

## **Inheritance and innovation: Exhibitions in Museums Between Nature and Culture**

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**Abstract** Natural specimens play an important role in the popular science, and have been the content of civilization heritage in the natural history museum. Chinese museums realized the meanings and have already done in collecting and exhibitions. Not only collecting historical culture relic, they gradually strengthened the collecting trend of natural collection .So do the exhibitions. Museums in China gradually tried many different types of display mode, participatory activities, and they want to put more and more emphasis on the audience experience. The article explained from four aspects: exhibition content, strengthen the natural collection, exact service and the curator to related with Guang Dong Museum ( short for” GDM”) .It has tried many ways to develop the participatory exhibitions in multi-angle and made great effort to display the story of the nature collection. Besides its traditional exhibitions, GDM develops the combination of natural and cultural exhibition to inheritance and innovation.

**Key words:**nature;culture; exhibitions, Guang Dong Museum

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Museums are important palaces for the protection and inheritance of human civilization and bridges connecting the past, the present and the future. Museums are responsible for the acquisition, preservation, display and research of the collected natural and cultural relics. Museums have special function in promoting exchanges and mutual learning between civilizations of the world. It is a non-profit organization, which serves the purpose of education, research and entertainment. Since 2008, most Chinese museums have been open to the public and offered free admission inciting an increased number of visitors to museums in China. The museum has become an important window to public service, and an essential platform for the cultural exchange.

### **1.How to make a good nexus between nature and culture in museums?**

Natural specimens play an important role in the popular science, and have been the content of civilization heritage in the natural history museum. Chinese museums realized the meanings and have already done in collecting and exhibitions. Not only collecting historical culture relic, they gradually strengthened the collecting trend of natural collection. The exhibitions are also adding more natural content. What is the challenge in the future?

### **2.Research Background,**

#### **2.1 Changes in Chinese museums**

There are many changes happened in Chinese museums. Firstly, it is very popular to make a theme exhibition in China these years, which related to one topic such as cloth, jade, Fan etc. It changed the organization system of the exhibition, not only make a period history of collection. That means many natural contents will be introduced. More and more natural specimens are used than before. Secondly, many museums choose the 'curator 'as charging all the thing related with the exhibition. Different curators in different areas made many various exhibitions which chose different angles from even the same topic. With the technology well development, the 'big data' and 'the Intelligent museums' make many museum better serve to audience .so the changings bring the problem that how to make better for Inheritance

and innovation in the museums. Chinese museums are turning from object-centered to people-centered places. Museums' identity as public culture services are furthered highlighted. Museums are sharing with the public collection, exhibitions, as well as education and cultural products.

## 2.2 Linnan culture

Lingnan, also known as Lingbang and Lingwai, mainly includes Guangdong, eastern Guangxi, Hainan, Hong Kong and Macao, south of the Nanling Mountains. Some scholars believe that Lingnan culture is mainly formed by the influence of the indigenous culture of South Vietnam, the orthodox culture of the Central Plains, and the gradually expanding marine culture(zhanglei,1994). For thousands of years, the Lingnan culture and the Central Plains culture have collided and merged, gradually forming the three major ethnic groups of the Han nationality, such as Guangfu, Chaoshan and Hakka. Lingnan culture is divided into three parts: Guangdong culture, Gui culture and Hainan culture. It is especially represented by Cantonese culture, Hakka culture and Chaoshan culture. Lingnan culture has the characteristics of heavy business worship, cultural open, cultural compatibility, etc. It is an important part of Chinese culture and a prominent advantage of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao. It is a kind of region culture.

## 3 Guangdong Museum ways

For these years, Guang Dong Museum ( short for" GDM") has tried many ways to develop the participatory exhibitions in multi-angle and made great effort to display the story of the nature collection.GDM is a comprehensive museum, and it has already hosted the 117 exhibitions since 2010 its new building opening. There were 11 theme exhibitions related to nature which are the audience favorite.

### 3.1 Exhibition content

From *'the survey of Asian Museum' Status Quo and Public Demands'* made by International Council of Museums ASIA-Pacific Alliance(ICOM-ASPAC) in 2013,there is the question 'what is/are the aspect(s) that demonstrate(s)the relevance between museums and environmental protection? '.The most popular choice selected

as the most relevant connection between museum and environmental connection is “diversity of natural and human environment as illustrated by museum collections” 55.9% choices selected .Second choice is “to a certain extent, museums contribute to the protection of cultural heritage. Then followed by “raising public awareness of environment protection via environmentally-themed exhibitions”. Museum collections are mostly gathered in accordance with the institution’s mission and goals in an effort to be comprehensive and systematic. Thus sometimes the objects are regarded as the only surviving relics of nature or human civilization. To put it simply,museums play the role of preserving, protecting natural and cultural heritage while promoting public respect for natural and cultural diversity. The choices saw no clear connection between the relevance of museum and environmental protection and ‘museum’ advantage in promoting environmental protection given the dense visitor flow’ and “preserving and exhibiting collections using environmental-friendly technologies’.

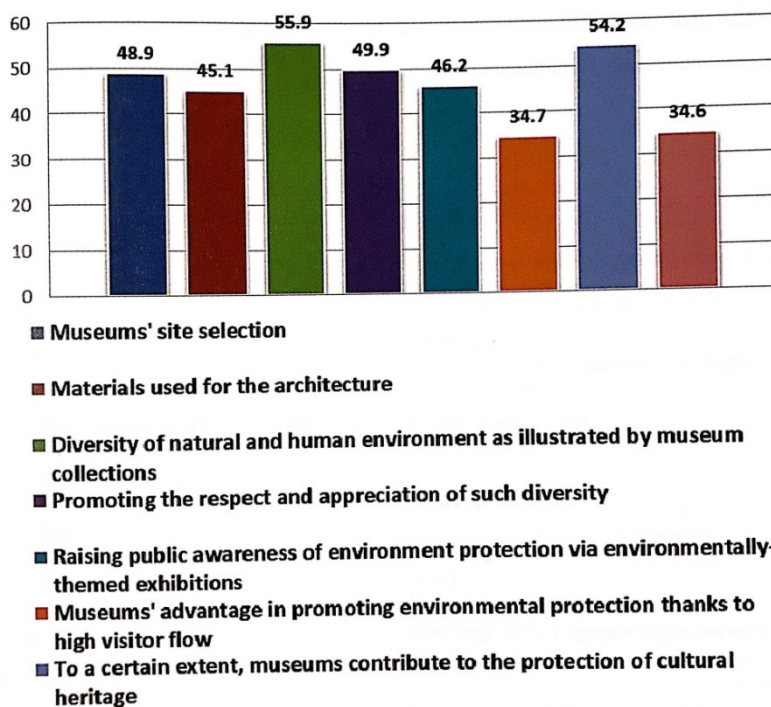


Figure 1 ‘what is/are the aspect(s) that demonstrate(s)the relevance between museums and environmental protection?’.

The museum is an important public cultural institution that focuses on displaying

China's excellent traditional culture and advanced socialist culture. How to do well in museums and tell stories about cultural relics, that is one of the important contents of Chinese museum. After analyzing situation, the data shows that the proportion of visitors to museums reached 40.5% during the Spring Festival in 2019<sup>[2]</sup>, and visiting choice to museum has become one of the most important ways of leisure. As an important place and main window for the dissemination of Lingnan culture, the GDM has received 2 million visitors each year, and about 51% of the audience are the local. The audience group under 35 years old accounted for more than 54%. The closeness to traditional culture is becoming a youth pursuit fashion. Take the Natural Resources Exhibition Hall in GDM, one of the basic exhibitions, as an example. It is divided into seven pavilions. The most popular among the young people is the Aquarium and the Paleontology part; most adults prefer valuable mineral part, which is most popular among Guangzhou and Pearl River Delta audiences. The Cantonese prefer the part of Chinese herbal medicine because it is closely related with their daily life. This is a phenomenon of regional culture. The phenomenon proved the audience would be more interest the content of nature and culture in exhibition. Besides its traditional exhibitions, GDM develops the combination of natural and cultural exhibition, such as the four minerals in linnan area, tea culture, lingnan culture of litchi, secrets of smell and culture in fragrance. Zoo of animal style of artworks, this exhibition used the characteristics of the cultural relics and first made for children in China 2016. The content related with nature make audience more enjoyable.

### 3.2 Strengthen the natural collection

The three techniques key to natural history museum is dioramas, the display of specimens, and conversation prompts in the exhibition. Dioramas have become more and more stylized in recent years, with abstracted ecosystems serving as foreground for collections objects rather than mixing reality with prop(kaka blond,2018).If the room space and fund are so limit that some of the exhibition might out of the dioramas. But the dioramas make the content vivid. Museums take the initiative to improve their protection and display capacity by using modern science and technology. With the collection at the core of our job, it need be more details to show

by digitization, 3-D printing, VR etc. it even encourages audience touch the collection. (Graham Black,2005)More promotions could be introduced in the exhibition. If a comprehensive museum wants to show more meaning content, it still need to make good use of the three techniques key.

The core of our work is the collection. In terms of origin, the collections are mainly from collecting and purchase, donation, exchange, allocation, transfer, stock, excavation and selection. In the comprehensive museum, the natural collection always takes the less part. With more specimens, we will use them in more situation. The process of collecting is always not easy, and it cost lots of time, sources and so on. GDM has already collected specimens since 2005.It began the work later than many natural history museums. And now it has already more than 46,000 piece natural collection. From the figure2, it shows the specimens number is growing every year and the fund is not always enough for it (GDM natural specimens are not made by itself). As the collection increased, the more job could move on.

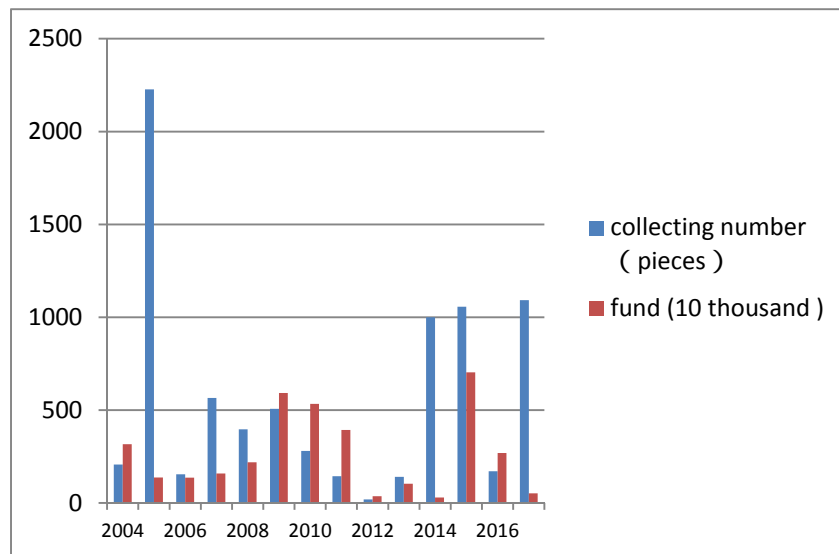


Figure 2.The nature collection increasing in GDM

### 3.3Exact service

Different audience has different choices in the museums. The museum afford different type exhibition. Meantime it needs to be comfortable and have many changes to serve the audience. This exhibition concept and content changed is priority to with cultural relic's exhibition at the same time, popular with teenagers. GDM is used in the special subway, shopping mall and community to make more people to

engage its nature exhibition. It organized the children to play dramas and draw the meaning things in exhibitions in order to a participatory museum .A series of cultural creative products specially designed by the GDM come out in order to promote development of creative cultural products to “enliven “objects in the whole country. Besides, it made an exploration hall in the airport which located in Guangzhou Baiyun airport to show and make tourists to get knowledge the GDM’s exhibitions. The GDM opened up the reading space and attracted the audience by reading the museum's published materials. It also added a way and window to understand the Lingnan culture. In order to the understanding Lingnan culture and familiar with the young audience, the way of museum development is even more important.

#### 3.4 The key- the curator

The ‘curator’ system has become popular in China. If the curator has the natural and culture connected, he/she will make the exhibition like that. Most of the employees in GDM have certain learning ability and basic cultural knowledge, and more than 32% of the employees have a certain research, this help with a better understanding of the field of their own learning, while little knowledge of other areas. President Xi Jinping stressed that we must adhere to the people-centered development thinking, especially the profoundly pointed out that we must "continue to promote the all-round development of people". Therefore, as a curator, he should have a comprehensive and basic understanding of Lingnan culture in GDM. Combined with collection own characteristics, the curators pay attention to both cultural content and refined natural elements in principle in exhibitions. After doing these, exhibitions could widen the content and meanings, and could help audience better experience.

At the end of 2018, there were 149 employees and 53% of employees under the age of 35 in GDM. The museum youth played an active role in research related to collections, collection protection, and cultural and creative product development. For the inheritance and innovation of exhibition forms and systems. In the second half of 2012, the competitive selection and exhibition system was implemented, and about 54 young curators were produced, accounting for curators. The total number is 39.7%. Under this system, every employee may be a curator and a communicator of

traditional culture. Therefore, it is more important for museum workers, especially young people, to educate themselves about Lingnan culture. Developing platforms to harness, prioritize, and present a diversity of voices around content does not mean giving all the power to visitors. Platform designers—curators should grant users a few specific, designed opportunities—to create their own content, to prioritize the messages that resonate best for them personally—in the context of a larger overall ecosystem.( Nina Simon,2010)

The GDM pays attention to the opportunities for the common development of the youth in Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, and meets the challenges. According to the data of the sixth national census in China, the “popular area” and “the most populous area” in the country are all in Guangdong Province. At the end of 2018, the Government officially issued the project "Guangdong Medium- and Long-Term Youth Development Plan (2018-2025)", which listed in the "Promoting Youth Exchange and Integration in Guangdong, Hong Kong, Macao and Dawan District" and deepen the implementation of the "Youth Concentric Plan" for Hong Kong and Macau. Young people come to Guangdong more conveniently for studying, working and living. Guangdong is in the golden age of Lingnan culture development now. Through the project, the museum youth can develop Lingnan culture with more opportunity and broad platform. Wei Jun, director of the GDM, believes that to form the cultural identity of the Project, first of all, it must be attractive enough. At the same time, it is planning to lead the Hong Kong and Macau Museum to make the exhibition collaborative and jointly launch the “Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao Museum Pass”. The establishment of the “Dawan District Museum Alliance” will continue to strengthen its own construction and enhance its attractiveness in order to better develop Lingnan culture .

#### 4.Conclusion

In the past, the GDM is lack of originality of exhibition, low utilization rate of the collection exhibition, and insufficient interlibrary cooperation. The characteristics of the museum youth determine the combination of museum work and Lignan cultural



development, and promote the inheritance of Chinese excellent culture. In addition to completing daily basic work, the employees in museums need to strengthen their ideological construction, interest cultivation, and experience Lingnan culture in many aspects, broaden their learning, and maintain a high spiritual state and enthusiasm. The construction of the Greater Bay Area of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao is full of opportunities for the youth development and construction of the museum. As a platform for youth development, the museum provides a relatively free and relaxed environment and system, providing support to the youth through human and material resources, and ensuring its development and effective scientific management. The exhibition content, the natural collection, the exact services are all decided by the curator in GDM. So the persons are the most important. The problems need to be further considered and solved: the balance of contradictions brought about by regional cultural development, such as ensuring the balance between Lingnan regional culture and current big culture; how to balance cultural inheritance with business work and to coordinate and develop together; the second problem is that cultivating young people's personal interests often takes time to accumulate, how to scientifically construct a training system, and make them healthy and stable development, forming an effective evaluation system, this process still needs a certain time to verify.

Above all, Maybe GDM is not the most advanced, but it is innovative, smart and wisdom idea of the museum between nature and culture. By now, GDM had made some good result by participatory and it will make great effort in the future and have a better view.

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