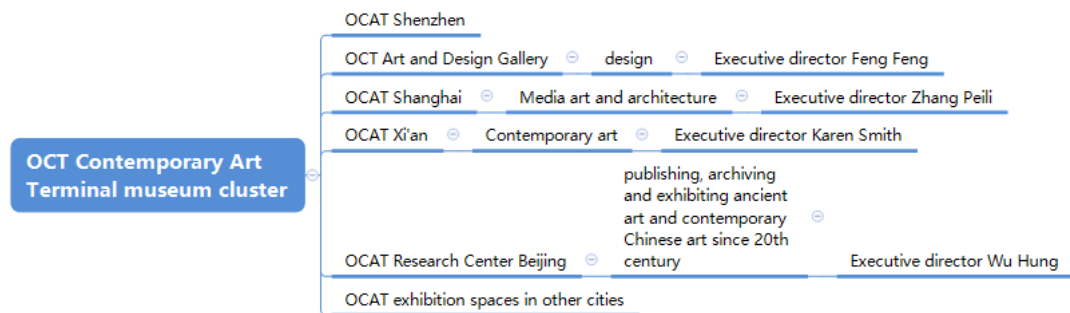


Figure 24. Replication of the OCAT model in different cities

In addition, to maintain its independence and professionalism, the OCAT has two boards of committees: one consists of leaders of the OCT Group and members of the investing sub-companies, which is responsible for investment, administration, and personnel management, while the other is the academic advisory team for curatorial

<sup>50</sup> As mentioned by Ruan Qian, this structure is convenient for the OCT Group to govern museum funding and venue provision and management (Ruan & Fang, 2018).

and research projects (Huang & Fang, 2015; Ruan & Fang, 2018). Members of the academic advisory team are renowned artists, curators, art historians, and critics. The OCAT is thus able to retain its autonomy while simultaneously obtaining financial support without being influenced excessively by the funding enterprise or capital. This way of operation makes the OCAT unique among China's contemporary art institutional practices as well as real estate projects.

The managerial structure of the OCAT Museum Cluster was announced in May 2012. Wang Xu, who is a renowned graphic designer and has been active in the design industry, was appointed as the executive director of the OCT Gallery. Wang had been collaborating with the OCAT and OCT Gallery for a long time. He not only designed exhibition publications for the OCAT, but also designed the whole visual identity system and wayfinding system of the OCT Gallery as well as its logo. His appointment lasted three years until he passed his directorship to Feng Feng, a professor in the Department of Experimental Art at the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts.

### 6.3 Building and Location of the OCT Art and Design Gallery

The OCT Gallery is located on Shennan Avenue, in between the InterContinental Hotel and the HXN Museum and in front of the "Splendid China" theme park. The main building of the gallery is the exhibition space, and the single-layered art salon is for public activities, such as lectures and workshops, and includes a museum shop and work spaces. The museum building was designed by URBANUS<sup>51</sup>, a Shenzhen architecture company led by Liu Xiaodu and Meng Yan. Formerly housing factories, both the OCT Group and the architectural team wanted to keep these old buildings

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<sup>51</sup> URBANUS was founded in New York, NY, in 1999. The company has designed the architecture of many local cultural institutions, such as the Luohu Art Museum, the OCT Creative Park, the OCAT, the Dafeng Art Museum, and the OCT Gallery.

and even the trees, so the design included renovating the original building and, to a large extent, keeping the setting that had existed in the 1980s (Liu & Meng, 2020). This was similar to the renovation plan of the OCAT, which was also refurbished from factory buildings.

When URBANUS received the commission in 2006, the project had not yet been designated as a design museum (Liu & Meng, 2020). The design was to fit into the existing diverse environment. The architectural team did not change the building's façade but covered it with glazed panel walls with hexangular frames and glass. The interior is simple and cubic, and several walls have been cut into a hexangular structure to let the light in and to echo the outside of the building. Together, the gallery, the surrounding facilities, and environment create a landscape of art and culture along Shennan Avenue.



Figure 25. The renovation of the OCT Art and Design Gallery. Photo credit:

URBANUS

#### 6.4 Exhibitions and Public Programs of the OCT Art and Design Gallery

The OCT Gallery serves as part of the art delta in the OCT region along with the HXN Museum and the OCAT. The three organizations were anticipated to be the

driving forces pushing the development of Chinese art and to represent soft power, as stated by Ren Kelei, the honorary director and former president of the OCT Group (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020). The OCT Group also hoped to establish a platform to display, communicate, and research design for the growing design industry and support the development of Shenzhen as a CoD (Su, 2008). As stated in the publicity document, the gallery aims to:

Promote the communication, development and research of design, and focus on the experimentality and transdisciplinary creativity of design. It is dedicated to connecting design, art, and culture with the public through its exhibition, education, collection, and research praxis. (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020)

The director Feng mentioned the idea of “social sculpture”<sup>52</sup> in the foreword of the gallery’s retrospective publication, which looked back on the previous 10 years of the institution’s existence (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020). Feng borrowed the idea of the gallery’s focus on social design that is not the professionalized design but rather design that is experimental and transdisciplinary in social life. He hoped to differentiate design in the gallery from those of the design industry, and to explore to the potential of design in people’s daily lives. This definition of design differentiates the gallery from any specialized industrial museums. To a large extent, this goal set by Feng was based on his academic background as an experimental artist and professor from the Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts.

Although the gallery initially claimed to be design-dedicated, its early exhibitions had a wide but obscure range of scope, ranging from contemporary art, graphic design, new media art, illustration, film, fashion, and architecture, to poetry. The first

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<sup>52</sup> Social sculpture was a concept developed by the German artist Joseph Beuys (1921–1986) in 1972. The impact of his theory was the development of a new form of artistic practices, now identified as social practices, which was normally presented by artists outside of traditional museums (Jordan, 2017).

exhibition, *Hypallage: The Postmodern Mode of Chinese Contemporary Art*, was curated by Feng Boyi, the art director of the HXN Museum. In this exhibition, 55 Chinese contemporary artists, among them, Yue Minjun, Xu Bing, and Chen Danqing, copied and transformed 90 contemporary classic artworks. Several of the exhibitions that followed helped refocus the gallery by displaying design works from the Netherlands and Japan. In the meantime, the gallery also hosted several exhibition seminars, filming activities, and industrial conferences.



Figure 26. Exhibitions held by the OCT Art and Design Gallery from 2012 to 2014

The aim of exhibiting design was brought back into focus and strengthened after the graphic designer Wang Xu was appointed as the executive director of the gallery in May 2012. Wang was a reliable designer who had worked with Huang Zhuan and designed the OCAT's publications for many years (Wang & Fang, 2018). In 2008, he was commissioned by the OCT Group to design the logo and visual identity system of the gallery; later, he also curated exhibitions for the gallery. In 2013, the gallery started hosting exhibitions that introduced international design competitions and renowned designers and their works, while at the same displaying a certain number of vernacular designers' works (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020; Wang, 2015). The master designers' exhibitions featured Swiss graphic designer Niklaus Troxler (2013) and Bruno Monguzzi (2014), Japanese graphic designer Shin Matsunaga (2015), and French architect Le Corbusier (2015), among others. These vernacular design

exhibitions were also used to display the works of Chinese graphic designers such as Han Jiaying (2012) and Tommy Li (2014). In addition, the *Tokyo Type Directors Club* (TDC)<sup>53</sup> and the *New York Art Directors Club* (ADC)<sup>54</sup> exhibitions became annual exhibition projects.

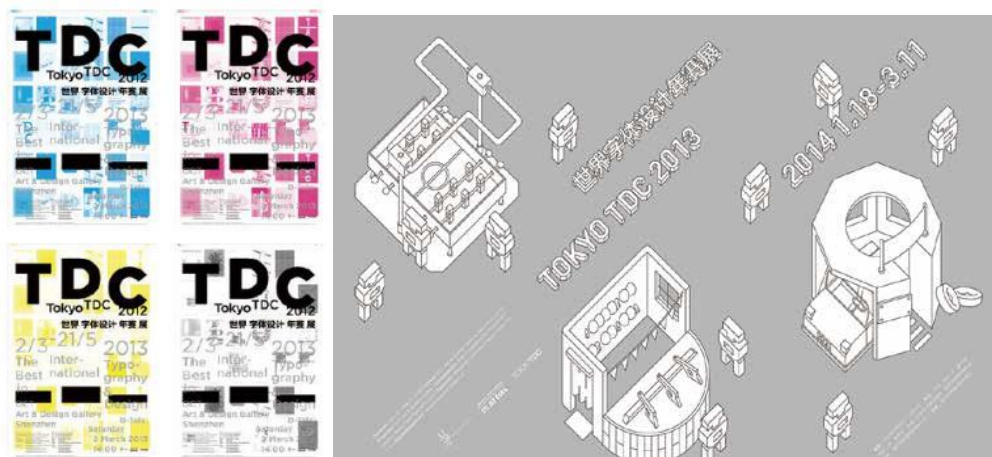


Figure 27. Exhibitions of the Tokyo Type Directors Club held by the OCT Art and Design Gallery

During Wang Xu’s directorship, the gallery held many exhibitions displaying graphic and communication design. His curatorial strategy was closely connected with the design industry, particularly in his area of specialization. This corresponded to the goal of the gallery to be a communication platform for the design profession, the industry, and the public (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020). Many of the designers who displayed their works in the exhibitions or participated in the gallery’s public activities were members of the SGDA; some of them had joined the first Graphic Design Exhibition in 1996 and had since become pioneering figures in the domain. However, the gallery did not have sufficient budgets for collecting, so most of its

<sup>53</sup> The Tokyo Type Directors Club (TDC) is a not-for-profit organization in Japan. It organizes the annual Tokyo TDC Awards international design competition and the TDC Exhibition, which showcases the winners of the competition.

<sup>54</sup> The New York Art Directors Club (ADC) is an international awards program in design and advertising. It was founded in New York in 1920.

collections came from the donations. Some of the artists and organizations donated their works and publications to the gallery after the exhibitions. For instance, as acts of goodwill in the partnerships established between the gallery and the TDC and the ADC, a set of each of the Tokyo TDC and New York ADC previous yearbooks, which are important research material in design and advertising, have been donated to the gallery (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020).

Feng disagreed with the idea of presenting too many works from the design industry, as such products are displayed sufficiently in commercial stores (Feng, 2021). As a design gallery, he believed the gallery should include content that has not been approved by the market or industry—design that is visionary, future-oriented, experimental, and research-based (Feng, 2021). Additionally, he believed that exhibitions that were too professional would be difficult for the public to understand. The new exhibition strategy instead focused on “exhibitions as experimental design” that would connect with daily life (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020). Hence, the gallery categorized six genres of thematic exhibitions: Clothes, Food, Housing/Living, *Xing* (which means behaviors, manners, walking, execution, transportation, etc.), Use, and *X* (which means unlimited and unknown) (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020).

In the *Our Red Packet for Your Favorite Blue* exhibition (July 16 – October 22, 2017), the gallery featured an artist group called Polit-Sheer-Form, which included Hong Hao, Xiao Yu, Song Dong, Liu Jianhua, and Leng Lin. The five artists worked as a team to explore political, cultural, economic, and daily life and in 2005 turned their thoughts and exploration into artistic forms. Feng considered the exhibition an experiment that represented the values of the gallery—to keep a distance from the design industry, to expand the territory of design, and to change people’s opinions of design and design history (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020). Polit-Sheer-Form observed and discussed design and Shenzhen in their own way, and their works

represented reflections on “Made in China.” For instance, in the work *The World is Our Factory*, they exchanged numerous daily used blue-colored objects from the public with red packets and assembled many mass-produced products in a neat and aesthetic way in the exhibition.<sup>55</sup>



Figure 28. *Our Red Packet for Your Favorite Blue* exhibition view

The idea of displaying non-industrial design was highlighted in the *Another Way to Design* exhibition (June 30 – September 2, 2018). The exhibition borrowed the title of the Japanese activist Nagaoka Kenmei’s publication (2018) and invited artists, scholars, designers, craftsmen, and participants from different disciplines to display their works. Design here referred to the action of designing, design thinking, as well as design processes. The exhibition consisted of three portions: “the studio,” which reinvented the workspaces of artists and designers, as well as their processes and conditions when designing; “the construction technique,” which was about how

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<sup>55</sup> The group selected blue items as they believed blue is a color that is non-political and imaginative. They hoped to uncover the power of collectivism and connect the embodied blue with society through this public participatory event.



design was involved in the revival and reconstruction of the Chinese countryside; and “the lab,” which showcased how several practitioners from different backgrounds researched and explored design.

This way of exhibiting discards the modernist method of representing a canon that follows historical narratives and displaying the important works of design masters. The gallery does not aim to cater to consumerism, promote the authenticity and visual appearance of products, or establish a canon for the design history. It is, as Gillian Russell put it, “a site of potentiality, a model of resistance rather than ritual” (2016, p. 106). As an institution of visual representation, it follows a critical and speculative way of representation and implants criticality and social design in the museum. Furthermore, as an institution of knowledge production, it insists on professionalism while at the same time endeavoring to connect with the public (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020).

However, some exhibitions are expressive without robust arguments and explanations, and most of the label texts are written by the designers themselves<sup>56</sup> and are thus sometimes over-simplified, ambiguous, or recondite. According to the visitors’ questionnaire conducted in the research (see Appendix IV), although a high percentage of visitors were satisfied with their visits, some of them also contended that clearer interpretations should have been provided in the exhibitions. Additionally, the curatorial strategies of the past directors conveyed their strong individualist interests and backgrounds. This is commonly seen in small organizations.<sup>57</sup> For example, the *New Creatures* exhibition (August 27 – October 16, 2016)<sup>58</sup> was derived from Feng’s personal experimental art project.

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<sup>56</sup> Interview with an OCT Gallery staff on October 26, 2020.

<sup>57</sup> There are less than 10 core staff in the gallery, noted by one OCT Gallery staff in an interview on November 12, 2020.

<sup>58</sup> Feng borrowed the idea of an ambiguous figure duck–rabbit figure and randomly combined the two animals into one. In this exhibition under the category *X*, Feng invited artists and designers who had been inspired by biological

The gallery has a curatorial team that organizes approximately five exhibitions annually. Notwithstanding, on most occasions, the director will invite guest curators to curate exhibitions and propose public programs. The curatorial team reports to the two boards of the OCAT with respect to funding and to finalize the themes of the exhibition proposals for the following year. Since the gallery is fully subsidized by the OCT Group and receives specialized cultural funding from the local cultural government based on its projects, it does not need to look for other sources of funding. Nevertheless, it retains a high level of autonomy. Although the initial aim of developing the OCT Shenzhen region through art was to stimulate consumption (Ruan & Fang, 2018), aside from some of their internal research publications, none of the branches in the OCAT Museum Cluster sell art or souvenirs. As a form of return to the OCT Group, the gallery serves as a leisure and cultural destination for the public, as well as the content producer for touring exhibitions that can be similarly hosted at OCT urban development projects in other cities.<sup>59</sup> For instance, *The Future of Fashion is Now* exhibition in 2015 kickstarted at the OCT Suhewang Exhibition Center in Shanghai (October 29 – February 28, 2015) and then moved to Shenzhen (March 26 – July 31, 2016). It was a diplomatic project in collaboration with the OCT branch company and the Shanghai Zhabei district government, Museum Boijmans Van Beuningen, the Dutch Embassy in China, and several associated academies and institutions. The exhibition was not only an important cultural venue during the state visit of the Dutch royal family to China in 2015 and a symbol of international partnership, but also a representation of the OCT's value at such important diplomatic events.

Similar to other museums, the OCT Gallery actively organizes many public programs, such as design salons, workshops, talks, and participatory events, to connect with the

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phenomena. He believed these experimental and explorative works challenged the ordinary mindset and were thus often underrepresented in the consumer world, so the gallery had an obligation to document and display the design evolution (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020).

<sup>59</sup> Interview with an OCT Gallery staff on November 12, 2020.

public. In addition to some exhibition-related events, the gallery has developed three public projects over the past decade. The D-talk series and the Lab aim to promote profession design and design techniques, and “We are Participating” and the volunteer project spread design knowledge and provide training by recruiting volunteers. Furthermore, “Have Fun” workshops and festivals and the Borderless Museum Night provide diversified events to engage the public three days every year. In the “We are Participating” series, the gallery sets up *Master Talks* and *Youth Gathering*, which comprises two series of talks. *Master Talks* invites professionals that are specialized in design, art philosophy, literature, science, and technology to give public talks; *Youth Gathering* engages with young designers and artists who are willing to share their experiences and practices with their peers and people who are interested in design (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020). The gallery acts as a mediator that gathers different parties from society and industry to organize these public programs. Since most events are low-cost and supported by the OCT Group and government cultural funds, they are generally free to the public.

## CHAPTER 7 Case Study Three: Design Society

### 7.1 Background to the CMG and the Renovation of the Sea World area in Shekou

The Design Society (DS) is a cultural brand initiated in 2017 by the real estate flagship China Merchants Shekou Holdings (CMSK), which is part of the state-owned China Merchants Group (CMG). It is located in the ambitious architecture of the Sea World Culture and Arts Center (SWCAC) in Shekou and was designed by the studio of the renowned Japanese designer Fumihiko Maki. As part of the urban project of the historical giant company, the architecture of the institution is linked to the master planning of the Shekou district.

The history of Shekou is very different from that of the rest of Shenzhen. In geographical terms, the Shekou peninsula is on the periphery of the west end of the city and close to Hong Kong across the Shenzhen Bay. Its connection with the central city (i.e., Futian and Luohu districts) improved following the construction of Binhai Avenue. With Shenzhen becoming a polycentric city, Shekou has become a bustling center in the Nanshan district.

In January 1979, the state council set up the first export processing zone (EPZ) in Shekou and established a port by reclaiming land from the sea. Shekou became an industrial zone under the auspices of the state Ministry of Transportation (O'Donnell, 2017) one year before Shenzhen was set up as an SEZ.<sup>60</sup> The CMG played a critical role in Shekou: it acted as a governing authority and was also responsible for the urban administration, planning, and construction in Shekou in the beginning.<sup>61</sup> This was common in Shenzhen during the transition period; the OCT Group and South Sea Oil Group had similar dual functions. Directed by Yuan Geng (1917–2016), the first vice-chairman of China Merchants Hong Kong and the director of the CMSK in the

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<sup>60</sup> In fact, the SEZ was a concept that originated from the EPZ.

<sup>61</sup> In 1992, the Shenzhen Municipal Government withdrew the rights, such as autonomous administration, tax collection, and land planning, from the Shekou Industrial Zone, which thereafter was under the jurisdiction of the Nanshan District Government (*Shekou Relaunch III*, 2012).

1980s, the reformation in Shekou was more daring than the early SEZ apparatus led by Liang Xiang (1919–1998), the first mayor of the SEZ government (O’Donnell, 2017).<sup>62</sup> It has since developed into the Shekou model, which is as important as the SEZ in the reformation process in China (O’Donnell, 2017; Wu, 2020). Furthermore, due to its geographical and business connection with Hong Kong, the Shekou Industrial Zone has a notable and inextricable affiliation with Hong Kong: it is the gateway that connects Shenzhen, Hong Kong, and the world. Thus, Shekou is often touted as the first modernized region in China that opened to the world (Design Society, 2018).

On January 26, 1984, Deng Xiaoping (1904–1997), the chief planner of China’s reform and opening-up, visited Shenzhen and inspected the development of Shenzhen’s practices and the correctness of the reformation. On the same day, Deng wrote the inscription “*Haishang shijie*” (Sea World) at the request of the CMG staff onboard the Mingwah liner when he visited the industrial zone. The now-defunct liner was once the pride of Shekou and remains one of the most popular sightseeing spots in the area. It is being refurbished to become a multifunctional center with a hotel, restaurants, and other entertainment services. Symbolically, it represents the spirit of the industrial region<sup>63</sup> and marks the beginning of Shekou’s tourist industry.

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<sup>62</sup> As O’Donnell scrutinized, “[t]he difference between the Shenzhen and Shekou models was subtle but important for political change because, in Shekou, Yuan Geng focused on transforming not only the mentalities of migrant workers but also the mentalities of administrators and, by extension, government functionaries, arguably with an eye toward cultivating an active and social minded middle class” (2017, p. 47).

<sup>63</sup> One of the most impressive slogans was “Time is money, efficiency is life” (Wu, 2020). It signified that China was entering a marketized stage in which profit and development were pursued.



Figure 29. The Mingwah liner and the Sea World area under construction in 2012.

Photo by Luo Kanglin

In the 1980s, Shekou attracted many enterprises supported by foreign investment, and they subsequently set up factories. The peninsula soon became an international district that was home to a high percentage of foreign businessmen, thus leading to the need for entertainment that in turn resulted in increased expenditure. Nonetheless, the Sea World area was unsuccessful as an entertainment and tourist destination from the beginning. For example, the Mingwah liner has had to close several times for fire safety reasons. In addition, it had to compete with theme parks such as the Splendid China and the Chinese Folk Culture Village, which are operated by the OCT Group in a more built-up and accessible area. This forced the CMSK, the operational body, to come up with a renovation plan for the Sea World area (Lin et al., 2013). The short supply of land has been a major issue. The oyster farming area was thus contentiously transformed by the Planning Office of the Shekou Industrial Zone into a landfill zone, which later came to constitute a large part of the new Sea World.

As a test ground, the Shekou Industrial Zone accomplished its preliminary mission, and more industrial zones were later established in mainland cities. The CMG recognized the importance for improving technology and reorganizing existing industries and businesses so that they could become engines for progress and development (Lin et al., 2013). The financial turmoil in Asia in 1997 cast a shadow over the future of economic development in East Asian countries. Shekou also experienced financial difficulties as a result of reduced foreign investment and exports. Renovating Shekou to transform and upgrade the industrial and investment environment was a major task (Xiang, 2020). In 2000, China Merchants Real Estate Holding Co. Ltd, another limited holding company with which the CMG and the Planning Office of the Shekou Industrial Zone initiated several seminars and international consultations, invited different parties and individuals to share their ideas on the renovation of the Sea World area. Consensus was subsequently reached that the Sea World area would be a multifunctional location that combined commercial and housing spaces as well as recreational, entertainment, and cultural amenities. The ecology and mountain–coastal landscape of the Sea World area, which is surrounded by the Nanshan Mountains and Shenzhen Bay, were also a crucial part of the renovation planning. Strategically, it was positioned as (a) the maritime gateway to the city, (b) a secondary center in the Nanshan district, and (c) the birthplace of Shenzhen start-ups (Lin et al., 2013).

## 7.2 The Construction of the New Shekou with Cultural and Leisure Services

In 2009, the CMSK commenced the Rebuild New Shekou project to intensify the renovations started in the 2000s (Xiang, 2020). Factories were turned into a creative park (Nanhai Yi Ku), and high technologies and creative industries were introduced to the Shekou Net Valley, high-end residential apartments were constructed, and the Prince Bay Cruise Home Port diversified its businesses to include tourism and

connected Hong Kong, Macao, and Zhuhai through its cruise industry. One of the new plans was to rebuild Shekou as a place for people who follow international and leisure lifestyles (*Shekou Relaunch I*, 2012), so the CMSK proposed building and improving the related infrastructure through, for example, improved traffic flow and networks, the creation of a low-carbon and safe environment, and the development of Shekou as a cultural destination (*Shekou Relaunch II*, 2012). This was in line with the goal of the CMSK to be “the better life carrier.”

The new renovation project was not decided behind closed doors. Instead, the CMSK appointed the fifth UABB curatorial team, as well as several international design and architect studios, academic institutions, and social entities to come up with a new plan to revive Shekou. The UABB of 2013 was themed “Urban Border” and chose its main venues as the former Guangdong Float Glass Factory and a warehouse at the Shekou Ferry Terminal, both of which were located in the Shekou Industrial Zone and on the periphery of the city. The creation of new value, as the new name of the glass factory (Value Factory) indicated, was a primary objective of the CMSK. This was also associated with the CMSK’s idea of providing cultural and leisure facilities in the region.

In early 2013, the CMSK organized seminars and invited the head of urban planning in the Planning and Land Resources Commission of Shenzhen Municipality, a manager from the CMSK, the curators of the UABB, and several professional designers and architects to participate in discussions on the revival of Shekou’s industrial heritage (Shenzhen Design Center, 2013). The UABB addressed the reuse of heritage industrial buildings, the relationship between the city center and its edges, and how to break the boundary between the contemporary city and its heritage through visual representations and public discussions (UABB, 2013). Intentionally, it reasserted the importance of Shekou in the city and China as a historical, economic, cultural, and political gateway.





Figure 30. The landscape of Sea World Culture and Arts Center. Photo credit: Design

### Society

To date, the Sea World area has extended its territory and content to include the Sea World Square with the Mingwah liner at its center, the Prince Bay Cruise Terminal, Nanhai Yi Ku (the creative park converted from factory buildings), several high-end residential apartments, and the SWCAC. Through the renovation of Shekou, the former industrial zone has been transformed into a region of diversity that comprises new technological industries, cultural and creative industries, tourism, residential accommodation, and entertainment venues. This cultural development has been a crucial part of the CMG’s urban development strategy: it has established newspapers, broadcasting and television stations, theaters, and cultural centers in Shekou in recent decades. In 2019, the CMG merged several branch companies and established the Shenzhen Merchants Culture Industry Co. Ltd., which is committed to the mission of “empower urban upgrade: better culture, better life.” The culture company has strategically positioned itself as a “comprehensive urban-upgrade service provider and aims to become a leading domestic cultural-scene synthesis operator” (Design

Society, 2020a, p. 162). The CMG envisions uplifting Shekou to become a world-class bay area and a driver of local economic development (Design Society, 2018). Furthermore, as the CMG has extended to businesses in other mainland cities, the new Shekou model has been replicated nationwide.

### 7.3 An International Cultural Project

The DS has been positioned as an international cultural institution dedicated to design. Its internationality was realized through its connection to the world from several perspectives.

#### *International Architect*

The establishment of the SWCAC and DS has played a critical role in transforming the SWCAC area into a cultural and tourist destination. In 2011, to populate the ambitious project, the CMG contacted Fumihiko Maki, a Japanese architect with an international background and a winner of the Pritzker Architecture Prize, to design the arts center. His design practices and international influences coincided with the CMG's idea of building an internationalized and modern arts center.



Figure 31. Site plan and project vistas analysis of the Sea World Culture and Arts Center (Lin et al., 2013)

The SWCAC complex took eight years to construct and cost 1.3 billion RMB (\$200 million) (Movius, 2017). The architecture has repeatedly been promoted via the DS's social media account as one of the highlight and representative of its core values (Design Society, 2018). The building is composed of three symbolic polyhedral boxes, which are oriented in three different directions: the mountain to the north, the sea to the south, and the city park to the east. The architecture is a tangible representation of the spirit of the cultural institution. It highlights the complex's accessibility and openness to the public and intention to interact with its environment through the metaphoric boxes (Shenzhen Design Week, 2020). It has multiple entrances—each has a different view, and visitors can go up to the rooftop garden through the outdoor stairway at any time, day or night. This white, modernist architecture offers an exquisite and sensuous design, creating an interactive, simple, and poetic urban landscape that blends in with its surroundings.

After opening to the public, the SWCAC obtained recognition from numerous international cultural and tourism organizations. The vanguard building is a manifestation of the CMSK branding as a “leading urban and industrial developer and operator” (Design Society, 2018, p. 76). It has been promoted by the CMG and DS official media and has gained considerable public exposure through local and international media.



Figure 32. The Sea World Culture and Arts Center. Photo credit: Design Society

### *International Partnership with the V&A Museum*

The DS's collaboration with the V&A Museum, a leading museum of art and design, gained the young design organization significant attention. This was the first overseas program of the V&A, indicating that both organizations anticipated building international networks as well as fostering cultural diplomacy between China and the UK (Reeve, 2019). The international cultural collaboration was facilitated by a national diplomatic visit and economic collaboration between the two nations. According to the 2017 yearbook released by the DS, the intention of the collaboration could be traced back to 2012 when Zhang Lin, the deputy general manager of the CMSK, and his colleagues visited the V&A and initiated talks with the former V&A director Martin Roth on the establishment of a design museum in Shenzhen. By the end of the following year, the CMSK and the V&A had signed a memorandum of understanding in Beijing, witnessed by related officials from the British State for Culture, Media and Sports, the British Council, and the British Embassy during the former Prime Minister of the UK David Cameron's trade mission to China (Design

Society, 2018). In 2014, during the state visit of the Chinese Premier Li Keqiang to London, the CMG signed a five-year collaboration agreement with the V&A, which was witnessed by Li Keqiang and David Cameron (Design Society, 2018).

This international collaboration is not simply part of the cultural scheme of the two parties, it also serves as part of the political and economic conditions of international diplomacy. According to the deputy director of the V&A, Tim Reeve, the partnership was thus seen as “a tangible outcome of the People-to-People dialogues” and would contribute to the cultural and economic relationship between the two countries (Design Society, 2018, p. 17). The V&A was one of the chosen venues for the UK–China People-to-People Dialogue (the Dialogue)<sup>64</sup> in the top tier of the UK–China bilateral exchanges. As an embodiment of the cultural diplomacy, the collaboration between the CMSK and the V&A was also featured in the Sino-British Creative Exhibition<sup>65</sup> when Chinese Chairman Xi Jinping visited the UK in October 2015 (Design Society, 2018).

During the five-year contract, the V&A was responsible for bringing two tour exhibitions to the DS, drawing up institutional policies and strategies, and providing staff training and outreach programs for the DS (Mengoni, 2016; Movius, 2017). Several V&A curators and professionals were appointed to China and worked on the liaison between the two parties and the development of the V&A Gallery in the SWCAC using the V&A’s collection. During their three-year secondment to China, the V&A team conducted in-depth investigations into Chinese design education and industry and collected new design acquisitions from China.

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<sup>64</sup> Introduced by the British Council website, the Dialogue, which started in 2012, is “one of three formal annual formal meetings that take place between the UK and China, the others being the Strategic Dialogue. . . and the Economic and Financial Dialogue. These Dialogues sit beneath the UK–China Summit which is led by the Prime Minister” (British Council, 2014). The tourism, cultural, and creative industries are high on the agenda of the Dialogue, and many memoranda of understanding and cooperation agreements were signed between national cultural institutions, such as libraries, museums, and universities, from the two countries.

<sup>65</sup> The exhibition was held on October 21, 2015, in the Lancaster Palace and presented eight cultural joint projects between China and the UK.

This collaboration was a fresh trial for both parties. The collaboration between the CMSK and the V&A was different from the overseas programs of the Louvre and Guggenheim Museum, which opened branches in Abu Dhabi and Bilbao, respectively, because it was initially only for five years. According to the report of the DS (Design Society, 2018), in the short-term partnership with the CMSK, the DS is dependent on the V&A which shares design collections, knowledge, and expertise to support the DS to be an international design institution .

*An International Platform and a Sustainable Cultural Model*



Figure 33. The front of the Sea World Culture and Arts Center

Apart from the international collaboration with the V&A, Ole Bouman, who is a Dutch German curator and practitioner in design and architecture and a creative director of the fifth UABB Shenzhen (2013–14), was appointed the founding director to run the CMSK museum project in January 2015. Bouman was a core member of the curatorial team that organized the Value Factory program. Led by Bouman, the

cultural branch of the DS was officially announced to the public in March 2016. As mentioned previously, its high accessible architecture is the embodiment of the DS's social concern for civic participation, and organizing cultural activities is another dimension that represents the institution's ambition and intended roles, which are as Bouman anticipated, to be a "researcher for critical thinking and making, incubator for creative talents, matchmaker for cross-disciplinary work, activator for design value, platform for diverse and inspiring programs, and club for exclusive experience" (Shenzhen Design Week, 2020).

In the pre-stage discussion, the operational team consulted professionals and researchers and investigated Shenzhen industries before deciding the theme of the DS. Since Shenzhen has prominent design industries, and China aims to transform itself into a nation embodying creative design, the team believed it would be valuable to establish a design-focused cultural platform.<sup>66</sup> The design institution intends to connect industries through design and inspire society with design (Design Society, 2016). It will document design histories, display innovative design, encourage cross-disciplinary dialogues and collaborations, and ignite design as a creative force for social development. Moreover, it is dedicated to becoming a platform through which international audiences can become familiar with Chinese design and to serving as a platform to introduce international design to local audiences (Design Society, 2016).

For the founding party, the CMSK, the DS is the representation of the pioneering and reformative spirit of Shekou and the CMG in cultural terms (Design Society, 2016). The DS initially aimed to establish the SWCAC to be a cultural and tourist destination (Design Society, 2018). This was later refined slightly to comply with the CMSK's stated purpose as "the better life carrier." As the administrative director of the CMSK

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<sup>66</sup> Interview with Design Society's deputy director Zhao Rong on November 4, 2020.

and chairman of the Design Society Culture & Arts Foundation Di Qian illuminated, the DS proposed:

to create a cultural landmark of the highest standards which will introduce a more sophisticated, diverse and international cultural significance to the region. . . enhance people's quality of life, enrich the city's cultural atmosphere, promote the interconnection of culture–commerce–industry and help encourage the development of China's creative industries and the further progress of design in China. (Design Society, 2020a, pp. 13–14)

This statement elucidates the ambition of the CMSK to transform Shekou into a cultural venue and to develop the creative industries. Different from traditional museal undertakings, the DS aims to pursue a sustainable and entrepreneurial way of operation. This means that the operational team is required to seek different kinds of collaboration and to develop multiple networks with industries, governments, academic institutions, enterprises, and other social and commercial entities (Design Society, 2018). The ratio of the cultural and retail programs in the SWCAC is 50:50 as required by the CMSK (Shenzhen Design Week, 2020). Apart from the income derived from venue hire, the DS has developed a wide range of revenue channels, including donations, grants, sponsorships, membership fees, admission fees, advertising, parking fees, souvenir sales, economic partnerships, and paid consultancy, training programs, and commissioned research. Additionally, it is supported by the CMG, the CMSK, and the newly established Design Society Culture & Arts Foundation.<sup>67</sup> It also has a wide range of benefactors, including government bodies, social entities, and other companies (Design Society, 2018).

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<sup>67</sup> The Design Society Culture & Arts Foundation was registered on August 27, 2019, under the Shenzhen Municipal Bureau of Civil Affairs. It is guided by the Shenzhen City of Design Promotion Office and curates and supports public programs related to culture, art, and design (Design Society, 2020a).



This is an explorative and challenging way to manage the DS. As Bouman stated, “[embedding] a cultural initiative in a state-owned company culture with no previous experience in the creative industries has been a learning curve in itself” (Design Society, 2018, p. 19). Conflicts exist when a not-for-profit institution is expected to make profits. Before the reformation of the cultural system, museums were fully subsidized by government funding. Accordingly, they were required to produce free exhibitions and organize public programs for the public. When the DS was proposed, it was expected to sustain its cultural activities, and so commercial activities also occupied half of its whole business. These commercial needs gradually changed the operation strategy of the DS.

In fact, in the negotiation period before officially launching the brand, the idea of establishing a cultural institution evolved from a design museum to a new cultural model,<sup>68</sup> which incorporates the cultural enterprise with the not-for-profit Design Society Culture & Arts Foundation, a rather ambitious form that sits in-between a museum and a commercial institution. In essence, the not-for-profit part will continue to produce cultural activities, while the entrepreneurial arm will develop culture-related businesses and commercial programs to sustain its cultural activities. It is expected to establish a new cultural model and signify the transformation and industrialization of Chinese cultural infrastructure.

#### 7.4 Cultural Production of Design Society

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<sup>68</sup> Interview with Design Society’s deputy director Zhao Rong on November 4, 2020.

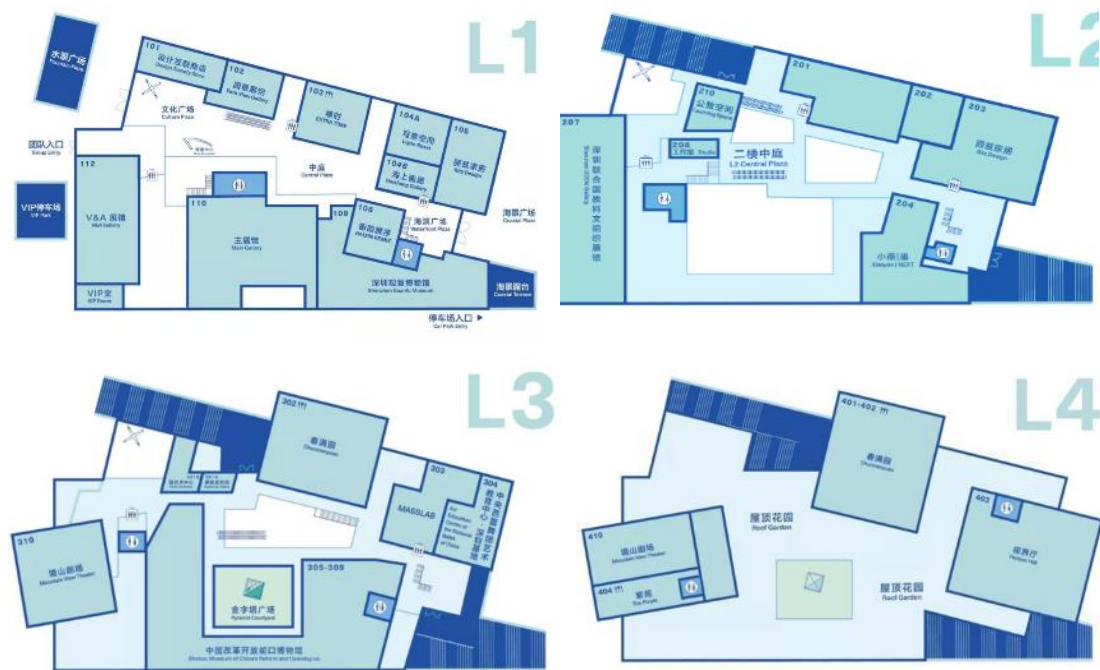


Figure 34. Floor map of the Sea World Culture and Arts Center. Photo credit: Design

### Society

As shown in Figure 34, the DS exhibition spaces are distributed across the first and second floors. They include the main gallery, the V&A Gallery, Park View Gallery, the UNESCO Center for Design Gallery, and several commercial art galleries.<sup>69</sup> The main gallery and the V&A Gallery both feature exhibitions that are curated by the DS and V&A teams; however, while the former focuses on the future-oriented development of design, the latter displays 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century international design. The Park View Gallery presents socially responsive programs, as well as topical, small-scale, and invited projects, and the UNESCO Center for Design Gallery, which is run in cooperation with the Shenzhen City of Design Promotion Office, primarily features the story of Shenzhen's emergence as a design hub and hosts some exhibitions commissioned by the promotion office and the Department of Publicity of Shenzhen Municipality (Design Society, 2018).

<sup>69</sup> The SWCAC as a cultural complex used to inhabit the Shekou Reform and Opening-Up Museum and seek collaboration with Guanfu Museum, but the former was closed, and the latter did not open.

Table 6.

*Design Society Exhibitory Spaces.*

Design Society galleries	Spaces	Focus
Main Gallery	1,200 m <sup>2</sup>	Future-oriented design
V&A Gallery	850 m <sup>2</sup>	V&A modern design collection
Park View Gallery	300 m <sup>2</sup>	Socially responsive programs, topical, small-scale, and invited projects
UNESCO Center for Design Gallery	700 m <sup>2</sup>	Shenzhen design history and other commissioned exhibitions

The V&A Gallery has successively presented the semi-permanent *Values of Design* (December 2, 2017–August 4, 2019) and *Values of Design: China in the Making* (January 19, 2020–December 31, 2021) exhibitions over the past four years. The first exhibition displayed 250 international objects from the V&A’s 20<sup>th</sup> and 21<sup>st</sup> century collections and 45 new acquisitions, which were collected during the V&A’s research and field trips in PRD factories and design studios (Reeve, 2019). As mentioned previously, the V&A did not plan to build another V&A outpost in China. Given the historical background of the museum however, the exhibitions mentioned some design movements in history, but they did not follow a historical narrative. The objects, which ranged from fashion, photography, furniture, performance, and product and graphic design to the latest digital design, were recategorized based on seven themes: performance, cost, problem-solving, materials, identity, communication, and wonder (Mengoni, 2016). In *Values of Design: China in the Making*, 138 works were displayed, most of which were designed by Chinese designers or were made in China. These objects were placed in the Chinese geopolitical and societal context and divided into six themes: patterns of design, problem-solving, shaping materials, identity and consumption, enhancing communication, and negotiating cost, all of which are related to heated issues in contemporary China, such as poverty alleviation, environmental protection, rural construction, sustainability, urban planning, and consumption (Design Society, 2020c).

Since design is an evolving term and people hold different views regarding design, the V&A team chose to address the values of design in China through its collection and framed debates with the public regarding “how they personally value design, and how those values might help determine the future of the designed world” (Cormier, 2017). In addition, the value of design is an integrated social concept, and as the DS curator Tang Siyun indicated, it addresses many things, such as the economy, labor, law, aesthetics, marketing, production, and recycling, on a realistic level, and is therefore a topic worth discussing.<sup>70</sup> Acknowledging the cultural and social differences between China and the UK,<sup>71</sup> the V&A team aimed to integrate with the local community and the Chinese context and to ensure the content of the exhibitions and learning and interpretation programs were relevant to and could attract local audiences (Bouman, 2018). Several staff, including Brendan Cormier, Luisa Mengoni, Alexandra Willett, and Anaïs Aguerre, moved to Shenzhen around 2014 and conducted research in the PRD region for three years.<sup>72</sup> Their first research output was presented in the *Unidentified Acts of Design* exhibition in the 2015 UABB. The exhibition profiled eight scenarios involving design production outside the design studios in the PRD region. In the exhibition, the V&A and DS teams worked with specialists, designers, factories, educators, and target audiences to build a network and pathway for the forthcoming “Values of Design” series of exhibitions and public programs in the DS (Green, 2016).

Table 7.

*Exhibitions hosted in the Main Gallery and the V&A Gallery.*

Date	Exhibition	Venue	Organizer
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<sup>70</sup> Interviewed with the DS curator Tang Siyun on October 15, 2020.

<sup>71</sup> For instance, as the team stated in the V&A blog, it was challenging to engage with local schools as it was not as common for them to visit museums as it is in the UK (Green, 2016).

<sup>72</sup> The V&A Shenzhen team regularly updated their research progresses and observations in the V&A blog. For details, please visit <https://www.vam.ac.uk/blog/>.

2017.12.02- 2019.08.04	Values of Design	V&A Gallery	Design Society, Victoria and Albert Museum
2017.12.02- 2018.06.03	Minding the Digital	Main Gallery	Design Society
2018.09.16- 2019.02.28	Craft: The Reset	Main Gallery	Design Society
2019.07.20- 09.30	Y-COMIC-X?	Main Gallery	Design Society
2020.05.16- 10.11	40 Years of Humanizing Technology – Art, Technology, Society	Main Gallery	Design Society, Central Academy of Fine Arts, Ars Electronica (Linz, Austria)
2020.01.19- 12.20	Values of Design: China in the Making	V&A Gallery	Design Society, Victoria and Albert Museum
2020.12.19- 2021.07.04	Fashioned from Nature	Main Gallery	Design Society, Victoria and Albert Museum, China National Silk Museum

The DS team located the functions, material, processes, techniques, and relations of design beyond its aesthetic value and reflected on how design is shaping the society and tackling the needs of human in the technical era (Bouman, 2018). The second exhibition, *Craft: The Reset* (September 16, 2018 – February 28, 2019), presented contemporary craft works that used new methods and materials with the aid of technology and discussed how craft has shaped contemporary identities and created new values and innovation. This curatorial strategy was distinctive among the exhibitions in craft museums. For example, the *Three Paths* exhibition (December 11, 2019 – January 11, 2020) in the Craft Museum in Hangzhou presented craft works made by nominated contemporary Chinese craftsmen and designers. The objects were categorized in three sections, however, they were presented in separate display cases. The objects were to be admired on their own, and did not have any connection or communication with each other. As the curator and scholar Hang Jian wrote in the preface of the exhibition, crafts as objects of daily use have lost their original meaning and became art (Hang, 2019). The exhibition highlighted the aesthetics of the objects and praised the exquisite techniques and spirit of their makers. The displays were

objects of pure contemplation without their functionality and contexts. In addition, *Three Paths* rendered a nostalgic feeling in interpreting the new “classics” made in contemporary times (Hang, 2019), while *Craft: the Reset*, as the name indicated, implicated the rebirthing of traditions by deconstructing the past and embracing future technologies (Design Society, 2020a).



Figure 35. Exhibition views of the *Craft: The Reset* exhibition

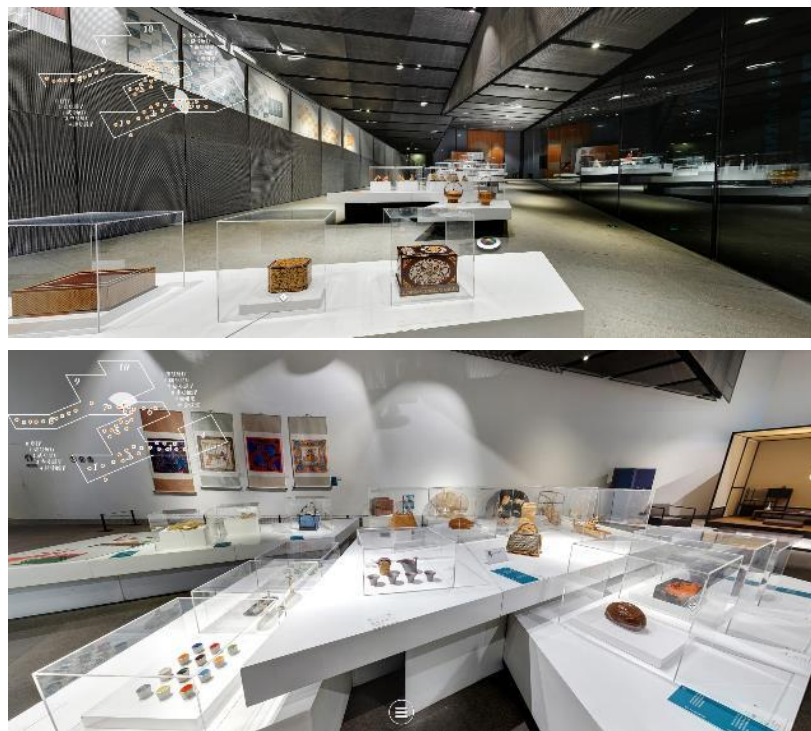


Figure 36. Exhibition views of the *Three Paths* exhibition

Because digitalization and technology have become pressing contemporary issues (Bouman, 2018), the DS team has addressed these topics in more than one exhibition, such as *Craft: The Reset* and *40 Years of Humanizing Technology – Art, Technology, Society* (May 16 – October 11, 2020). In addition, locating exhibitions in the local context is a crucial tactic in curation. *Y-COMIC-X?* was initially the tour exhibition *Mangasia: Wonderlands of Asian Comics* (October 7, 2017 – January 21, 2018) from the Barbican center in London, but it was adapted extensively after moving to China.

Learning and educational programs are another imperative for the DS. Before 2019, the DS frequently held many low-cost public engagement programs, ranging from open-air music festivals and maker fairs to design workshops, short courses, and lectures. The programs were mostly offered free of charge or at a reasonable price<sup>73</sup> to “cultivate enthusiastic, loyal, and dedicated audiences” (Design Society, 2020a, p. 61). The year 2019 marked the transition of the DS and its internal role in the CMG. The Shenzhen Merchants Culture Industry Co. Ltd. was established in 2019 with the aim of developing cultural industries wherein profit-making was the core. For the CMSK, the education programs are a crucial part of the cultural industries that can be “scalable, replicable, and profitable.”<sup>74</sup> This has altered the DS’s strategy of organizing public programs, hence in the same year, the CMG launched Design Society Education. The education brand brought together leading cultural, technological, and educational enterprises and organizations, such as the National Palace, Tencent, Huitong International School, and the Yucai Education Group. Its objective is to provide qualified learning programs with the backup of these renowned cultural and technological institutions.

The DS education department has different tactics and different target audiences. These programs are divided into three parts: exhibition-related educational programs,

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<sup>73</sup> Interview with the DS staff on October 13, 2020.

<sup>74</sup> Interview with the DS staff on October 13, 2020.

museum educational programs in collaboration with schools and organized extracurricular design thinking courses for school children, and programs that connect with society, such as the volunteer program and the community festival.<sup>75</sup> With the exception of some not-for-profit activities such as those that foster social connections, the programs' fees are generally in line with market prices.

Similar to other museums, schoolchildren are the DS's primary target. Through preliminary research when the V&A team assisted in developing visitor programs and pedagogies for the DS, the learning programs target families with children and work with international and local schools at pre-college levels (Green, 2016). The team found that the international schools were willing to incorporate art and design courses into their curricula. Furthermore, Shekou has a large expatriate community, and many affluent Chinese families have the ability to send their children to international schools so that they can study abroad in the future (Green, 2016), hence these students and families are more willing to pay for art programs. These programs have also attracted other institutions that participate by joining the programs or providing sponsorship or investment<sup>76</sup> as the potential market in education is considerable.

Exhibition-making and education are currently the domain of the department of content production in the DS. Similar to the OCT Gallery, the DS has made some design acquisitions through commissions and donations, but this does not constitute its essential function. Creating value, both in cultural and economic terms, is the primary concern of the DS team. Such value is not intended to benefit CMG's business in Shenzhen only, but also in other cities, for example, through touring exhibitions to CMG residential projects in Shanghai. In late September 2020, a mini replica of the DS, the DS+, was created in Shanghai Garden City—a commercial plaza of the CMG—based on the DS's culture and commerce model (Design Society,

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<sup>75</sup> Interview with the DS staff on October 13, 2020.

<sup>76</sup> Interview with the DS staff on October 13, 2020.



2020c). This was to meet the CMG's goal of establishing a cultural model that can be replicable, scalable, and industrialized.

## CHAPTER 8 Summary and Answers to Research Questions

### 8.1 Comparison and Analysis of the Case Studies

The Shenzhen Museum of Industry is one of the first cultural infrastructure projects built in Shenzhen. It is located at the Shenzhen Civic Center, the political and cultural center of Shenzhen, which signifies its importance in political terms. As a governmental museum, it conforms more with government bureaucracy than the other two design museums. Primarily serving as the publicity platform of the SZBIIT and local industry, the museum was not open to the public until 2011. It follows a top-down strategy of managerial style that is typical of a socialist work unit and has extended its focus to include industrial design and culture in accordance with national and local policies. The museum is an instrument that applies soft power to influence its target visitors, which include diplomats and entrepreneurs from other cities in China and across the world. Since 2017, the museum's objectives have included promoting industrial culture and design. This is particularly important for Shenzhen given its goal of transforming from a postindustrial city to a city of creativity that can excel in the race of global competition.

The OCT Gallery is a design museum that was founded by the state-owned cultural enterprise the OCT Group, which has been a leading enterprise in the cultural and tourism industries and a pioneer in regenerating post-industrial regions into creative parks. Opening in the same year that Shenzhen gained its CoD designation, it was one of the early non-governmental forces that delved into design culture and representation. The gallery is part of the OCT's cultural tourism agenda and thus supplements its real estate and urban development projects in the center of Nanshan district. It was initially operated as a cultural project affiliated to the InterContinental Hotel, a sub-company within the OCT Group. The OCT Gallery was renovated from two factory buildings, which was in line with the company's renovation idea

exercised in the OCT Creative Park and the OCAT. With the development of the OCT's urban project in more mainland cities, the gallery merged with the OCT Art Terminal and became the design branch of the OCAT Museum Cluster.

The DS was established as a new cultural model by another Shenzhen-based state-owned enterprise, the CMG, and is operated by its real estate flagship the CMSK. The CMG played an administrative and governing role in the Shekou peninsula in the early reformation period. It embarked on the transformation of the Sea World area to a tourism and leisure region and the renovation of Shekou in the 2000s. The CMSK's intention of reviving Shekou through art began around 2010. The enterprise invited the UABB to address the district's regeneration ambitions and turned the post-industrial venues into cultural hotspots. The design museum project began as an international cultural initiative between the CMSK and the V&A and was facilitated by the diplomatic visit and economic networking between China and the UK. The DS is a reciprocal joint project: it is the first of its kind for the V&A and could reach more audiences from China, while for the CMSK, the assistance of the century-old museum has helped establish the design museum as a world-class design institution. In addition, while being based in Shekou, the DS has an international scope and could thus be described as providing a cultural bridge that connects China and the world. As Shekou is on the periphery of Shenzhen, the CMSK aimed to recentralize the area by establishing the SWCAC, a world-class architectural structure designed by an international designer, as an urban landmark and tourism destination.

Table 8.

*Summary of the Foundational Information of the Design Museums*

	Shenzhen Museum of Industry	OCT Art and Design Gallery	Design Society
Year of opening	1985	2008	2017

Mission	<p>a. To collect local industrial products and disseminate industrial information</p> <p>b. To display Shenzhen’s industrial achievements and promote Shenzhen as an investment destination</p> <p>c. To organize domestic and international exhibitions, fairs, and investment promotion activities</p> <p>d. To provide economic information to domestic and international investors (Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology, 2020).</p>	<p>“The gallery aims to promote communication, development and research of design, and focuses the experimentality and transdisciplinary creativity of design. It [is dedicated to connecting] design, art and culture with the public through its exhibition, education, collection, and research praxis” (OCT Art &amp; Design Gallery, 2020).</p>	<p>“As an innovation agenda, Design Society aims at developing relevance for the creative industries in the Pearl River Delta, and to provide a prestigious and major design platform to stage interaction between the design culture of China and the world. Design Society, by actively pursuing opportunities for design in society, and by its manifold match making activities between design talent and industries, design disciplines and societal issues, hopes to contribute to elevating the quality of life and the positive transformation of contemporary lifestyles” (Design Society, n.d.-b)</p>
Founding and operational body	Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology	OCT Group OCAT Museum Cluster	China Merchants Group China Merchants Shekou Industrial Zone Holdings Co., Ltd Shenzhen Merchants Culture Industry Co. Ltd (since 2019)
Location	Shenzhen Civic Center in the center of Futian district	OCT tourism district in the center of Nanshan district	The Sea World area in Shekou, Nanshan district, on the west tip of Shenzhen

Cases described in the research have demonstrated that the establishment of design museums relies on a favorable environment directed by the political and social

change, that is, the nation's support on design and cultural reformation. Each entity included in this set of case studies represents a different museum model developed at a different time. They are run by different organizations and have distinctive and varied aspects with respect to, for example, their internal mechanisms, missions, curatorial strategies, and public programming. Their coexistence reflects the diversity of museum structures, and their respective functions and roles in contemporary China cannot be generalized as disciplinary or national instruments.

### *Internal structure of the design museums*

China began reforming and developing its socialist cultural systems in the 1990s. Other initially socialist cultural undertakings, such as theaters and cinemas, have already been transformed into commercial cultural institutions. Because the transformation of museums began at a slower pace as not-for-profit institutions, they cannot trade their content (i.e., their collections) like other commercial galleries, and China does not have a philanthropic tradition in museum donation. Although the generation of profits and self-sustainability are also the concerns of many existing governmental museums, commercial practices are restrained. Some museums have purchased once-off services from external parties, and some have sought short-term collaborations with private enterprises to reduce the expense of recruiting tenured staff. Furthermore, some museums have loaned their collections and spaces to individuals and other museums, some have developed cultural products by selling souvenirs that are inspired by their collections. The Shenzhen Museum of Industry has one administrative office and three departments, which are respectively responsible for publicity, displays, and curation. This is common among governmental museums. To reduce expenses and generate revenue, it outsources the property management function, recruits non-tenured staff, and loans its conference hall and exhibition spaces to external bodies.

To aid the development of new cultural infrastructure, the government encourages the investment of private capital so that it can step back and play a supervisory and supportive role in cultural development. Many financial, property, and real estate giants have participated in the establishment of private museums (Zhu & Zhang, 2020). Nevertheless, the management of the cultural institutions established by such enterprises often requires professional knowledge and experience. The OCT Gallery and DS constitute alignments between private capital and art professionals. The approach of the DS is more complicated as it also involves the international V&A Museum and political authorities. Such collaboration is not easy as complexity, tension, and negotiations are frequently encountered when dealing with the needs and expectations of the different parties.

Different from non-governmental enterprises, state-owned enterprises are positioned between the boundaries of the government and social and private institutions: they are representative of the government as they have been involved in supervising dominant industries and the hedging and economic growth of national assets since the early reformation period. Their practices and businesses are thus generally determined by the ideologies and interests of the state. Nonetheless, they also have a certain level of autonomy in the marketplace to pursue self-interests. Ding Xueliang introduced the concept of “institutional amphibiousness” in reference to the institutional parasitism in the transitional communist state where “[institutions are] in a parasitic relationship with party–state structures. They [depend, to] a greater or lesser degree, on official structures for a political screen or legal protection and for personnel and material support” (1994, p. 298). They are typically ambiguous in structure and indeterminate in nature. State-owned enterprises, as national instruments, are often derived from or set up by party–state institutions while simultaneously maintaining a certain level of autonomy when exercising market-oriented practices. In other words, they mediate, sometimes in paradoxical ways, between the public and private, social progress and self-interest. Thus, the intervention of state-owned enterprises in the art realm is, on

the one hand, in line with the political intention of economic development, but on the other, requires these enterprises to run their own businesses, to place culture in the realm of the market, and to turn cultural values into assets.

In the process of their marketization, museums are confronting the crisis of being instrumentalized and having their independence interfered with. For art professionals, most of whom are professors in art universities or experienced curators in such institutions, their standpoints may vary from those of the enterprises. The director of the Guangdong Times Museum<sup>77</sup> Zhao Qie, who previously worked for the Times Real Estate Company, noted three ways in which non-governmental entities could achieve market success as art museums: they could consider (1) the art museum as a financial platform that regards artworks as financial products or stocks; (2) the art museum as a tool to gain better public resources, such as land and tax exemption for the private sector's other businesses; (3) the industrialization of the art museum (Zhu & Zhang, 2020). The third way has often been realized through creative parks and could be copied in different regions and cities in the same way as the OCT Group has done in past decades. For Zhao, investment by the private sector in museums has two primary objectives: to achieve market benefits and to gain or enhance their academic reputation<sup>78</sup> (Zhu & Zhang, 2020). Although these objectives may not necessarily conflict with each other, tensions may exist on occasion.

The OCT Gallery shares the administrative department with the OCAT and has two functional departments responsible for curation and public programs. Although they have more autonomy from the OCT Group, they have also had to deal with tension from the enterprise.<sup>79</sup> Therefore, when Huang Zhuan designed the mission, structure,

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<sup>77</sup> The Guangdong Times Museum (formerly as the Times branch museum of the Guangdong Art Museum) was a marketing project of the Times Real Estate Company. The persistence of its director Zhao Qie and mutual support from the president of the Times and the Guangdong Art Museum made the museum become a professional and important art organization in Guangdong.

<sup>78</sup> The second objective often results in tensions between the investing party and the team who run the academic projects in the museum.

<sup>79</sup> Interview with the OCT gallery staff on October 26, 2020.

and academic strategy of the OCAT museum cluster, he foresaw this situation and insisted to maintain its nature as a not-for-profit and academic art institution (Huang & Fang, 2015; Ruan & Fang, 2018).

One of the DS staff members admitted that it is challenging to work in a real estate company and to convince the founder to support and endorse their art proposals by demonstrating, for instance, why the topic and budget are valuable and how and why the design work or designer should be present.<sup>80</sup> Furthermore, since the requirement of the new cultural model is to be self-sustainable, the DS has two functional departments that are respectively responsible for commercial affairs and public relations: the Commercial Department is responsible for property management, venue hire, personnel, and latterly the operation of the Value Factory, while the Public Relations Department handles the liaison for outsourced and commercial cultural projects. The curation of exhibitions and the organization of public education programs, however, falls under the department of content production, which is required to organize regular exhibitions and education programs in the SWCAC as well as other commissioned projects sought by the Public Relations Department.<sup>81</sup> Of the three studied design museums, this managerial structure is unique to the DS as the commercial section accounts for 50% of the institution. The department of content production therefore has to constantly negotiate with its founder and different departments.

### *Exhibitions and public programs*

Collecting and preserving artefacts, conducting research, and displaying artefacts are the four fundamental functions of museums. As the museums of today have become

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<sup>80</sup> Interview with the DS staff on October 15, 2020.

<sup>81</sup> Interview with the DS staff on October 13, 2020.



sites for delivering novel experiences (Hein, 2000), collection development has been downplayed in many new museums. This is the same in two of the design museums studied, with the exception being the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, which set up a team in 2016 to collect local industrial objects to upgrade the content of its galleries.

The Shenzhen Museum of Industry's exhibitions are mostly permanent and promote local industrial products and companies despite the commercial implications. The exhibitions feature award-winning industrial products that are categorized according to the genres of industries and displayed without correlation or context. Additionally, as previously mentioned, the museum seldom takes the initiative to organize programs for the general public. As the visitor questionnaires (see Appendix IV) revealed, its visitors were satisfied with the museum's content but felt that the interpretation and interactive experience could be improved, the content updated, and guided tours organized. More latently, the exhibitions and media releases of the museum have often conveyed the nationalist and localist ideologies of the superior departments. The industrial products, which are made and designed by Chinese/Shenzhen enterprises or individuals, represent an ideology of nationalism and localism through which the museum aims to shape an identity of Chinese and vernacular design. This is less deliberate in the representations of the DS and OCT Gallery.

The OCT Gallery does not have permanent exhibitions; instead, it holds four to five temporary exhibitions per year. At the time of its inception, the gallery did not have a clear exhibition strategy. It was only when the graphic designer Wang Xu assumed the role of executive director that it began hosting exhibitions representing international design competitions and design works created by renowned designers, most of whom specialized in graphic and communication design. The gallery also connected with industry and established networks with the TDC and ADC. Later, Feng extended the design focus of the gallery after he was appointed as the executive

director in 2015. He believed the gallery should be different from commercial stores, keep a distance from design in the industry and market, and focus on design that is connected with daily life (OCT Art & Design Gallery, 2020).

Design curation in the OCT Gallery and DS primarily follows a thematic approach. The curatorial teams decontextualize the displayed objects by detaching them from their original context while concomitantly recontextualizing them within certain social or cultural contexts. The DS, for example, derives its inspiration from conducting research into and working with industry. Together with the V&A team, their curatorial strategy follows a relatively scientific methodology in which they collaborate with specialists, designers, factories, educators, and target audiences. The reinterpretation of the functions and meanings of design in the *Values of Design* series, for instance, was not speculated by the curators themselves but was based on research into the design and manufacturing fields and visitor studies (Design Society, 2018). They conducted field trips to study design companies, factories, and universities, interviewed practitioners, and organized focus groups and workshops with target audiences (Green, 2016). In an open manner within the curatorial process, the V&A team also recorded their trips and observations in China in the V&A blogs.

However, the representation and reinterpretation of contents in exhibitions also carry the ideologies of the directors and/or curators. In the discursive formation,<sup>82</sup> to use Foucault's term, they produce knowledge and create specific meanings for objects while concurrently excluding other meanings (Liao, 2017). In the OCT Gallery exhibitions, the curators play a definitive role in deciding the themes and content and their interpretations. In the *Values of Design* exhibitions, although the V&A and DS teams developed new meanings for the design objects by conducting research and collecting points of view from various groups of practitioners and professions, this

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<sup>82</sup> Discursive formation refers to written and spoken communications that produces discourses and knowledge within a specific cultural context.

method still reflects the power of the knowledge of the institution as it decided whose ideas and which objects could be included in the exhibitions and excluded those that were underrepresented or did not participate in the research process. This was confirmed in the questionnaire findings as 85.6% of the visitors felt that the DS met their expectations because the exhibitions broadened their horizons and conveyed professional knowledge and the value of design, while 55.7% thought that it was difficult for non-designers or beginners to understand the exhibitions, which means that they needed to already have a certain level of design knowledge (see Appendix IV). This reflects the knowledge gap between the museum practitioners and the public.

The three studied design museums also hold different opinions regarding design, which has an impact on their curatorial strategies and public programs. The Shenzhen Museum of Industry considers design as merely representing the styling and appearance of a product,<sup>83</sup> and the criteria for collecting and displaying “good design” are based on their accreditation from international design organizations (such as the iF or Red Dot awards). The OCT Gallery currently focuses on social or speculative design, which refers to both design objects and non-object design concepts that address design criticism, design in daily life, future-oriented design, and concern for ecological issues and the social environment that human inhabit.<sup>84</sup> At the same time, it reflects upon consumerism and challenges authenticity of design. Following this understanding of design, the gallery designed several free public programs, among them, The Practice of Everyday Life program in 2021, which consisted of participatory workshops, lectures, and community activities and focused on the environment, community, social system, and interaction of objects with daily life.

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<sup>83</sup> Interview with the Head of the Administrative Office in the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, Ye Tao, on July 27, 2021.

<sup>84</sup> Interview with the OCT Gallery staff on October 26, 2020.

Similar to the OCT Gallery, the DS focuses on design as a broad and cross-disciplinary concept. Notably, it investigates design as a social engine and the relationship between design and society.<sup>85</sup> Based on observations in recent years, the DS has three sets of exhibition schemes. One is the *Values of Design* series, which aims to explain design values within contemporary context. The second addresses future-oriented and technology-based design, while the third represents small-scale and socially responsive design projects that are held over the short term. The V&A team designed a standard operating procedure for the DS, which contains pre-stage research (as mentioned previously), investigations during exhibitions, and reviews thereafter.<sup>86</sup> It is a relative modernized way of operating that follows certain standards and rules.

Public education programs are important business for the CMSK. It launched Design Society Education and organized hundreds of learning and education programs and leisure activities each year. Aside from the paid programs and commissioned projects, the DS also develops community events for the benefit of the public. Led by the idea of codesigning with society, it holds the Design Community Festival annually to invigorate community life and motivate public engagement through workshops, lectures, weekend markets, and other initiatives (Design Society, 2020c).

The three studied museums have disclosed their commercialization interests as dictated by the top-down policies following the market reform. As the government has stepped back in terms of building museums, new museums have become more reliant on other sources of funding. This has led to a shift from the traditional “inward-looking” museum to “outward-facing, donor- and visitor-focused” cultural institutions (Lord & Blankenberg, 2015, p. 11), which is exemplified by the three studied design museums. In addition, instead of being preservers of culture, the new

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<sup>85</sup> Interview with the DS curator Tang Siyun on October 15, 2020.

<sup>86</sup> Interview with the DS curator Tang Siyun on October 15, 2020.

museums tend to be cultural producers that can transmit diverse experiences and new interpretations of design to the public.

The museums also reflect the evolution of design curation in China. Design exhibitions are changing from the display of award-winning objects to a more contextualized and cross-disciplinary approach that investigates design in fresh, critical, and reflective ways. Although the practice of displaying design objects (or decorative and industrial art) began in the early industrial expositions, the concept of design curation is a relatively fresh idea, especially in China. In the V&A's experience, design curation came to serve the museum's collections and was mainly in charge of design historians (McDermott, 2017). It has evolved to address more cultural and social contexts and incorporate other disciplines, along with the development of design, which is playing an increasingly important role in culture, society, and the economy (McDermott, 2017). Now design curation also embodies criticality over the society in which it is situated and indeed design itself (Russell, 2016). In China, the Western concept of curation was introduced in the 1980s (Wang, 2017). Design curation was not brought to the public's attention until a few years ago. For example, the Central Academy of Fine Arts opened a course on design curation, and the China Design Museum organized the Design and Curation Workshop in 2020. In the same year, the DS, in partnership with the Central Academy of Fine Arts, China Academy of Fine Arts, and Guangzhou Academy of Fine Arts, initiated the design curation project *Design (Re-)union* to support design exhibition proposals that were social responsive, based on new knowledge, and put design in cultural, historical, and artistic contexts (Design Society, 2020b).

*Design museum visitors*

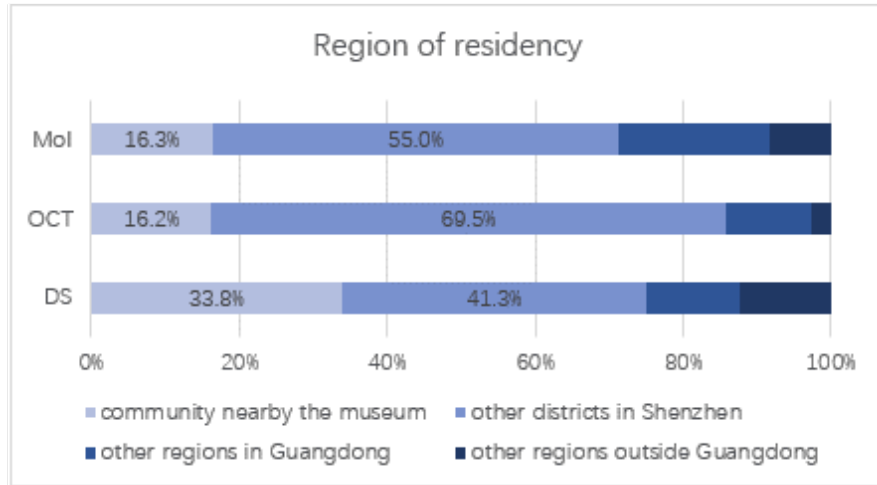


Figure 37. Region of residency of visitors to the three museums<sup>87</sup>

More than 70% of visitors visited the museums for the first time, and most visitors (over 56%) had obtained or were pursuing undergraduate degrees (see Appendix IV). Perhaps due to the recurrence of COVID-19 that affected visitor flow, the majority of visitors were residents of Shenzhen (Figure 37), and they provided valuable opinions and evaluations on the museums. Most of the visitors to the three museums were 20–29 years old, and students accounted for the largest proportion.<sup>88</sup> The visitors had a diverse background of careers or areas of study. Most of the visitors to the OCT Gallery and DS were from the creative industry, while those of the Museum of Industry were mostly from the areas of finance, trade, management, engineering, farming, and medicine (Figure 38).

<sup>87</sup> DS: Design Society; OCT: OCT Art & Design Gallery; MoI: Shenzhen Museum of Industry

<sup>88</sup> This could be due to the fact that it was summer vacation when the data were collected.

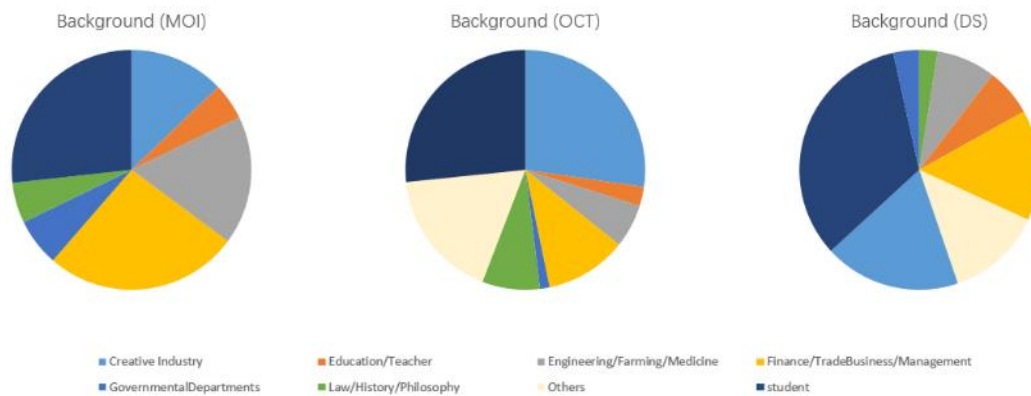


Figure 38. Background of careers or areas of study of visitors to the three museums

In terms of visitor opinions of the three design museums, as indicated in the results of the visitor questionnaires (see Appendix IV), most visitors showed generally positive responses according to the questionnaires collected in the research (Figure 39). The visitors’ expectations and recognition of the importance of the museums were mostly similar albeit with nuanced differences. Notably, visitors may not be aware of the intricate relations, tensions, and latent functions of the museums.

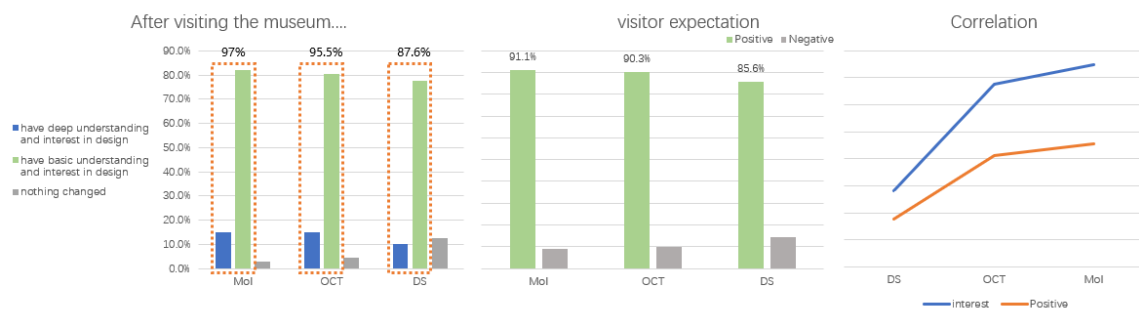


Figure 39. Knowledge or interests gained after visiting the museums & Visitor expectation

Visitors go to museums for various reasons and with different expectations. A Likert scale was used to measure the degree of the expectations of the visitors. As revealed in the findings (Figure 40), the visitors to all three museums generally had high

expectations with respect to their appreciation of the aesthetics of design, while those visiting the Shenzhen Museum of Industry in particular had slightly higher expectations about gaining new knowledge based on the provided aspects of expectation delineated in the questions. Many visitors also tended to have sufficient leisure time to explore the unknown realms in the museums. In comparison, they had relatively less interest in engaging in the museum planning or communicating with the organizers or other visitors.

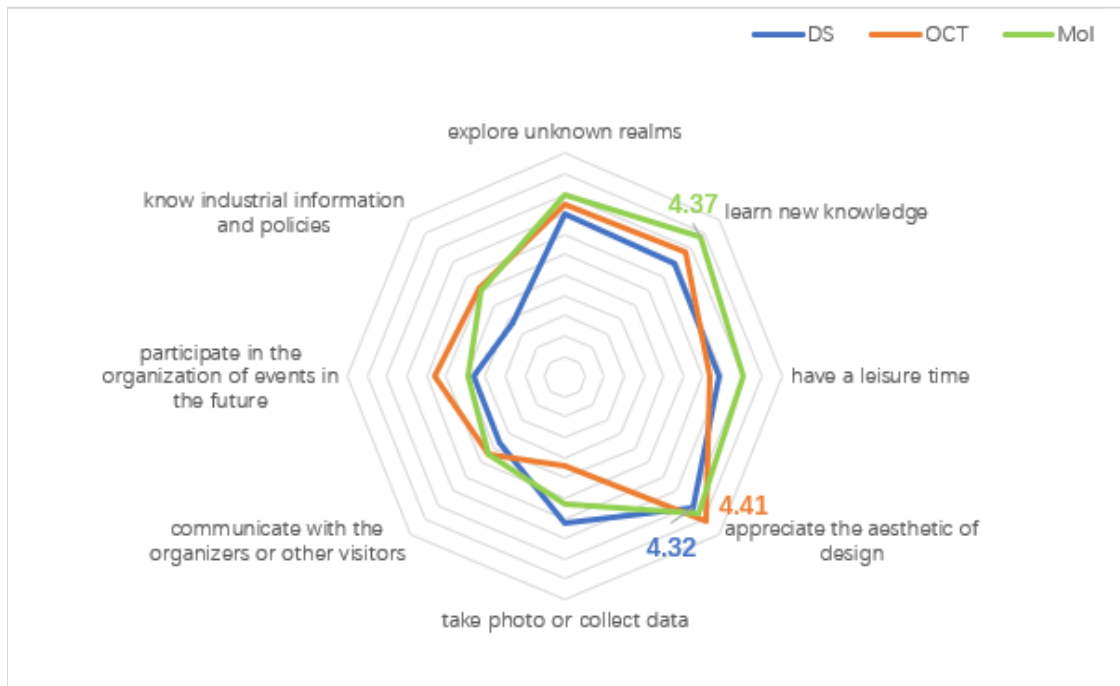


Figure 40. Visitors' expectations in visiting the three Museums

Appreciating the aesthetics of design exhibits and architecture was favored by the visitors to the OCT Gallery and the DS—many visitors were content with the OCT Gallery's exhibition as it had a nice-looking design and the DS's architecture and interior space was seen as impressive and artistic. This indicates that visuality was important for these design museum visitors.



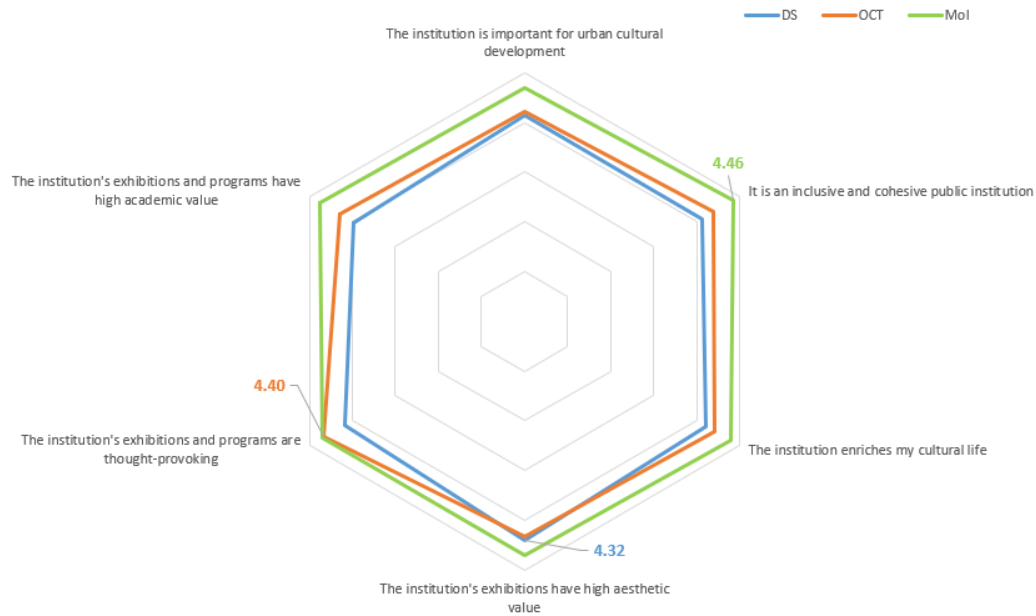


Figure 41. Recognition of the values of the three museums

A Likert scale was employed to measure how the visitors valued the museums. After visiting the museums, a high percentage of visitors felt that they had gained basic or a deep understanding or interest in design and related subjects, and over 85% of the visitors were satisfied with, and had very positive evaluations of, the museums they had visited. The values presented in Figure 41 were chosen from the museums' textual records (such as their publicity documents). The results showed that, from the perspective of these visitors, the three design museums were reflective, thought-provoking, and inclusive, had positive academic and aesthetic values, made a contribution to the cultural development of the city, and enriched people's personal lives.

## 8.2 Answers to Research Questions

### 8.2.1 What is the reason for the formation of design museums in China?

Museums with various themes are the consequence of societal interactions in a specific spatio-temporal context (Liao, 2017). According to Fyfe (2006), the booming and diversification of museums on an international scale is the result of post-industrialism, post-capitalism, and postmodernism. Denton (2014) agrees that the thriving mass consumer culture in the market economy is an important reason for the booming and diversification of Chinese museums. Since the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, many concepts and ideas were translated from the West and Japan and continually evolved to adapt to China's own context from different periods. The notions of the museum and design were two examples that entered China in the process of modernization. In the 1910s, international industrial expositions were organized by social elites and officials alongside the emerging capitalist market. The *Nanyang Industrial Exposition* was a seminal event organized by patriotic elites to promote national industries, and industrial exhibitions and societies flourished for several decades. Some galleries and museums also embarked on collecting commercial and industrial products under this impact.

However, the establishment of design museums is occurred after the market reform and, to a large extent, was dictated by top-down policies and strategies. Capitalism and commercialism are considered to be contradictory to the socialist theory.

However, after the failure of previous socialist practices (e.g., planned economy and eliminating private economy) in China and east Europe in the late 20th century, China realized it was unrealistic to continue on the old path. After the Reform and Opening-up Policy in 1978, China entered an era that embraced an open market and capital economy. Hence, the market economy became imperative, according to the principle of new socialist theory, to enrich the nation and bring benefits to the Chinese collective. Some scholars refer to the stage after market reform as the postsocialist and neoliberal period, which pursues marketization, privatization, and commodification (Denton, 2014).

Economic growth in the industrial economy ignited national developments in various aspects, such as culture. Consequently, culture became a drive to boost economic development to an upper level. This social and cultural context, as well as the endorsement of government policies, provided an open, neoliberalist environment for the rapid redevelopment of Chinese design and museums.

On the one hand, museums are crucial instruments for distributing soft power, which is urgently needed when a nation's economy is growing rapidly (An, 2019). As the number of museums indicates the civilization process of a nation (Varutti, 2014), policies on museums are now released to support museum development.

Concurrently, the reformation of cultural undertakings encouraged the injection of private capital into the cultural realm, which caused the growth of private museums founded by private collectors, industries, and other social entities. Hence, the museum infrastructure was transformed, and museums not only became a national instrument but also a cultural industry depended on the market. Rosalind Krauss asserts that the museum "as a guardian of the public patrimony has given way to the notion of a museum as a corporate entity with a highly marketable inventory and the desire for growth," which was caused by the free-market spirit in the 1980s (Weiss, 1990, as cited in Krauss, 1990, p. 5). Thus, the museum realm was industrialized like Disneyland, and museum exhibitions and activities became cultural products.

This market-oriented, neoliberalist environment led to the booming and privatization of museums on a national scale. The genre of museums also diversified in the market economy (Lord et al., 2019; Lu, 2014; Varutti, 2014). Design museums are a manifestation of the marketization of the museum industry. The musealization of design and the privatization and marketization of design museums have become marketing strategies as well as cultural capitals (which can be converted into economic capital) of enterprises and city governments.

On the other hand, design is an important factor in defining creativity and innovation, which are value added for products and services. However, promoting design at a material level cannot transform China's industrial profile and spread its impact to the public and the world. The similarity between the advent of design museums in China and the United Kingdom is that they both confronted an economic crisis in the international market. The United Kingdom was in strong competition over exported digital products with countries like Germany and Japan in the late 20<sup>th</sup> century. Conversely, the Chinese economy was bottlenecked because China heavily relied on exported business and traditional manufacturing production that had prevailed in the early reformation period, hindering the sustainable development of China's economy, and negatively affecting Chinese identity. Design, as a creative drive, is considered important in changing China's identity as a low-cost world factory and upgrading China's economic and industrial structure (Keane, 2013). Therefore, it is included as part of the national strategy to transform China's industrial and economic structure and its cultural identity.

The rising status of design and the demand for building cultural infrastructures have led to the musealization of design. In the meantime, the design industry also needs venues to showcase their products. Therefore, the government plays an important role in hosting or facilitating promotional exhibitions. In the case of Shenzhen, being part of the global competition was the initial goal of establishing SEZs, which aim to attract foreign investment, learn from developed countries, and expand overseas markets by selling manufactured products to the world (O'Donnell et al., 2017a). Through its preferential treatment as a SEZ, Shenzhen accumulated economic strength through its processing and manufacturing industry in the early reformation period. Shenzhen is the epitome of a modern Chinese metropolitan dream, with an earnest expectation to experiment with a market-oriented economic system and introduce nationwide reforms. Its success in practicing economic and socialist reform gained more opportunities from the state council. Recently, Shenzhen has been designated as a

model city and a socialist demonstration area that is expected to realize the “three transitions” indicated in the *Made in China 2025* scheme and transform both the city and the nation from a center of manufacturing to one of creativity.

Shenzhen began building its early cultural infrastructures in 1985, but it was in 2003 that the government included culture in its strategy and determined to establish itself as a city renowned for its culture. Its objective was to improve its comprehensive cultural strength, build a city of culture, edify citizens with high art, satisfy the cultural needs of citizens, and improve the city’s cultural profile on the global stage (Hu, 2005; Wang, 2005), and ultimately build an international, modernized, civilized, and high-standard cultural Shenzhen City (CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee & Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2005a).

Shenzhen embarked on applying for the CoD and made it part of the political agenda when UNESCO set up the Creative Cities Network in 2004. It aimed to develop creative design industries and establish itself as an international city of creative design for the following reasons: 1) design is a contemporary language that can connect Shenzhen with the world and a value-added industry that can implement the national strategy of *Made in China 2025*, and 2) being a city of design is a marketing point to shape a characteristic Shenzhen culture and fulfil the municipal ambition of being a civilized city (2005). Culture is believed to be crucial to the transformation of the industrial structure and the economy system of Shenzhen. Developing cultural industries and cultural undertakings and reforming the cultural system were key in the government-led initiative. For the former, design serves as a creative drive, and museums, as cultural infrastructures, are expected to transform the economic structure from an industrial economy to a knowledge economy and boost economic development. For the latter, reforming the socialist cultural system endeavors to emancipate cultural production and encourage private capital to invest in culture. The OCT Gallery and DS are two cases established in this context. The government-

owned Shenzhen Museum of Industry is also looking for an approach to invite the private sector to run the new museum.

Initiated by national and local cultural policies, design museums such as the OCT Gallery and DS were established along with the goals of cultural enterprises and coincided with urban characteristic. Design museums, as a specialized type of museum, can satisfy the need for building more cultural infrastructures, establish a unique Shenzhen culture as a CoD, and promote the design industry in Shenzhen. However, the development of design museums is a historical opportunity that cannot be realized without the full facilitation of government support, the increasing maturation of cultural enterprises and private museums,<sup>89</sup> and fortune. The Beijing Museum of Art and Design is a case in point. The museum was founded by designer He Yuehua at the end of 1998. It was the first Chinese design museum on record, but it was seldom mentioned. The small museum acted as a cultural organization that communicated with designers and artists from Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macao, and mainland China. The museum's collection came directly from He's own collection of posters, and his commercial design projects financially supported the museum. According to its publication, the museum was very active, at least in the first year, and organized 21 exhibitions and events, including design, music, performance arts, and fine arts (*The Birth of Beijing Museum of Art and Design*, 2000). It was an early stage of resuming Chinese design and establishing private museums in Beijing. National policies (e.g., the "Law of the People's Republic of China on the Protection of Cultural Relics" in 1982) and local policies that legitimated cultural artifacts collected by the private sector and provided financial support facilitated the establishment of private museums. However, as He recollects, the museum faced financial difficulties, as the source of funding came from his personal commercial

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<sup>89</sup> According to Gao Peng (2020), in the new century with the maturing of real estate industries, many private art museums have transformed into cultural add-ons of real estate projects. However, it was in the 2010s that the internal operation of private museums became more mature and that the number of private art museums increased dramatically.

business, and the museum was free to the public.<sup>90</sup> When the rented museum building was demolished in 2002 for the construction project of the 2008 Olympics, the museum was forced to close. A single source of funding and limited material support were the major problems. Although many private museums in this period faced similar obstacles and survived for several years, some eventually closed down (Song, 2008).

Besides, although state-led initiatives provide a favorable environment for establishing design museums today, each design museum has different reasons for establishment, as they have different founders and cultural and urban contexts. For example, the China Design Museum, which is affiliated with the China Academy of Art in Hangzhou, is a university museum. Its establishment was facilitated by the provincial and municipal governments, which provided the university with 500 million RMB to purchase 7,010 pieces of European modern design works from the German collector Torsten Bröhan. Although it was also a cultural project initiated to implement national and local cultural strategies and support national cultural development (Arshad, 2017), it was not an urban development project or a speculative business like DS, which was founded by the China Merchants. For DS and OCT Gallery, as the development strategies of their founding party varied, their founders had different expectations for the two museums. OCT gallery, as a branch of the OCAT cluster, is a cultural subsidiary of the OCT Group's cultural tourism project, whereas DS, which is the CMSK's attempt to develop cultural industries, is expected to become a new cultural enterprise model that is self-sustainable.

### 8.2.2 What are the implications of the establishment of design museums?

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<sup>90</sup> In an email conversation with the author in 2020.

In a knowledge economy, it is a global trend for museums to become cultural content (Jimenez & Lord, 2019) that is convertible into economic capital. Through the many international exhibitions, world fairs, design competitions, architecture biennales, and design museums, Shenzhen became a modern metropolis with many exhibitionary complexes, such as Paris and London, in the previous centuries. This is a golden era of culture. In the international trends of culture consumption (Denton, 2014), the Shenzhen authorities also see a huge consumer market for culture and place culture in market-driven competitions to stimulate economic development. Both design and museums are cultural capital that adds value to industrial and economic development.

Borrowing Bourdieu's theory (1986), a design museum is an institutionalized form of cultural capital for its founder and urban planner. It cultivates its audiences by presenting its objectified cultural capital—the collections and the displayed objects and texts in its exhibitions. For their founder, the design museum is not merely a cultural and educational institution but also a cultural brand that has the potential to be marketized and industrialized. The tour exhibitions in the OCT and CMG properties in other cities, as well as the DS+ in Shanghai, are prime examples that intend to replicate cultural content to benefit their own businesses. This resembles a Fordist approach to industrializing cultural production similar to the standardized manufacturing mode of mass production to increase productivity. Although culture cannot be mass-produced like commodities, this represents a trend of industrializing culture.

However, instead of promoting commodity fetish as deliberate, similar to the industrial expositions in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the OCT Group and CMG envision a good life for their consumers (i.e., the residents in their properties) through the OCT Gallery and DS. The OCT is committed to be the “creator of a good quality of life” and the CMSK “the better life carrier,” both define culture and leisure activity as part of a good life. Marcuse (1991) criticizes advanced industrial society for being haunted



by consumerism and dominated by the interests and capital of the upper class. It projects false needs to the public and turns everything into a commodity through marketing media. This is particularly evident in private museums, as they are speculated for their economic potentials. As Song observes,

The syndicates running private museums –and their commercial services – have taken important measures towards strengthening business culture and enterprise in their institutions. Some owners have used their museums as platforms from which to expand the sale of their business products. (Song, 2008, p. 47)

In the context of this study, design museums cannot be traded directly as products, although they induce consumption through the selling of tickets or souvenirs. There are other items that their founders can sell: for examples, apartments and tourism services. Aside from selling tangible commodities to consumers, enterprises also sell the definition of a good lifestyle. In other words, rather than consuming what they need (e.g., apartments), consumers buy what the marketing strategy suggests (e.g., apartments with educational and cultural facilities, shopping malls, and theme parks). In addition, the seemingly good intention of providing a good life, to a certain extent, disguises the commercial implications while attaching the additional prices of cultural facilities to consumers at the same time. Not-for-profit cultural institutions not only possess cultural capital, which can be converted into economic capital by decorating the urban scape and supporting local commercial and residential businesses, but also social capital for enterprises to develop cultural, economic, and political networks of relationships. Moreover, their actions in investing in culture in accordance with the government's policies demonstrate and glorify their social values and beneficence in supporting social progress and contributing to socialist reform and the construction of cultural infrastructures. In return, these enterprises receive preferential benefits on land uses, finance, and revenues, as endorsed by the regulation on supporting private museums (State Administration of Cultural Heritage et al., 2010).

From an urban perspective, the promulgation of the *Five-Year (2018–2023) Plan of Shenzhen Museums Development* and the *Vision in 2035* reveals the government's aspiration for cultural development. This plan aims to triple the number of museums by 2035 by encouraging social entities to invest in museum infrastructures. It intends to accelerate the civilization process to become a global city and transfer the financial burden and risks of running a museum. The strategic plan has proved to be effective. According to the *Report on the Development of Guangdong Museums in 2020*, the number of non-government museums in Shenzhen ranked first in Guangdong (The Department of Culture and Tourism of Guangdong Province, 2021). With the agreement on accruing cultural capital from the authority and the development of a local private economy, private enterprises have actively engaged in building museums in Shenzhen. In this process of capitalization, museums can be assessed and operated by the market directly or indirectly and seek a self-sustainable manner of operation. Therefore, the government can step back and play a supervisory and supportive role. Although the five-year plan for museum development also mentioned increasing the quality of museums, in practice, having an iconic architecture designed by international architects or having a presupposed function in supporting new urban projects is more important than building a rich collection for establishing new cultural organizations. Many new museums, such as the Innovation Design Museum and the Museum of Industry under planning, started from scratch without any collection or acquisition strategy, but they had already been designated a certain purpose for urban development.

Nevertheless, the establishment of new museum models does not eliminate the traditional ones. In the reformation of a cultural system, the government emphasizes the coordinated development of cultural undertakings and cultural industries (Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2016). For example, the Shenzhen Museum of Industry would co-exist with the new industrial museum, as asserted by the museum

staff.<sup>91</sup> They would be differentiated with nuanced in functions: the old one would continue to serve as a diplomatic platform for SZBIIT, and the new one, which targets to be a world-class cultural landmark, would be more public oriented.

### 8.2.3 What are the functions of Chinese design museums in the postsocialist era?

Museums are cultural indicators of social change, and their functions and roles change in accordance with changes in time and social environment. Industrial exhibitions and design museums were established in the West in the past two centuries, demonstrating that the “exhibitionary complex” is associated with the power apparatus of authorities (Bennett, 1995) and the disciplinary instruments in Foucauldian theory. These activities glorified the value of commercial products and raised the pilgrimage to the commodity fetish (Benjamin, 1999). In terms of museums in China, they were owned by governments before the 1990s and normally served as ideological instruments that disseminated socialist and patriotic values to the public. Along with the marketization and diversification of museums, museums’ social functions and roles have become pluralistic.

Literally, museums have the fundamental functions of collecting, preserving, researching, and displaying, while also have functions that are not so manifest as they are within the social system and are associated with certain intentions and purposes (Kirchberg, 2003). They are in intricate relations with different entities and face different needs, expectations, and consequences from social actions. Externally, they can be strained by the government and the public; internally, they can be affected by their social missions, sources of funding, managerial modes, and background of personnel. Kirchberg (2003) identifies multiple manifest and latent functions of

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<sup>91</sup> Interview with the Head of the Administrative Office in the Shenzhen Museum of Industry, Ye Tao, on July 27, 2021.

museums in terms of urban planning, architecture, urban imagineering, urban policy, and new museology in the urban context. Inspired by his taxonomy of museum functions and based on the results of the study, this study categorizes the multilayered functions of design museums into three levels: national, urban, and institutional.

#### 8.2.3.1 National level

Although the development of museums in China is imbedded into the civilization process of a city agenda, it cannot be realized without a national master plan and a top-level design. During the 5<sup>th</sup> Plenum of the 19<sup>th</sup> CPC Central Committee, the central government reiterated the importance for developing cultural undertakings and cultural industries, which could increase national soft power and develop a socialist spiritual civilization (*Proposal of the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party on Drawing Up the 14th Five-Year Plan for National Economic and Social Development and Long-Range Objectives for 2030*, 2020). Cultural development hereby is given ideological and economic-political assumptions in the geopolitical context.

Museums, as a cultural component, are an indicator of modernization in China. Therefore, apart from supporting national museums, the State Administration of Cultural Heritage specified the objective of museum development from 2011 to 2020 on a macroscopic level: to support industrial and specified museums with local characteristics and develop museums of varied levels. According to the *Masterplan of Medium- and Long-term Development of Museums (2011–2020)*, private museums are important as they are supplementary to shape a diverse and multivariant museum structure in China and establish China as a cultural powerhouse (State Administration of Cultural Heritage, 2012). Domestically, they meet people's cultural and spiritual needs, secure national culture, nurture cultural confidence, and lead to national

rejuvenation. Internationally, museums are agents of disseminating soft power and exporting the nation's cultural values to gain international recognition.

The concept of soft power was introduced by Joseph Nye in 1990, describing it as international relations that are different from military or economic power and that can be transmitted or exert impacts on others through intangible forms, such as ideas, values, and culture (Lord & Blankenberg, 2015; Zheng, 2019). Currently, it is widely accepted that museums are both cultural and political venues that represent soft power and international relations through activities such as tour exhibitions, collection loans (or repatriations), and institutional exchanges of experiences and trainings of staff.

In December 2016, an article entitled *Our Time Calls for Industrial Culture* was shared by the WeChat account of the Shenzhen Museum of Industry:

National industrial strength is not only represented by its “hard power”, but also by its cultural “soft power.” .....The Chinese government issued *Made in China 2025* in May 2015. China aims to upgrade from a manufacturer of quantity to one of quality. China needs to catch up not only in science and technology but also in culture (The Editorial Office, 2016).

The text indicates that developing culture as a national soft power is dependent on the development of technology as hard power in the master plan *Made in China 2025*, which aims to develop China as a strong country that excels in culture and spreads its soft power to the world. This study shows that the development of design museums is associated with the ambition to brand “Chinese design” (as an upgrade from Chinese products) and develop a creative image through design and museum infrastructures.

Manifestly, the Shenzhen Museum of Industry plays a diplomatic role in demonstrating the industrial achievement and award-winning design of Shenzhen to foreign diplomats and officials, while the OCT Gallery holds international exhibitions

in collaboration with foreign embassies and occasionally serves as a site for state visits. DS is a more evident case, as it partnered with an international architect and a world-class museum and is led by a Dutch–German director who is experienced in cross-cultural curatorship. The cultural embodiment of the United Kingdom–China People to People Dialogue signified “a golden era of relations between China and the UK” (Reeve, 2019, p. 87). This international partnership was built upon mutual acceptance and benefits and would “forge closer diplomatic and economic ties” for the two nations (British Council, 2015). The abovementioned museums, as well as their corresponding founders expanded their social networks and cultural influence by being a disseminator of soft power and a site for negotiating political relations and economic interests.

#### 8.2.3.2 Urban level

As museums have more direct interests in the city, establishing design museums has more specific functions and roles at the urban level. In Mumford’s *The Culture of Cities*, the function of city museums in the first half of the last century was to preserve “the memorials of culture” (1970, p. 446). Sharon Zukin (1995) argues that arts play a seductive role in urban redevelopment and fueling a city’s economy. As observed by some scholars, museum development schemes in the municipal agenda in Asian metropolises, such as Shanghai, Hong Kong, and Seoul, are also associated with cultural urbanization (Luo, 2020; Mersmann, 2015), and these museums, as Zukin puts it, serve “to produce symbols and space” (1995, p. 2).

In 1995, the Shenzhen government came up with the idea of establishing Shenzhen as a modern and civilized city to excel in the global campaign of cities, and it realized that culture was an imperative indicator of this urban campaign (Wu, 2020). Culture can be turned into intangible assets that accelerate urbanization and economic

development in the era of knowledge economy. The number of museums has become a cultural indicator of the level of civilization of a city. Shenzhen is not the only Chinese city that largely invests in museums to accrue cultural capital. Megacities such as Shanghai, Beijing, and Hong Kong, as well as rising first-tier cities such as Chengdu, have also joined the race. Similar to the cases of Hong Kong and Seoul studied by Mersmann, the new museums are “public spaces of cultural self-representation and urban identity building” to implement their global city agenda (2015, p. 86).

In the mental space, design museums are representations of urban soft power, as they contribute to branding Shenzhen’s international and creative profile, manifesting a characteristic Shenzhen culture as a designated City of Design, and promoting the values of design. They also latently accrue cultural capital for transforming the local and regional economy. Both the DS and OCT Gallery are non-government initiatives that uplift urban soft power through the support of favorable policies. They raise the reputation of Shenzhen design, as the DS and V&A Shenzhen team did in rediscovering the values of manufacturing in Shenzhen and the PRD region in the *Unidentified Acts of Design* in the 2015 UABB exhibition. In terms of the latent functions of design museums, they help to establish a modern international model that can be propagated and promoted to other cities in China in the process of the development and renovation of culture in Shenzhen, as a pilot demonstration city of socialism with Chinese characteristics. The objective of the postsocialist cultural development is not for individual’s benefits, but for the collective’s cultural and spiritual needs.

In the physical space, newly established museums contribute to the skyline of the city (or coastal line, as in the case of Shenzhen) as cultural landmarks and provide public spaces for citizens to rest, enjoy art facilities, or spend their leisure time. Many museums with vanguard buildings designed by international architects were

constructed in new cultural and commercial centers as part of urban imagineering megaprojects, contributing to place making in the urban fringes.<sup>92</sup> They attract not only citizens and tourists but also urban developers to invest in their vicinity. The SWCAC, where DS is located and designed by a renowned foreign architect, is a case in point. By obtaining nominations from several international cultural and tourism organizations, it has demonstrated its internationality and importance in supporting the global city agenda.

As indicated in this study, design museums are intended to be cultural nodes within a complex socio-geographic network with different actors. However, each organization has different strategies for contributing to urban development. The new Museum of Industry and the upcoming Innovation Design Museum are urban projects that aim to empower the new commercial and tourism centers in the Bao'an and Nanshan Districts, respectively. They are the “consequence of urban growth politics” (Kirchberg, 2003, p. 69). The OCT Gallery is part of the art delta in the planning of the OCT Group, which constructed a spectacular landscape of art and tourism that consists of several theme parks, art museums, commercial plazas, residential blocks, and a creative park along two sides of Shennan Avenue. This strategy decorated the urban skyline, and more profoundly, it established a model that renovated post-industrial factories with a cultural cluster comprising art, ecology, entertainment, and tourist facilities, which was proved to be feasible and were listed and promoted later in the masterplan of Shenzhen's urban development.<sup>93</sup>

With a slightly different strategy, DS serves as “catalysts of urban cultural renewal and economic development” (Mersmann, 2015, p. 87) in Shekou, where China

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<sup>92</sup> There are two reasons for this: first, there is limited land resources in the city center, and second, the urban planner aims to accelerate the urbanization process by developing a polycentric urban structure.

<sup>93</sup> The renovation of post-industrial factories into a creative park began earlier than the policymaking. The *Masterplan of Shenzhen Cultural Development*, which was issued two years later than the establishment of the OCT Creative Loft, has referenced this idea and aimed to renovate other inopportune industrial areas into creative platforms that focus on the design industry (CPC Shenzhen Municipal Committee & Shenzhen Municipal Government, 2005a).



Merchants has been based for decades. In the renovation plan of Shekou, China Merchants aims to recentralize and rejuvenate the post-industrial area and the urban fringe as a new cultural and commercial center by establishing the SWCAC as an urban landmark and tourism destination (Design Society, 2018). In accordance with the municipal government's cultural agenda, China Merchants has created an ideal model of contemporary urban life and a renovative model for other post-industrial and coastal regions that provide work opportunities and has comprehensively integrated residential blocks, schools, commercial squares, tourism, industries, financial and health care services, and other living infrastructures with art and entertainment facilities.

#### 8.2.3.3 Institutional level

Whereas scholars criticize the hegemony of control in capitalist society over the public (Horkheimer & Adorno, 2002; Marcuse, 1991), as revealed in the industrial expositions and museums in the last two centuries, Kirchberg (2015) re-examines the disciplinary function of museums and argues that museums today are increasingly non-heterotopic and popular with multiple meanings. The cases featured in the present research illuminate the pluralization of museum functions and roles.

Museum functions are associated with their value in society. Creating value has been mentioned repeatedly in DS's publicity articles. Value was originally an economic concept. Use-value (i.e., the practical function of things) and exchange-value (e.g., labor and commodities that can be calculated into money) are concepts in Marxism (Bennett et al., 2005). For the new cultural institutions and the enterprises behind them, it is imperative to demonstrate their value (i.e., functionality) to their patrons to prove that they are worthy of the public to visit, consume, or invest. Aside from the functions and roles expected by the government and museum founders, design

museums also contribute to the creation of social values. Social value refers to the contribution of museums to the public (individuals or communities). Although the mentioned design museum projects contribute to the nation and city as political and/or marketing tools, from the institutional perspective, they also create social values by providing pioneering understanding of design and social concerns (e.g., ecological design) to the public, supporting design curatorial practices, developing participatory programs for their communities, being a place of visit, and offering entertaining activities. This reflects a vigorous and bottom-up autonomy inside of the institutions.

First, design museums are dedicated to the development of design and are “a field of action for design” (Mura & Ballarin, 2012, p. 8), which means they are a venue for design to represent and speak for itself. They are not cultural preservers or historical sites but rather producers of culture that provide different interpretations of design and foster a contextualized culture of design, both locally and nationally, while maintaining an international vision. The OCT Gallery provides another way of understanding design that is different from design in commercial stores. In the *Another Way to Design* exhibition, the curators invited industrial and design studios and research teams to interpret design using their cross-disciplinary knowledge. For example, a museum project featured in the exhibition explored how the organizers went to the countryside, delved into rural hollowing issues, and designed a museum and a way of living in the village. The OCT Gallery has also presented design works from other countries, such as Japan, the Netherlands, and Germany.

In terms of DS, the curatorial team promoted a universal understanding of design by reorganizing and reinterpreting the collection from the V&A museum in the first *Values of Design* exhibition. Later, in other exhibitions, such as the *Values of Design in China* and *Craft: The Reset*, they intentionally addressed vernacular design issues. In the *Fashioned from the Nature*, a tour exhibition from the V&A, the curatorial team incorporated a small exhibition *From Nature in China: Then and Now*, which

featured collections from the China Silk Museum, and revealed the history of Chinese fashion and how contemporary Chinese fashion designers designed with tradition. The team displayed not only design from China in terms of their material meaning but also their symbolic identity as Chinese design. At the same time, it played the role of a cultural bridge and facilitated a dialogue between East and West. The two institutions also disseminated ecological concerns and social responsibilities of design by holding public conversations and lectures. For example, as a public program of *Fashioned from the Nature* exhibition, DS invited several young design practitioners to share their reflections, experiences, and environment-friendly design that dealt with climatic issues.

The design exhibitions of the Museum of Industry tended to present award-winning objects and regarded beauty as essential to design. Some exhibitions at the two other institutions also displayed beautifully-design objects and presented them in a nice-looking way. This aesthetic feature of design or exhibitions has been criticized, as design museums have been accused of turning design works into “objects of contemplation” (Taylor, 2016, p. 91). Critics believed that the *raison d’être* of design is in its functionality and ability to be mass-produced and that “exhibiting design for the foremost purpose of aesthetic appreciation can be deeply problematic” (Charman, 2016, p. 139). These arguments are sound from the perspectives of design professionals. However, as revealed in the questionnaire (see Appendix IV), many visitors come to museums to appreciate the aesthetics of the design (Figure 40). This means that displaying design for aesthetic reasons still has value. As Eilean Hooper-Greenhill (2000) argues, individual visitors come to museums with various experiences and memories; thus, they perceive the exhibitions differently. Even the Museum of Industry, which primarily serves diplomats and officials, received a high and positive evaluation from visitors (Figure 41). Therefore, it is important to convey new and professional reinterpretations of design to the public, meanwhile it is

arbitrary to neglect public opinions and impose affirmative contexts and meanings on them.

Second, design museums are conducive to the growing ecology of design exhibitions and curation. As mentioned previously, DS has opened a call for curatorial proposals and has provided support for shortlisted ideas. This project assisted emerging young design curators and brought the concept of design curation to a wider audience. In the *Curation Workshop II: Story and Structure* (December 30, 2020 – May 7, 2021), the exhibition of the OCT Gallery invited 19 young curators to propose 19 exhibitions by restructuring 41 art works or projects based on their personal backgrounds and experiences (OCT Art and Design Gallery, 2020). It also organized a participatory workshop and welcomed the public to engage in curatorial practices. The exhibition and its workshop were bidirectional processes of learning and education on design curation between the institution and the public.

Third, although the establishment of the design museums has to serve the gentrification ambitions of their founders, they also have a voluntary and nonprofit facet that aims to serve the public and the local community with good intention. They are, as they claim in their mission statements, public institutions that aim to “co-design with the public” (DS) or connect the design with the public (OCT Gallery). This will contribute to building a cohesive and inclusive cultural environment in the city. This visitor- and community-oriented facet has prevailed since the advent of new museology. The “outward-facing, donor- and visitor-focused” cultural institutions (Lord & Blankenberg, 2015, p. 11) legitimated the social functions and cultural values of museums (Kirchberg, 2015). Spurred by the neoliberalist and open environment after the reformation, Chinese museums were also motivated by public well-being and became visitor oriented (Varutti, 2014). The Museum of Industry has taken a small step forward by opening itself to the public since 2011. Conversely, the OCT Gallery endeavors to organize public-engaging programs for many years to come. As DS has

been driven by its visitors and communities since its inception, it has made great efforts to paint an inclusive image through social media. In 2016, a year before its opening, DS launched the Design Community Festival as an annual nonprofit program that serves communities in Shekou through various participatory activities (Design Society, 2020c).

In accordance with China Merchants' commitment to creating a bourgeois way of life, DS serves to transform contemporary lifestyles by providing art and cultural activities in Shekou. DS has become an instrument of consumption that intends to stimulate the bourgeoisie consumption of culture and leisure. However, given that leisure and culture have already become part of the daily life of urban citizens nowadays (Liao, 2017), the co-existence of DS and other cultural institutions may not be pessimistic. Instead, as they are no longer hegemonic instruments of the authorities but public institutions that need to gain recognition and be tested by the market, they should be attractive to the public and be required to provide more qualified and diverse exhibitions and activities to satisfy the needs of the public.<sup>94</sup> They provide multiple choices and empower the public to decide where they would like to spend their leisure time and what cultural products they want to consume, as this concerns the social legitimation and values of these cultural institutions.

Finally, as the design museums chosen as the case studies in this research are a mixed consequence of social, economic, and political relations, they do not pursue historicity and permanence with static collections. They are mutable and transient, like industrial expositions, and function to serve specific contexts and ethos. Whether new museal institutions, such as the OCT Gallery and DS, will last for a long time or be replicated to other cities as a Shenzhen experience remains unknown. In fact, the CMG and

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<sup>94</sup> Interview with a DS staff on October 13, 2020.

OCT Group have already established mini versions of DS+ and OCAT branches in other cities, but whether they will be successful needs to be tested over time.

### 8.3 Limitations of the Research and Future Studies

As Creswell (2007) claims, the process of qualitative research is changeable and emergent. Yanow and Ybema (2009) use the old Sufi tale about blind men and elephants as an analogy to organizational research. The tale reveals the difficulties of blind men (i.e., the researcher) in uncovering the whole image of an elephant, which is a metaphor for social realities. The relationship between museums and society changes parochially and diachronically, and the spirit of each epoch often has a different effect on this relationship. Therefore, this kind of organizational research cannot generalize universal knowledge but is subject to scrutiny over time and place.

Conducted from 2018 to 2021, this study focuses on design museums in Shenzhen in the post-socialist context of China. However, these design museums were established for different purposes, subject to different cultural and urban contexts, and constantly changing through time. Therefore, this study cannot generalize a definitive conclusion to the phenomenon. Hopefully, research will continue to observe these design museums, as well as the forthcoming Innovation Design Museum, and their related issues in the future and expand the scope of the research by exploring more cases in other cities.

In the middle of the research, the outbreak of the coronavirus in early 2020 affected the mobility of visitors to museums and museums' activities. During the period of collecting visitor questionnaires, only a few people visited from other cities because of the recurrence of COVID-19 and the restrictions in cross-regional travelling (see Appendix IV). Thus, the function of design museums in promoting cultural tourism was not significant. Although this study examined the visitors' opinions on the

museums, it only serves to understand their general point of view. Future research would focus on museum visitor studies, compare the differences in visitor statistics between design museums and other type of museums, and question visitors with what kinds of backgrounds and social and economic statuses have a higher preference for and ability to decode design museums. Although design museums claim to be open to all social classes and connect with the daily life of the public, will the results confirm, in Pierre Bourdieu's term, a stratification of social distinction?

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## Appendix I List of Decorative/Industrial Art Museums and Design Museums

Name	Opening date	City	Country
V&A Museum	1852, renamed in 1899	London	UK
Österreichisches Museum für angewandte Kunst	1864, renamed in 1947	Vienna	Austria
Kunstgewerbemuseum, German Museum of Decorative Arts	1867	Berlin	Germany
Design Museum	1873, renamed in 2002	Helsinki	Finland
Leipzig Museum of Applied Arts	1874	Leipzig	Germany
Museum für Gestaltung Zürich	1875, unknown date of renaming	Zürich	Switzerland
Kunstindustrimuseet	1876	Oslo	Norway
Stieglitz Museum of Applied Arts	1878	Saint Petersburg	Russia
Powerhouse Museum (Museum of Applied Arts & Sciences)	1879, renamed in 1988	Sydney	Australia
Martin-Gropius-Bau	1881	Berlin	Germany
Uměleckoprůmyslové Museum	1885	Prague	Czech Republic
Designmuseum Danmark (Det Danske Kunstindustrimuseet)	1890, renamed in 2011	Copenhagen	Denmark
Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum	1896, renamed in 2014	New York	USA
Museum of Applied Arts	1896	Budapest	Hungary
Design Museum Gent	1903, renamed in 2002	Gent	Belgium
The Musée des Arts Décoratifs	1905	Paris	France
Danish Museum of Art & Design	1907	Copenhagen	Denmark
Die Neue Sammlung, the State Museum of Applied Arts and Design	1925	Munich	Germany
Museum of Applied Arts	1950	Belgrade	Serbia
Museum of Arts and Design	1956, renamed in 2002	New York	New York
Bauhaus Archive Museum for Design	1960, renamed in 1979	Berlin	Germany

Swedish Centre for Architecture and Design	1962	Stockholm	Sweden
Museum für angewandte Kunst Frankfurt	1967	Frankfurt	Germany
Museum of Architecture and Design	1972, renamed in 2010	Ljubljana	Slovenia
Goldstein Museum of Design	1976, renamed in 2000	Minnesota	USA
Design Museum, London	1989	London	UK
Museum of Design Atlanta	1989	Atlanta	USA
Vitra Design Museum	1989	Berlin	Germany
Design Exchange, Toronto	1994	Toronto	Canada
Bauhaus Museum	1995	Weimar	Germany
Red Dot Design Museum Essen	1997	Essen	Germany
The Beijing Museum of Art and Design	1998 (closed in 2002)	Beijing	China
the Neuen Museum, Staatliches Museum für Kunst und Design in Nürnberg	2000	Nuremburg	Germany
A+D Museum	2001	Los Angeles	USA
National Museum of Art, Architecture and Design	2003	Oslo	Norway
The Red Dot Design Museum in Singapore	2005	Singapore	Singapore
21 21 Design Sight, Tokyo	2007	Tokyo	Japan
La Triennale di Milano	2007	Milan	Italy
Xu Liaoyuan Modern Design Art Museum	2007	Chengdu	China
Oct Design Gallery	2008	Shenzhen	China
China Industrial Design Museum	2010	Shanghai	China
Design Museum Holon, Tel Aviv, Israel	2010	Tel Aviv	Israel
Chicago Design Museum, Chicago	2012	Chicago	USA
Archivo Diseño y Arquitectura, Mexico City	2012	Mexico	Mexico
Shenzhen Modern Design Museum	2012 (closed in 2017)	Shenzhen	China
Moscow Design Museum	2012	Moscow	Russia
The Museum of African Design	2013 (closed in 2017)	Johannesburg	South Africa
Yang Mingjie Industrial Design Museum	2013	Shanghai	China
Museu del Disseny de Barcelona	2014	Barcelona	Spain

The Branch Museum of Architecture and Design	2015	Richmond	USA
China Design Museum	2015	Hangzhou	China
Iittala & Arabia Design Center (Design Museum Arabia and Design Museum Iittala)	2016	Helsinki+Iittala	Finland
Design Museum Dharavi, India	2016	Dharavi	India
Design Society, Shenzhen	2017	Shenzhen	China
V&A Dundee	2018	Dundee, Scotland	UK
Xiamen Red Dot Design Museum	2018	Xianmen	China
HZReindl Design Museum	2018	Guangzhou	China
Shenzhen iADC Design Museum	2019	Shenzhen	China
Bauhaus Museum Dessau	2019	Dessau	Germany

## Appendix II Interview Questions

### Interview questions

1. What's your responsibility in the museum?
2. The history and background of the museum
3. What is the mission/goal of the museum?
4. How do you organize activities and curate design exhibitions? How the design exhibitions or activities fulfil the mission of the museum?
5. What's the criteria of selecting design objects on display or collections?
6. How the museum acquire funding and supports from its founders, government funds, or social entities?
7. Who are target audiences?
8. What role does the museum expect to play in society? What messages does it want to convey the public through its exhibitions and activities?
9. What difficulties has the museum come across so far?
10. What is the future plan of the museum?



## Appendix III Visitor Questionnaire

### Museum Visitor Questionnaire

1. 您来自哪里（日常居住地）？ Where do you come from? (Region of residency) \*
  - 美术馆周边社区 nearby the museum
  - 深圳其他地区 other districts in Shenzhen
  - 广东省内其他地区 other regions in Guangdong
  - 广东省外其他地区 other regions outside Guangdong \_\_\_\_\_
  
2. 是什么吸引您来此次展览或活动？ Your reason of coming to the museum. \*
  - 和专业或工作相关 related to my area of studying/working
  - 对展览/活动很有趣，特地过来参加 the exhibition or program is interesting
  - 在周边活动刚好碰上 happen to be here
  - 其他: other \_\_\_\_\_
  
3. 此前您是否来过，如有，您来的频率是？ Have you been to the museum before and how frequent do you visit the museum? \*
  - 否，第一次来 No, this is the first time
  - 有，三个月至少来一次 Yes, I come at least once in three months
  - 有，半年会来一次或者有新展览和活动会来 Yes, I come when there is new exhibition or activity
  - 有，一年以前来过 Yes, one year ago
  
4. 您是否理解该馆的展览或活动想传达的内容？ Do you understand the content or meaning of the museum exhibition or program? \*
  - 不能理解 No at all
  - 比较难理解，需要有相关的专业知识 difficult to understand, it needs professional knowledge
  - 比较好理解 easy to understand
  - 很好理解 very easy to understand
  
5. 通过该馆的展览或活动，您对设计或相关的知识是否有更深的了解或兴趣？ Through this exhibition or program, do you have more knowledge or interest in design or related subjects? \*
  - 完全没有 not at all
  - 有一些基本的理解和兴趣 have basic understanding and interest
  - 很比较深的了解和兴趣 have deep understanding and interest
  
6. 在参与该馆的展览或活动中，您希望…… What do you expect when visiting the museum?  
\* (5: strongly agree, and 1 strongly disagree)

	1	2	3	4	5
探索未知的领域 explore unknown realms	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
学习到新的知识 learn new knowledge	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
度过轻松、娱乐的休闲时间 have a leisure time	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
欣赏设计艺术之美 appreciate the aesthetic of design	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
拍照、采集素材 take photo or collect data	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
和展馆工作者或其它参与者交流、甚至成为朋友 communicate with the organizers or other visitors	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
未来参与到展览或活动的组织中 participate in the organization of events in the future	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
了解行业资讯 know industrial information and policies	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

7. 您是否同意以下观点? Do you agree with the opinions below? \* (5: strongly agree, and 1 strongly disagree)

	1	2	3	4	5
该馆对推动深圳城市文化发展起到重要作用 It is important for urban cultural development	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
该馆是包容的、具有凝聚力的公共机构 It is an inclusive and cohesive public institute	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
该馆的展览和活动丰富了我的文化生活 It enriches my cultural life	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
该馆的展览具有较高的艺术价值 Its exhibitions have high aesthetic value	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
该馆的展览和活动能引发思考 Its exhibitions and programs are thought-provoking	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>
该馆的展览和活动有较高的学术价值 Its exhibitions and programs have high academic value	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>	<input type="radio"/>

8. 总体而言, 该馆的展览/活动是否达到了您的预期? Did the exhibition or program meet your expectation? \*

否, 原因是.....No, why.. \_\_\_\_\_

是, 哪些方面比较好?.....Yes, in what aspect? \_\_\_\_\_

9. 您对该馆有什么意见或建议吗? Do you have any suggestion or comment?

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10. 您通过哪个渠道知道该馆的展览或活动? How do you know the museum exhibition or program? \*

- 微信公众号 WeChat official account 请留下公众号名称: \_\_\_\_\_
- 微博、小红书、抖音及其它社交媒体 weibo, or other social media
- 新闻、广播或广告 news, broadcast or advertisement
- 亲友、同事推荐 recommend by friends or colleagues
- 其他 other \_\_\_\_\_

➤ 请让我们了解您的相关信息, 以便更好地为您服务。  
Please let us know more about you.

11. 您的性别 Gender \* \_\_\_\_\_

12. 您的年龄 Age \* \_\_\_\_\_

13. 您的教育水平 (含在读) Education level \*

- 高中或以下 high school or below
- 研究生或以上 postgraduate
- 大学专科 college degree
- 大学本科 undergraduate

14. 您的工作/学习领域是? Your area of studying or working \*

- 学生 student 专业/学科 program: \_\_\_\_\_
- 教育行业 education/ teacher 专业/学科 program: \_\_\_\_\_
- 文化创意产业 (文化艺术设计等) creative industry
- 政府部门、事业单位 governmental departments
- 金融经济、贸易、管理 finance, trade business, management
- 法学、文史哲学 law, history, philosophy
- 机械、工农医学 engineering, farming, medicine
- 其他 \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix IV Results of Questionnaires

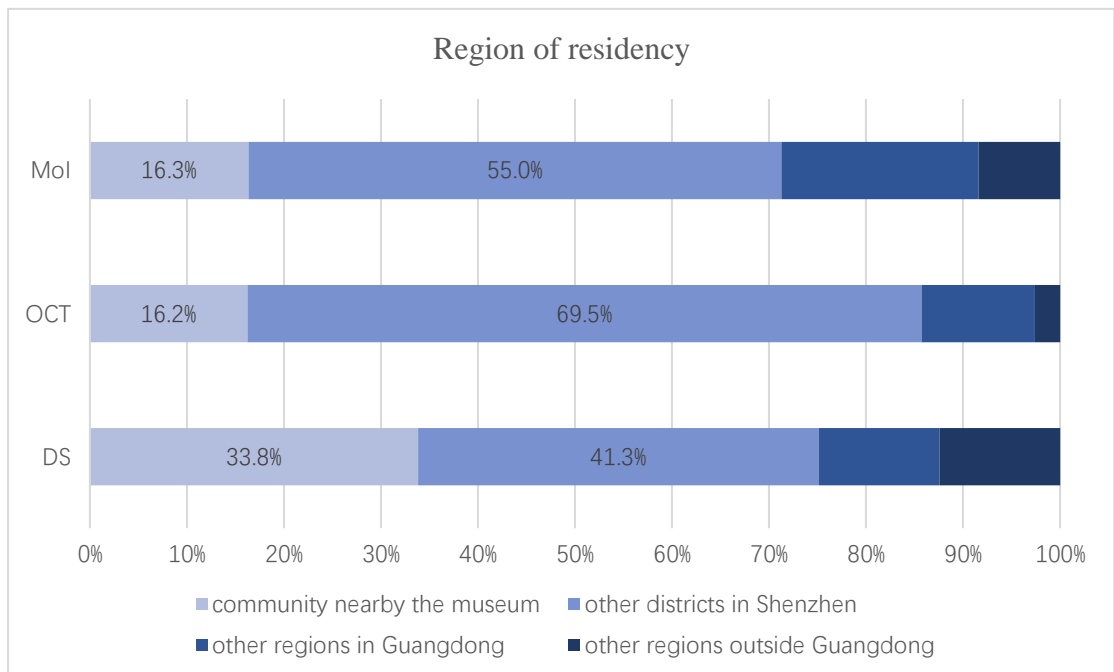
DS: Design Society

OCT: OCT Art & Design Gallery

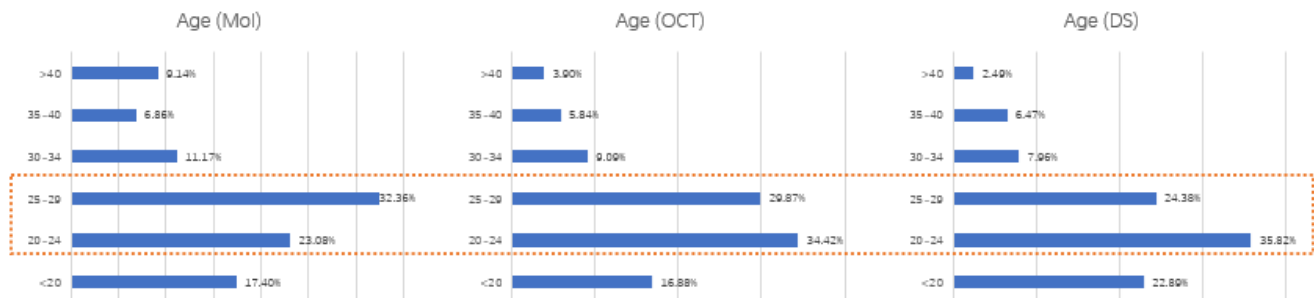
MoI: Shenzhen Museum of Industry

### A. Demographic information

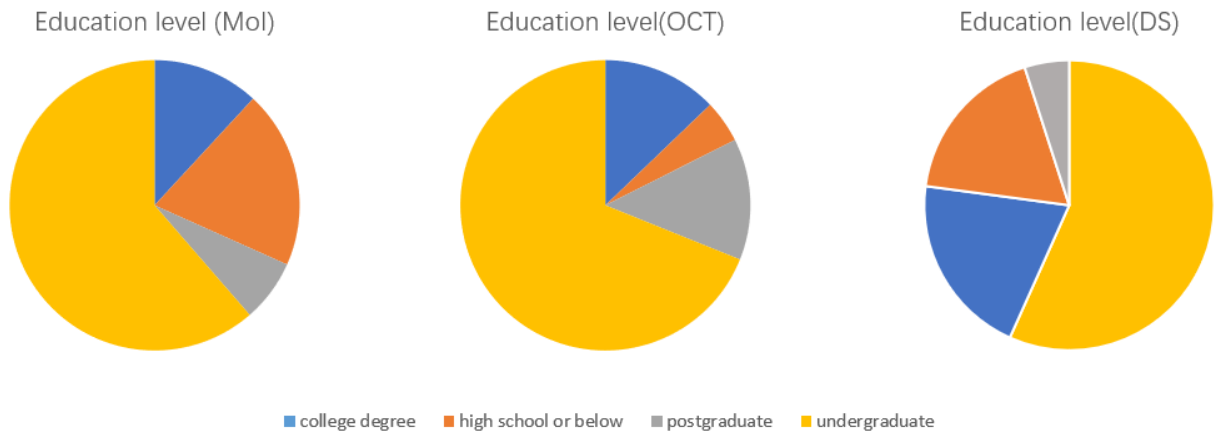
#### 1. Region of residency



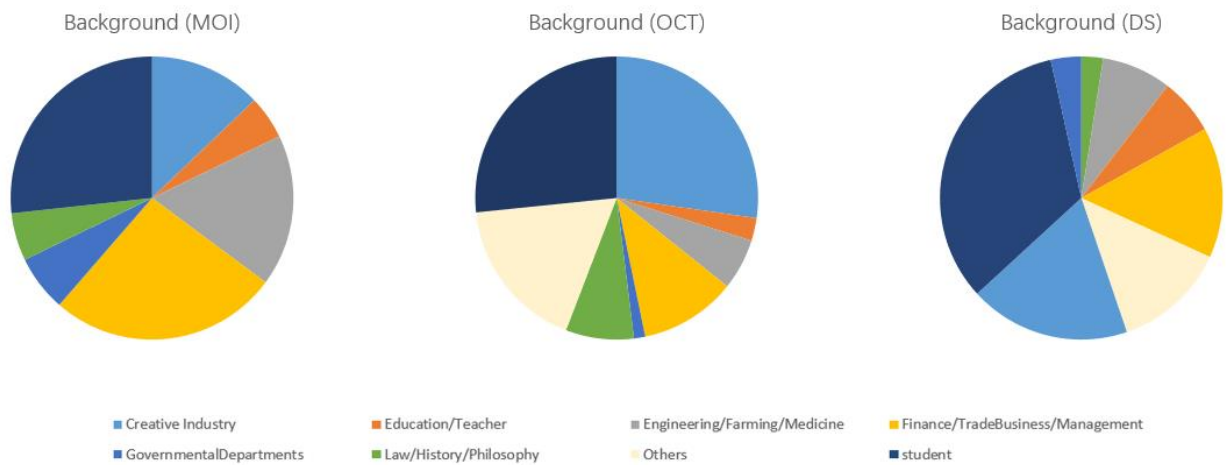
#### 2. Age



### 3. Education level



### 4. Background of Career/Study



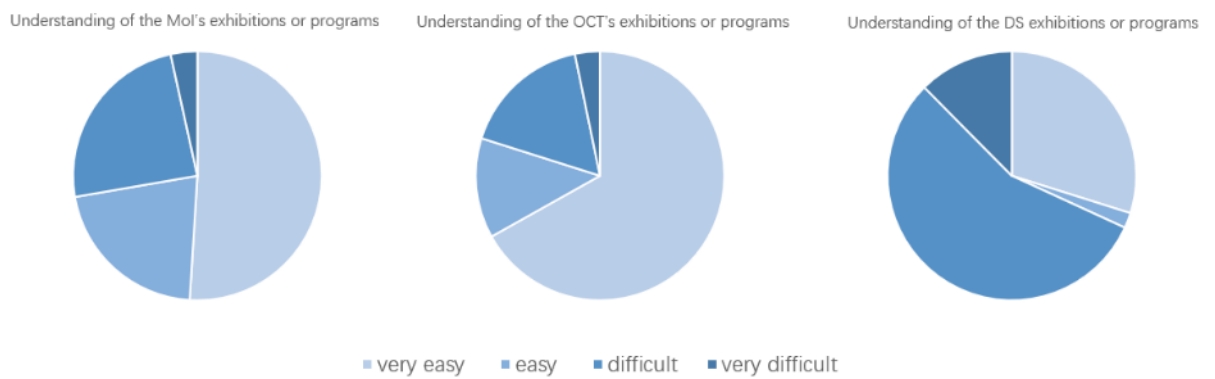
## B. Evaluation of the three museums

### 1. Frequency of visiting the museums

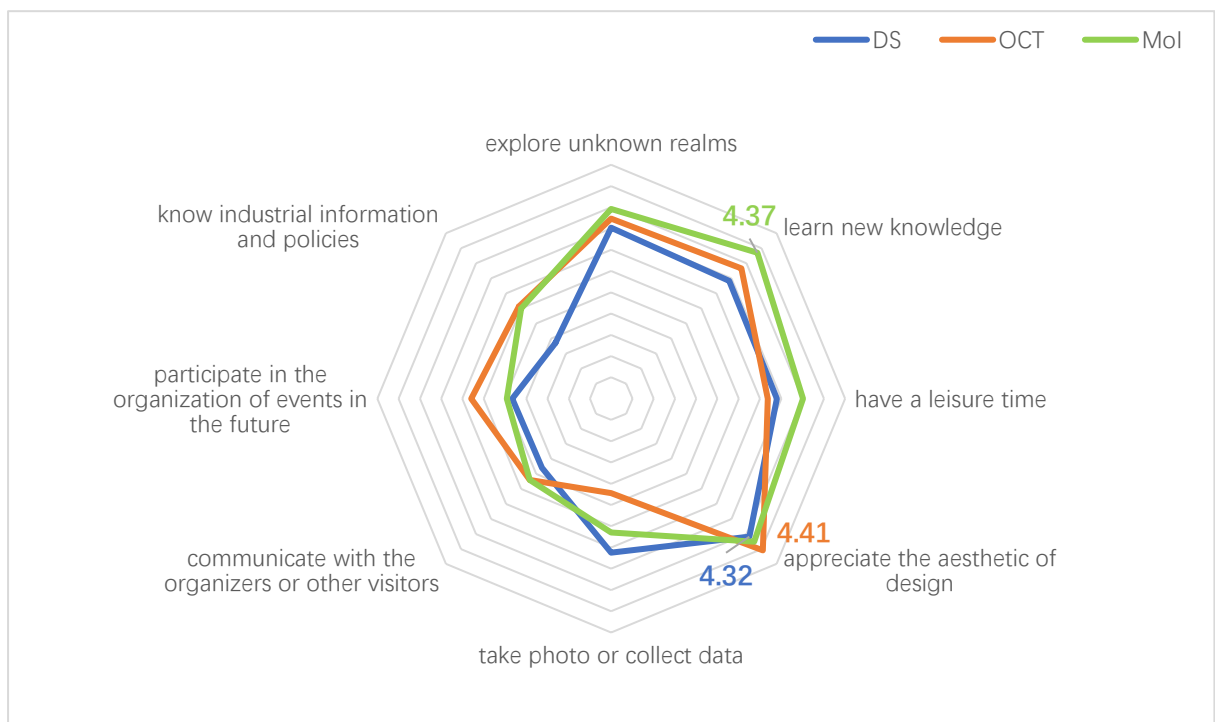
Frequency	MOI	OCT	DS
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Visit for the first time	84.2%	74.0%	72.1%
Visit the museum at least once in three months	3.5%	7.1%	10.9%
Visit the museum when there is new exhibition or activity	7.4%	10.4%	14.4%
Visit the museum once in a year at most	5.0%	8.4%	2.5%

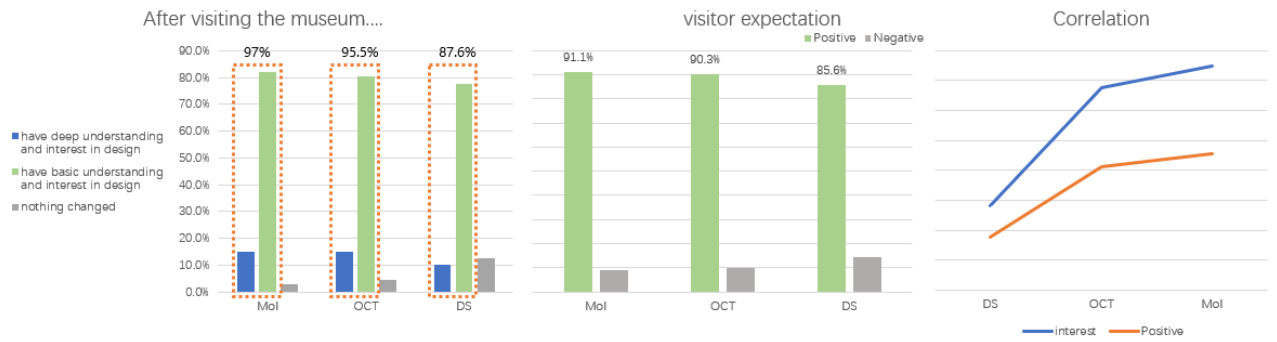
## 2. Understanding of the exhibitions/programs



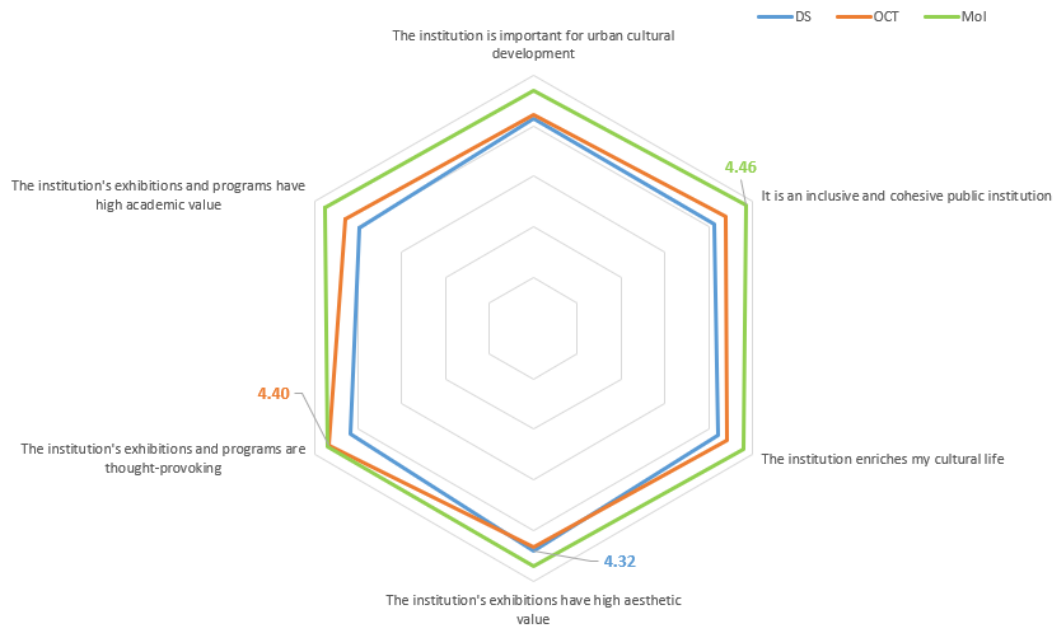
## 3. Areas of expectation



#### 4. Knowledge or interests gained after visiting the museums & Visitor expectation



#### 5. Recognition of the values of the three museums



## Appendix V Glossary of Acronyms

“City of Design” (CoD) “设计之都”

China Merchants Group (CMG) 招商局集团

China Merchants Shekou Industrial Zone Holdings Co., Ltd. (CMSK) 招商局蛇口工业区控股股份有限公司

Communist Party of China (CPC) 中国共产党

Design Society (DS) 设计互联

Export processing zone (EPZ) 出口加工区

Graphic Design in China (GDC) 平面设计在中国

He Xiangning Art Museum (HXN Museum) 何香凝美术馆

International Art and Design Center (iADC Center) 深圳国际艺展中心

Ministry of Industry and Information Technology (MIIT) 工业和信息化部

National Development and Reform Commission (NDRC) 国家发展与改革委员会

New York Art Directors Club (ADC) 纽约艺术指导协会

OCT Art and Design Gallery (OCT Gallery) 华·美术馆

OCT Contemporary Art Terminal (OCAT) OCT 当代艺术中心

Overseas Chinese Town Group (the OCT Group) 华侨城集团



Pearl River Delta (PRD) 珠江三角洲

Sea World Culture and Arts Center (SWCAC) 海上世界文化艺术中心

Shenzhen and Hong Kong Bi-city Biennale of Urbanism/Architecture (UABB) 深港城市\建筑双城双年展

Shenzhen Bureau of Industrial and Information Technology (SZBIIT) 深圳市工业和信息化局

Shenzhen Graphic Design Association (SGDA) 深圳平面设计协会

Shenzhen University (SZU) 深圳大学

Special Economic Zone (SEZ) 经济特区

the People's Republic of China (PRC) 中华人民共和国

the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) 联合国教育、科学及文化组织

Tokyo Type Directors Club (TDC) 东京字体指导俱乐部

UNESCO Creative Cities Network (UCCN) 联合国教育、科学及文化组织创意城市网络

Victoria and Albert Museum (V&A) 维多利亚和艾尔伯特博物馆