

Glocalization Practice from the Perspective of Curatorial Capital: Reflections on Public Pedagogy with Margin as Method

Qianzi Zheng

College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Edinburgh, Edinburgh, United Kingdom

Abstract: Curatorial work in exhibitions is no longer a neutral organisation of exhibitions but a type of cultural production driven by the logic of capital. This paper introduces the idea of "curatorial capital" and studies how symbolic capital, social capital and economic capital are combined in the public education of art museums. The three selected cases for comparison are the "Spatial Productivity" project of Suzhou Contemporary Art Museum (over 40 free public activities as supporting programming). A comparative analysis of the 2025 international solo exhibitions and concurrent public education programs of UCCA (Ullens Center for Contemporary Art), and the "Interiors of Wanderings—Swiss Contemporary Comics Art Exhibition" held by Shanghai Minsheng Modern Art Museum in 2025. Research shows that the deep problem of public education is not cultural opposition between global and local, but rather a structural mismatch in the knowledge hierarchy and resource allocation for the flow of curatorial capital. "Taking the Margins as Method" is not passive acceptance of the marginal position; instead, it turns the margin into cognitive resources to disrupt the current operational order and reconstruct the knowledge foundation and participation system of public education. The effectiveness of local-global public education is not determined by the proportion of the two, but rather by the continuous involvement of marginal forces to foster a new public cultural logic in the conflict between difference and connection.

Keywords: Curatorial Capital; Local Globalization; Public Education; Edge as a Method; Art Museum.

1. Introduction

"Global localisation" seeks to break free from the dichotomy of globalisation and localism, and instead suggests that they are interdependent and continuously produce new cultural forms. This idea has also been applied to curation, and two problems have emerged: how to integrate foreign art resources with the local context, and how to establish a line of communication between universal knowledge and local experience for the public. However, these questions implicitly contain an untested assumption: that the global and the local are the same and thus can be unified. Curatorial Practice is a type of cultural action and capital operation. Cross-border sponsorship of biennials and branding operations for art museums are examples of how capital is used to support exhibition production and circulation, and also to establish implicit standards for "what is worthy of presentation" and "who can speak". The curator has several connections; therefore, the resources and networks for mobilisation and exchange can be obtained through these connections. This is the actual basis for the idea of "curatorial capital" [1].

When the logic of capital enters curatorial activities, the public nature of public education is no longer pure. Exhibitions may become a capital-appreciation phase, and audiences will change from participants to consumers. However, the concepts of capital are not uniform. Bourdieu's division of the forms of capital shows that there is a certain space for the conversion among symbolic capital, social capital and economic capital. Non-profit organisations and public art museums are still able to guide capital flows. How is curatorial capital organised, changed or used for different purposes in some public education settings? The Margins Method can be employed at this level to find a way. Turn the deficiencies in the structure into cognitive resources for

research. Groups, Spaces and experiences that have been neglected by main-stream curatorial discourse serve as new sources for public education. This way does not deny the reality of globalisation and capital movement; instead, it seeks opportunities to upset the existing order and give rise to alternative practices while acknowledging their existence.

2. The Dual Logic of Curatorial Capital: Symbolic Accumulation and the Game of Publicity

First, based on Bourdieu's theory of capital division, explore its theoretical foundations for this idea. Bourdieu's four kinds of capital are economic capital, cultural capital, social capital and symbolic capital. The categories are all interchangeable with each other. Curatorial activities are located at the intersection of these categories of capital: curators use cultural capital—professional knowledge, aesthetic judgment, academic reputation—to organise exhibitions, leverage their network of connections with artists, institutions and sponsors for resource allocation, and build symbolic capital through the presentation and spread of the exhibition, which can then be converted into economic capital, such as higher curatorial pay or more institutional invitations. This cycle is the operating closed loop for curatorial capital [2].

The circumstances of the field of public education are also particular. Public education projects have a dual nature: they serve as strategies for art galleries to secure government funds, social donations and audience visits; the quantity of activities, participants and media coverage are all included in the assessment and function as quantitative indicators of symbolic capital; at the same time, they are also the basic routes for art galleries to carry out their social responsibilities

and serve specific communities. The problem of internal tension is that, once public education is included in the track of symbolic accumulation, its content will tend to move towards "safe" and "well-spoken" subjects, and those truly controversial or experimental local issues will be avoided [3]. In projects led by transnational art capital, curators may be reduced to roles of "executors" or "mediators" and lack autonomy due to the value system of the capital-providing party.

The flow of curatorial capital is not unidirectional absorption. Non-profit institutions are the origins of the ideas and thus still hold an important position in the contest for funds and other resources. The exhibition mechanism and the capital it provides also have the function of promoting and protecting creation, offering a platform for those ideas that cannot be spread through the market to gain attention. The above two attributes indicate that the final result of curatorial capital depends on particular institutional arrangements and operating modes. If art galleries consider the public education they undertake to be a long-term accumulation of social capital rather than a short-term means of brand building, then the flow of curatorial funds may be diverted from popular projects to support peripheral works that do not offer immediate symbolic benefits. The two logics provide a foundation for exploring the feasibility of local-globalised public education; the issue is not the curatorial capital itself, but rather how to adjust the flow of this capital in response to demands for growth in publicness.

3. The Tension of Local Globalization: Knowledge Hierarchy and Symbolic Risks

The first problem in the structure of local globalisation practice under this framework is the conflict between global discourse and local experience. The convergence of global discourse and local experience in the area of public education is not the "mutual shaping" referred to in the theory. An implicit knowledge hierarchy order always exists: the curatorial logic of international biennials, the educational procedures of European and American art museums, and the prevailing global art history narratives are given the status of universally applicable models, while local knowledge, community craftsmanship traditions, and non-academic visual experiences are placed in the sequence of "to be improved". This order does not need to be publicly announced by any institution; through the distribution of resources and industry prestige, it is repeatedly demonstrated in daily life [4].

The exhibition of Ledeniev's works at the Sichuan Museum in 2024 is a typical case. Seventeen exhibitions of the artist's work have been held between 1970 and 2023 in four sections. The realistic techniques of Russian realist painting are not unknown to Chinese audiences, but the difference in culture has resulted in a viewing experience that remains at the level of "being able to understand the techniques but not the culture". The curators need to respond: In transmitting the spirit of foreign art, how can we enable local audiences to find a connection with their own lives through these works, so that the exhibition is not merely a "foreign art exhibition far away"? This case is a typical structural problem: the localisation transformation of foreign exhibitions is generally superficial, with only a few local comparisons added to the exhibition signs or local cultural lectures combined, and the framework

of knowledge production itself is rarely changed.

Locality, once a good exhibition label, has now become a feature of cultural consumption. Select representative places, invite local artists, incorporate local visual symbols, and thus claim to have achieved localisation. However, these practices neither meet the deep needs of local culture nor promote the standardisation of expression; rather, the "local" exhibition structures in different cities are almost the same, and only the surface symbols have been replaced. Some people think that the idea of "locality" art offers a way out for Chinese art museums to balance internationalization and localisation, but the activities organised for local audiences in actual curating often lack real creativity and are more like the local application of a global method. Therefore, local globalisation cannot be realised by the benevolence of curators or pronouncements from institutions; rather, a fundamental shift in method is required, and "using the margins as the method" serves as the entry point [5].

4. Edge as a Method: The Epistemological Shift towards Disturbing Order

"Edge as a Way": It is not just a device of speech, but also a change in mode of knowing. At the foundation of this change are the theoretical sources of postcolonialism's critique of the "centre-periphery" power structure and the methodological search for repressed voices in feminist and folk studies. Therefore, in terms of curatorial practice, the "edge" has been reversed from "object needing rescue" to "subject capable of offering various cognitive perspectives". The 60th Venice Biennale provides a reference: the national pavilion presents the official and national art narrative, and the Arsenale was created by Harald Szeemann, who transformed an old warehouse into an exhibition space by placing the former at the centre and building around it. The two spatial forms are in contrast, and therefore, the edge position may serve as the origin for creative works [6].

Adding this epistemology to public education requires us to ask again: Who has the right to curate? What Knowledge is worth spreading? Where is the boundary of public education? In the traditional model, curators are dominant due to professional capital, and the audience is assumed to be "knowledge-deficient" recipients of education in exhibition halls and classrooms. Edge practice has problems in all three areas. "Let children curate together" is a solution: when children take part in the decisions about curation and selection of exhibits and design of flow lines, their experiences and perspectives move from the edge to the center. This modification will be more interactive, and the "adult-expert" model of knowledge production will be broken; non-professional and incomplete cognitive forms can also be expressed.

Spatially-based Edge practice is also useful. Curatorial projects have used "leftover space" as a metaphor to explore the social, cultural and ecological meanings of neglected and unscalable remaining spaces in the city. Such practices release public education from the white box of the art gallery and place it in the urban gaps; education is no longer limited to guided tours and workshops but extends to the whole intervention of spatial relationships, social connections, and public life. As a result, the object of public education is no longer the abstract "public", but specific communities [7]. At the same time, the edge does not have to be an extension of

the centre; rather, it can also exist independently and provide its own voice to disrupt the existing knowledge hierarchy and spatial order, demanding a re-evaluation of their legitimacy.

5. Three Edge Practices: Case Analysis and Comparison

The effect of the Epistemological shift mentioned above in practice needs to be verified through case studies. The following three cases are selected to correspond to the three types of margins: community, space and culture. They want to know how the edge method disrupts the flow of curatorial capital in their own areas.

Community Edge: International Artist Exhibitions and Public Education at UCCA. In 2025, UCCA Ullens Center for Contemporary Art in Beijing presented solo exhibitions by several international artists. The solo exhibition "Another Evolution" by Korean-American artist Anika Yi was held from March 22nd to June 15th, focusing on the artist's exploration of human sensory experiences through biological materials and technological means. During the exhibition period, UCCA organized a series of AI image creation workshops, inviting visitors to experience the fun of AI image creation; at the same time, public projects such as artist talks and curator dialogues were also held. The solo exhibition of Swiss artist Pipi Lesther was presented from July 19th to October 19th, and one of the works was a site-specific image installation specially created for the UCCA main exhibition hall, fully utilizing the public areas and unconventional exhibition spaces of the art museum. These public education projects of the international artist exhibitions transformed the audience from observers into participants, making the art museum a node for cross-cultural dialogue and community interaction.

Exploration of the Space is represented by the Suzhou Contemporary Art Museum. As the museum building is still under construction, it has begun the "Space Productivity" project and will organise exhibitions and public education activities in various public areas of the city. In April 2024, the first event at the commercial square of the Olympic Sports Centre had almost 2,000 participants on that day. A total of 8 projects were completed in the year, and more than 40 free public education activities were organised. Thus, the traditional sequence of building a museum first, then organising exhibitions, and finally conducting education has been broken; public education has been separated from the subsidiary function of exhibitions, and a pre-channel for institutions and cities to build social trust has been established [8].

Cultural Periphery: The Swiss Contemporary Comics Exhibition at Shanghai Minsheng Modern Art Museum. From December 2025 to May 2026, the Shanghai Minsheng Modern Art Museum launched the "Interlude of Comics—Swiss Contemporary Comics Art Exhibition", curated by Swiss curator Elionora Bitelli. The exhibition was jointly organized by the Shanghai Minsheng Modern Art Museum, the Swiss Embassy in China, and the Lucerne International Comics Festival. The exhibition featured nearly 500 works by 22 artists from the Swiss German-speaking region, presenting the creative ecosystem of contemporary Swiss comics and illustrations in a systematic manner. The exhibition also focused on the recontextualization process of comics in the art gallery—when these works were removed from the paper and publishing systems and entered the contemporary art

framework, their image structure, narrative style, and media characteristics were reactivated [9]. 2025 marked the 75th anniversary of the establishment of diplomatic relations between China and Switzerland, and the exhibition used image narration as a medium to build a window for cross-cultural dialogue.

The three cases correspond to the same question in three ways: institutional design can adjust the flow of curatorial capital, and one-way dissemination of global knowledge is not the only mode of operation.

6. Path Reconstruction: Public Education Initiated from the Periphery

How will this adjustment be implemented at the level of operation in practice? The following are the four dimensions of the answers.

First, modifications to the knowledge-production process. At present, the curatorial discourse generally presumes a set of universal criteria for assessing a good art exhibition and public education. This set of norms denies the legitimacy of other forms of knowledge. Therefore, we should be able to recognise that local craft traditions, community oral histories, children's game experiences, and the life wisdom of marginalized groups are also cognitive resources worthy of exploration in public education, not merely decorative "cultural backgrounds". Operationally, a community curator invitation mechanism can be established to bring in local knowledge at the start of the exhibition research and include it in the agenda early on, rather than adding it later.

Second, a reduction in participation authority. The old model of "curating for the public" had a single output colour. Although participation has been introduced, the choices available to the public are still relatively limited by the system. The solution put forward by the shared decision-making scheme is to have the public participate in the actual organisation of the exhibition, such as determining the theme and selecting works, and to design an educational process [10]. Institutionally, there should be a permanent position for public representatives and, with the same decision-making power as curators, be included in the decision-making process. Suzhou Contemporary Art Museum started operating before the building was finished, and this case is worth learning from.

Thirdly, the change in values. "Serving the public" appears reasonable, but it is in fact an upward-downward giving mentality. The museum should be seen as living together with marginalised communities, rather than leading from the front [11]. The Standards for evaluating public education need to be revised as well. Besides the number of people participating and how satisfied they are, we also need to know whether the community ties are long-lasting and whether the culture of marginalised groups has been given a platform.

Fourthly, the redirection of capital flow. Curatorial Capital has two traits. Strengthen the brand image of the exhibition and offer some marginal uses for it. Feasible Institutional Designs include establishing a special fund, introducing community representatives to the project review, and incorporating long-term social influence into performance evaluations. The aim of the above measures is not to deny capital logic, but to add another value judgment to it so that the flow of curatorial capital produces social effects other than mere accumulation.

7. Conclusion

Returning to the main question of this paper: How is the curatorial capital being reallocated in public education? Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that the problem is not the contradiction between global and local, but rather a structural imbalance in the flow of curatorial funds. The discourse of globalisation carries a system of implicit knowledge hierarchies, and the local demands are easily co-opted by capital as decorative symbols; although they appear to be in opposition, they actually operate under the same operational framework. To break this cycle, one should not merely seek "equilibrium"; rather, as the foundation of balance lies in the assumption of equality, actual power imbalances have never been addressed.

The purpose of "the margin as a way" in this paper is to find a path for disruption that does not outright defy the current system. The three cases show this possibility in terms of community, space and culture: allowing marginalised groups to speak, turning unconventional places into stages, and providing opportunities for the translation of diverse cultural experiences. The aim of all the above is to enable the redistribution of curatorial capital through institutional design, as it is not uniform.

Of course, these explorations still have some deficiencies in practice. Institutional inertia, capital constraints and the boundaries of the system all limit the scope for the development of marginal practices. But precisely because of this, the problem needs to be continuously discussed and tested rather than being left at the level of concepts.

In the future, other research will also be carried out to explore the working mechanisms of guiding devices for curatorial capital in different institutional environments. After reaching a certain level of visibility, the marginal practices will be organised, and how should they respond to this re-organisation? The answers to the above questions require more cross-case comparisons and extended-period monitoring.

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