

Study on Text Installation Art of Zen — Taking the Heart Sutra as an Example

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ABSTRACT

By analyzing the artistic conception of Zen in traditional literature and art and the connotation of Heart Sutra, this study draws the characteristics and specific manifestations of Zen. Afterwards, considering the existing problems of the text of Heart Sutra and taking artistic conception of Zen as the main body, this study analyzes the characteristics and development of text installation art, discusses how text and space can present Zen in text installation art.

Keywords: *Artistic conception of Zen, Zen, Text installation art, Heart Sutra.*

1. INTRODUCTION

Considering ups and downs in life, Zen catkins will be stained with dust and mud, and people will have joy, anger, sorrow and joy. Undergoing the separation, people can cross the boundless sea of suffering and enter the boundless bliss when they take Zen as the way. Zen is all-embracing. Since its introduction into China, Zen of Buddhism has had a great impact on Chinese aesthetics, Chinese spirit and Chinese thought. As a result, even though not all people understand Zen and practise meditation, they have their own understanding of Zen, which is mainly reflected in the works of literati and poets, and naturally also in the Heart Sutra, the guiding principle of Buddhist doctrine. In the text installation art, there is still a lack of attention and discussion on Zen. In addition to the characteristics of pictographic symbols, it is suggested to integrate artistic conception of Zen to enrich the cultural and spiritual connotation of Chinese characters. If people want to understand Zen in the text installation art of Zen, Zen must be the guide of its content and form.

2. ARTISTIC CONCEPTION OF ZEN

2.1 *Artistic Conception of Zen in Traditional Literature and Art*

"The hair is white today and the flowers are red last year. The beauty of the flower is as fleeting as the dew in the morning. The fragrance of the flowers, chasing the night wind, drifted everywhere. Why do they wait until the branches and leaves fall, and then know the truth of phantom?" In a poem "looking at peonies" by Yin Yi, a poet of the Tang Dynasty, the Zen meaning of life can be learned by blooming and falling flowers. Zen is reflected in poems, paintings, gardens, and the hearts of Chinese people in the process of time going by. According to Li Bai's resentment, "the beauty rolled the bead curtain and frowned. However, she torn, and it's unknown who she hated." "Since the friend set sail, it had been a month. It was late autumn, and the strong autumn wind blew from the Weishui River, leaving leaves everywhere in Chang'an City." This is Jia Dao's poem. Beauty tears and Autumn River are the most beautiful features of Chinese poetry recognized by the world. They are not only words, but also things beyond words, "implied meanings and sounds", and aesthetic experience beyond words, sounds and colors.

Zen in the field of painting often comes from the place where the painter has not drawn, such as the waterless water in Ma Yuan's painting of

fishing alone beside the cold river, and the sparse forest and stones in Ni Zan's painting of fishing village after autumn. The description of the object is beyond its representation. In other words, artistic creation comes from the nature, but the beauty of nature cannot automatically become the beauty of art. Although the four monks in the early Qing Dynasty had different birth circumstances, they all became monks to study Zen. They sketched their original minds with simple brush techniques and showed their images on the paper. Only then could there be "less ink and more tears". In their respective lives, they realized the artistic conception of Zen and obtained painting fun. In their view, the artistic conception of Zen and painting fun are the same, and there is no difference.

In Chinese gardens, the spatial relationship between the big and the small is always contained. The artistic conception of Zen in the garden is mainly expressed in the gardening thought of "mutual tolerance between Mustard and Mount Sumeru" — creating a space realm of "heaven and earth in cage and form inside" with its own space. Whether it is the beautiful private gardens in the south or the grand royal gardens in the north, they all focus on the transformation of space, and the scenery is moving in terms of panes, doors and walls, stone and water. People travel in the scenery, feeling the blooming and falling of flowers and the rolling clouds, and understanding themselves in turn.

2.2 Artistic Conception of Zen in the Heart Sutra

The artistic conception of Zen comes from Zen. When people talk about Zen, it is necessary to talk about its relationship with Buddhism. Hu Jiayang once said: "Zen is the product of sinicization of Buddhism, or even the product of Zhuangzi thought on Buddhism." [1] Buddhism had been introduced into China since the end of the Eastern Han Dynasty. At first, it was Indian Buddhism. In the process of spreading, Buddhism with Chinese characteristics has been formed. "Since the Tang Dynasty, the connotation and extension of Zen had been fully enriched and expanded" [2]. What is the artistic conception of Zen? First of all, it is necessary to answer what the Zen is. "Zen is Jhāna or dhyāna, meaning contemplation in Chinese" [3]. According to the first sentence of the Heart Sutra "observing the Bodhisattvas, practicing Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra for a long time, seeing that the five elements are delusive, and overcoming

all hardships", it can be seen that the fundamental idea of the Heart Sutra is to use Prajna to carry out clear and free meditation, and obtain freedom and liberation through observing the phantom. Prajna is usually translated as wisdom, but the connotation in the original text is a broader concept than wisdom. The key word in the Heart Sutra is "phantom", which can also be called the characteristic of Zen. Not only is the word "phantom" repeated, but what behind the repetition is its profound idea of "phantom". The first time that the Heart Sutra involves "phantom" is to clarify that "the five elements are phantom". The five elements are color, reception, thought, form and consciousness, which bind the body and mind and cover the Buddha nature. It is believed that it is people's materiality that causes them to fall into deep suffering. Once the five elements are all empty, the suffering will be covered. "All dharmas are empty." Only by clearing the six roots, eliminating the six sense objects, and calming the six senses can the shackles be lifted, and it is clear that all the consciousness and the clear understanding without any objects can be shed. At this time, people can realize the realm of "no life, no death, no dirt, no purification, no increase, and no decrease".

2.3 Expressing the Artistic Conception of Zen

Whether it is Zen in Chinese traditional literature and art, or the "phantom" of Zen in the Heart Sutra, Zen is reflected in poetry, transformation of the realm, the mind, and the meaning. "According to Zeng Jia's research, it is believed that the ethereal aesthetic conception of Zen is ultimate pursuit." [3] As the saying goes, "the better the music, the more silent, the better the image, the more ethereal", the "phantom" does not mean that there is nothing in the space, but that it is real in the outer space. The phantom is the representation of the world. From this, it can be concluded that to express the artistic conception of Zen is to pursue the phantom and "infinity", so that the viewer can feel the infinite space-time outside the limited material world. According to the Buddhist verse "one flower, people can understand the world from one flower and obtain thousands of wisdom from one leaf, showing the mystery of Zen.

3. TEXT INSTALLATION ART

Duchamp's "spring" helps the world re-examine what art is, and art is no longer limited to traditional norms. This work is considered by most people as a

watershed in the transition from tradition to contemporary art media. Anthony Janson, an American art critic, has made a metaphor for installation art. It's believed that the world is a kind of "text", through which the ideas can be conveyed, and the intention of installation representation has different understanding among different people. This metaphor reveals the artistic significance of installation art and other art categories. "Installation art refers to the effective selection, utilization, transformation, combination and installation of ready-made materials or comprehensive materials by artists in a specific space-time environment, so as to form a display individual or group with rich spiritual and cultural connotation". [4] This shows that installation art is rich and diverse in its artistic language, and it is not indefinite to the media. However, among many types of installation art, the installation art created by means of words is a special one. In the development history of installation art in China, art works inspired by words began to appear in the early 1980s. In the discussion of the possibility of writing, many of the works created by these artists are transformed into a symbolic presentation in the form processing. These artists aim to awaken people's national crisis consciousness and make people feel the possible problems in the cultural exchange between China and the West. The most representative artist is Xu Bing. Xu Bing's most representative work "the analysis of the world — the last volume of the century" (or sealed book) (as shown in "Figure 1") condensed the painstaking efforts of the creator and took more than four years to finally complete the content of 4000 characters. At first glance, this work may be mistaken for a collection of rare Chinese characters. In fact, the author has made a full study of the strokes and structure of Chinese characters, and forged a fake collection of Chinese characters by splitting and reorganizing these parts. If people ask about its meaning, or meaninglessness is its real meaning, it is that "taking time to express the dignity of Chinese characters" in Xu Bing's words. In addition, Xu Bing and other artists continue to explore new possibilities of combining text and installation, and create more art works with text as the core.

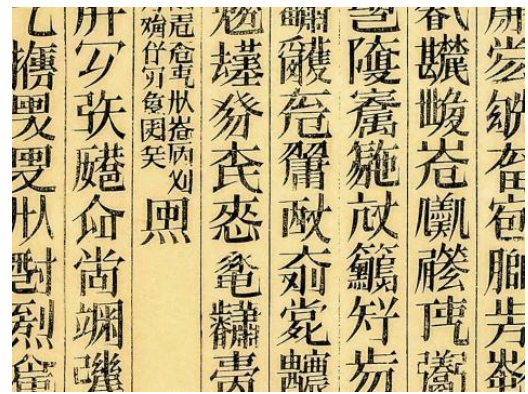


Figure 1 Xu Bing's "sealed book".

4. CURRENT SITUATION OF MODERN TEXT OF HEART SUTRA

The Heart Sutra is also known as the Prajnaparamita Hridaya Sutra. It has 260 words in total, which is the most important Buddhist Sutra. Besides, it is not only short and concise in length, but also the guiding principle of Buddhism. And it only uses a hundred words to contain the essence of 200000 songs and 6.4 million words of the Daihannya. Therefore, due to such advantages, the Heart Sutra is the most widely spread and well-known Scripture among Buddhist Sutras comparing with Buddhist classics such as the Diamond Sutra and the Saddharmapundarika Sutra. In the process, the corresponding purpose is often achieved by copying. The purpose is either to practice calligraphy, or to pursue meditation and stability, or to understand Buddhism.

As the above purposes are all in pursuit of the actual function of the text of Heart Sutra, they view the text from the perspective of the writer, and do not discuss what the Heart Sutra text itself can bring to the viewer from the perspective of the text, so the design of the Heart Sutra text is much inferior to the text design in the commercial field. In this study, the researcher summarizes the shortcomings of the text design of the Heart Sutra in three aspects. First, most of the Heart Sutras texts are only written. Even if the author admits the Zen, it is still very rare to write text on the paper; second, most of the Heart Sutras texts are mainly used to perform different calligraphy styles. Although they cover everything from seal script to cursive script, they lack the transformation of modernity; third, most of the Heart Sutra texts are only explored on the plane, lacking the discussion of environmental factors, that is, the environment that can highlight

the Zen. The same words will give people different feelings on different occasions.

5. CONVEYING SPIRIT THROUGH "FORM" WITH THE INSTALLATION OF HEART SUTRA

5.1 Text Used in Installation Art of Heart Sutra

In the exploration on the installation art of the Heart Sutra, its characters must be an indispensable part, and it will have an impact on the overall installation with its core content. Therefore, the design of the characters must conform to the artistic conception of Zen expressed in the Heart Sutra.

5.1.1 Unification: Representing the Artistic Conception with Forms

Zen is invisible but words are tangible. It is necessary to convey the artistic conception of Zen with forms. Words are always full of information. In the age when science and technology are not so developed, if people want to communicate with each other thousands of miles away, the most common medium of communication is letter. At the beginning of the letter, a sentence like "seeing words is like meeting, opening letters and relaxing yourself" is often written, that is, it is hoped that the addressee will see this letter as if he had seen the writer personally and show a smile. In addition, there will be such sayings as "letters being alive" and "the style being the man". All these show that the information in the text can not only perform the function of communication, but also display the image and temperament. The integration of the Heart Sutra and the installation art must show the artistic conception of Zen from the shape of the text.

If people have the Zen in their hearts, they will understand the meaning of the word. If it is said that learning regular script needs to learn the styles of Yan and Liu, and learning cursive script needs to understand the styles of Zhang, so that the writing of the Heart Sutra needs to learn from famous calligraphers. Ouyang Xun, Zhao Mengfu, Wen Zhengming, Shen Du, Qian Long, Wu Zhen, Yu Youren, Wu Changshuo and others have all written the Heart Sutra. However, their writings of the Heart Sutra can't reflect the realm of Zen. The characteristics of phantom are mainly expressed by the spatial relationship among characters and the pure use of black and white. It is more personal

style. Its artistic conception of Zen is mainly presented by combining with the meaning of characters. Among the many masters, the text of Heart Sutra written by Li Shutong was of significant artistic conception of Zen, which was related to his experience, talent and original heart. He was once a master of literature, calligraphy, fine arts and music. Later, he became a monk, and his name was Hong Yi. A Buddhist heart has three characteristics in the writing of Heart Sutra, as shown in "Figure 2". First, the fonts are not completely arranged neatly, and the characters are scattered and arranged in random manner; second, the connection of strokes is relatively loose, and the spacing between words and lines is a little distant from other written typesetting; third, the line is round and soft, and the stroke is scaled to a small size. In the installation of the Heart Sutra, attention should also be paid to the alienation of strokes and spacing, so as to better shape the artistic conception of Zen.

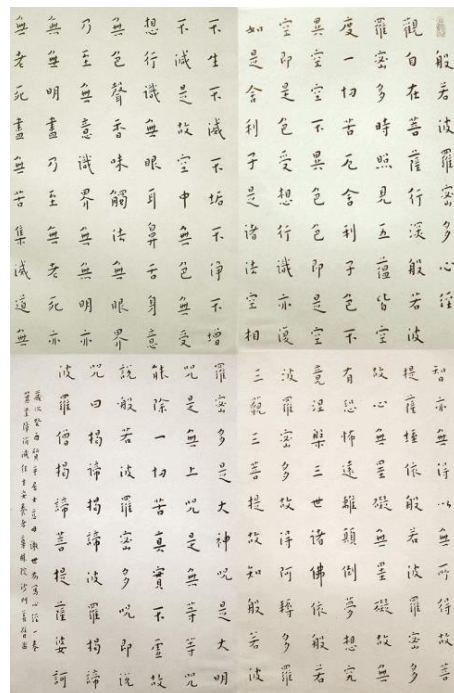


Figure 2 Li Shutong's writing of Heart Sutra.

All dharmas refer to phantom, and geometry is Prajna. Compared with the implicit expression of Zen in the traditional Heart Sutra, the modern design should extract the key points from the Heart Sutra to make the Zen more intuitively expressed. Many designers have also discussed this. For example, Sun Qi's font design of the Heart Sutra is based on the traditional Chinese characters and

combined with the line form of geometric figures, as shown in "Figure 3". At the same time, it integrates some characteristics of seal script, with both ancient charm and artistic conception of Zen. Liang Xiaoguang's writing of the Heart Sutra is composed of squares, triangles, circles, straight lines and arcs. As shown in "Figure 4", it shows the wisdom of Buddhism with the myriad changes of the most basic elements. In addition, many designers apply geometry to design, which is also applicable to the installation of the Heart Sutra. All shapes in the world are formed based on the most basic geometric changes, which is so-called "unification". And the geometric form is also different from the curve composition full of human feelings, which is consistent with the requirements of "free from human desires and passions" of Zen. When the text of the Heart Sutra is highly symbolic and abstract, its form is greater than the function that should exist, that is, readability. What remains is the artistic conception of Zen when facing the installation of Heart Sutra. (as shown in "Figure 5")



Figure 4 Liang Xiaoguang's text design of Heart Sutra.

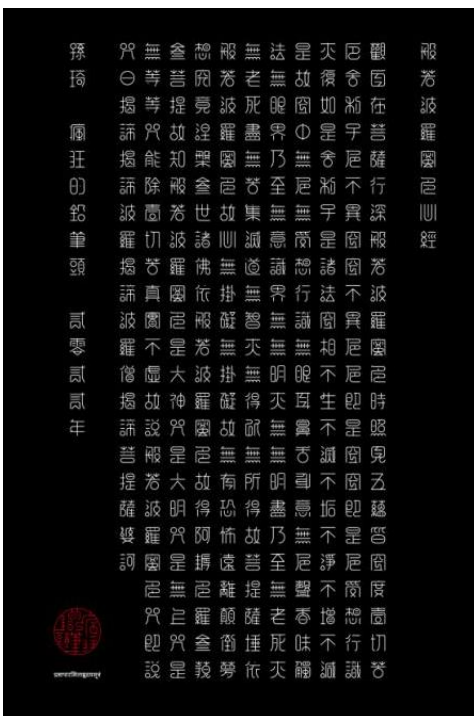


Figure 3 Sun Qi's text design of Heart Sutra.

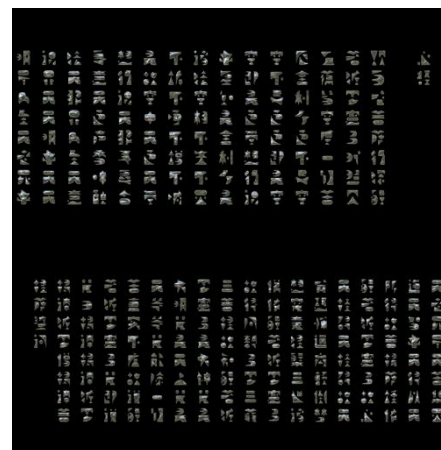


Figure 5 Text design of Heart Sutra.

5.1.2 *Nirnimitta: Viewing the Artistic Conception of Zen with Quality*

All reality is a phantom, and all phantoms are real. What quality is phantom? Looking across the world, water constitutes everything, and the world originates from water. This material is colorless and invisible, which is closest to the nature of ethereal. As shown in "Figure 6", the "Sutras with water — Buddhist Chanting" consists of water as part of the Scripture, which varies in size and has an artistic conception of Zen. In addition, the exploration of Zen materials is less. Some designers use dead branches as materials to compose the whole Heart Sutra, as shown in "Figure 7". The branches are

different, like the changes of everything, and full of a sense of tranquility and simplicity.

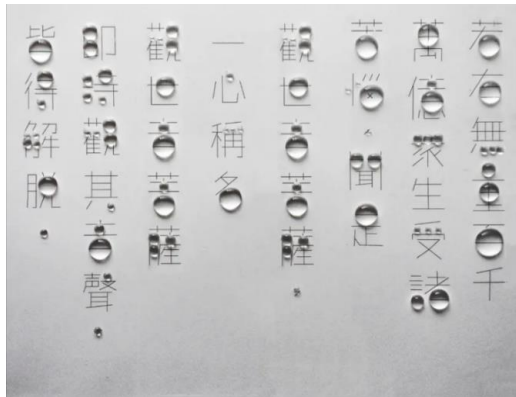


Figure 6 Sutras with water — Buddhist Chanting.



Figure 7 Deadwood design of the Heart Sutra.

It's said that "the face is the index of the heart", which means that the things a person sees, or the understanding, interpretation and perception of things are determined by the heart. Is there a material that can reflect the heart? With a Buddhist mind, people can observe all things, gain insight into the emptiness of the world, and then turn their mind into a Buddha. This kind of meditation coincides with the mirror. Zen believes that "heart" is the origin of all things and the core structure of natural ecology. The nature of all things generated by "heart" is phantom. Just as the world is born and gone, the form is invisible but the heart is unchanged. Zen, which is refined to be pure, simple and beautiful, can make the viewer better reflect on themselves through the use of mirror materials (as shown in "Figure 8"). This is consistent with the core of Zen. Those who pursue Zen are passionate about and worship the Buddha and seek for the general idea of Buddhism, but they are actually questioning themselves and pursuing the inner self. If the mirror surface is uneven, the mapped things will be in contrast with the real things. What is the truth and what is the false? It may end up with no

appearance, and the true and the false are just illusory.



Figure 8 The mirror script of the Heart Sutra.

5.2 Installation Art Space of the Heart Sutra

In the exploration of the installation art of the Heart Sutra, as the space and environment in which it is placed, it plays an important role in creating the corresponding atmosphere and making people in the space as observers enter the ethereal realm of Zen. When people enter the school and teaching building, the bell after class and the noise of the playground can make people feel the Youth March. After entering the hospital, the smell of disinfection water, the bed and the light can make people feel the variation of life. Different environments give people different feelings, so it is very important to discuss the design of environmental space in the whole installation.

5.2.1 Leaving Blank Space: Keeping the Artistic Conception of Zen with Open Space

"Space design is manifested as the idea and method of arranging exhibits and bears the important task of effectively connecting concepts and objects" [6]. It is said that "architecture is solidified music and music is flowing architecture", the space of the Heart Sutra should be "solidified poetry and three-dimensional painting of Zen". To inject the artistic conception of Zen into this

"painting", it is necessary to firmly grasp the key of "leaving blank". The charm of the blank space lies in the emptiness of the blank space, and the artistic conception of Zen also belongs to the emptiness, which also needs self-consciousness to fill it.

Leaving blank space needs to focus on the size relationship. In order to reflect the supremacy of divine power in the space with religious needs, it is often particularly obvious in the wide space, the arrangement of key points and the symmetrical application. These characteristics can create a solemn and religious atmosphere with a certain sense of oppression by relying on the line of sight. The spatial structure of the main hall of the Buddhist temple is of great reference value. The most common structure is a large hall with a large Buddha statue placed in the center. For the Main Shrine Hall, "the hall space module is centralized. The hall space size varies extremely large, but the sum of the second and top rooms is not as wide as that of the first room. The design of the auxiliary steps in the hall forms the effect of interspersed compact and rhythmic space." [5] Steve Jobs once said: "Zen honed his ability to appreciate intuition, taught him to filter out any other unnecessary things that could distract time and energy, and cultivated an aesthetic concept based on Minimalism." In his own home, a large amount of blank space and few daily necessities can also show his thoughts on Zen (as shown in "Figure 9"). For the installation design of the Heart Sutra, the size of the space is also left blank. As shown in "Figure 10", the main text of the Heart Sutra is placed on the central table to attract the attention of the viewer with a huge volume and also give people a sense of loftiness. The vast space of the rest gives enough space for reverie, so that the participants can face the quiet void and meditate, "understand the subtle artistic conception of Zen in the color phase with a smile". [6]



Figure 9 Steve Jobs' home.

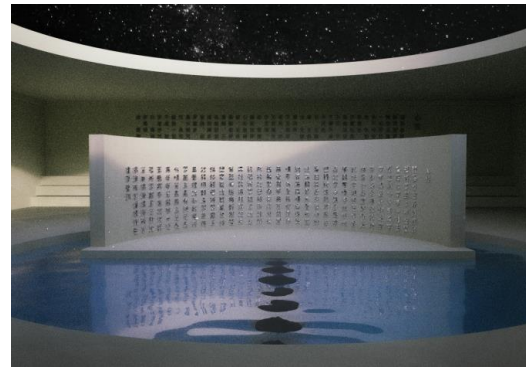


Figure 10 Installation Environment of the Heart Sutra.

5.2.2 *Shielding: Calming the Mind with the Purity*

Considering this point, it is necessary to filter out visual interference and sound interference in the space design, so as to achieve the harmony and unity of the subject and the external environment of the object and achieve spiritual detachment and peace. The annoyance is removed, people's hearts will be pure, and the design concept is reflected through simple building materials and simple and generous modeling.

It is suggested to eliminate the complexity. Viewers walk in the space to brush off the dust of modern cities, and put the mind in the ethereal and beautiful place at that moment. The interior space of the building on the second horizontal axis of Shuiyue Temple in Suining County is enclosed by imitation wood metal grille. Simple clean lines and styles are used to weaken the boundary between indoor and outdoor, so that human activities and ecological environment are harmonious, and the beautiful feeling of nature is expressed in Suining County (as shown in "Figure 11"). The Shuiyue Dojo of the Nongchan Temple in Taipei City is composed of fair faced concrete, without any other materials and structures. Compared with traditional temple buildings, the influence factors of structure, color and decoration are eliminated, and a simple appearance is displayed to the public, achieving an effect like washing away lead (as shown in "Figure 12"). The installation space of the Heart Sutra is only made of concrete (as shown in "Figure 13"). Instead of complicated decoration, it pursues a simple material that is closer to the essence of Zen, and does not set other objects in the space. It focuses on the center of the space and meditates on Zen through the mirror of the Heart Sutra.

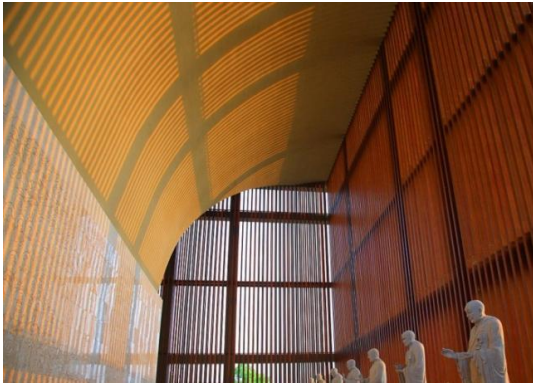


Figure 11 Shuiyue Temple in Suining County.



Figure 12 Shuiyue Dojo in Nongchan Temple.

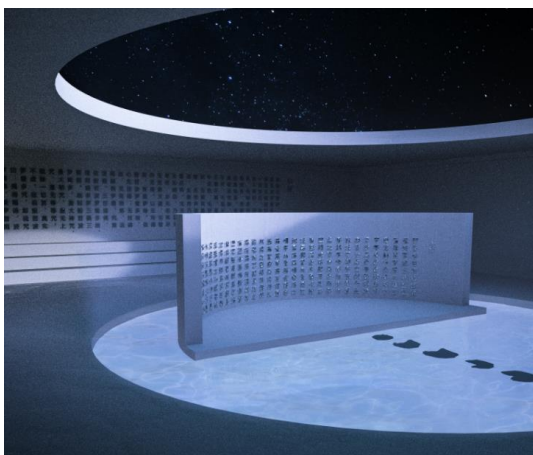


Figure 13 Installation space of the Heart Sutra.

In addition, if people want to calm down, it is suggested to design the sound insulation of the space in addition to having the ability to "live in the human environment without the noise of cars and horses". In the space, people need to pay attention to the structural tightness, thicken the walls and windows, and apply sound insulation materials. In

this way, the viewer will be naturally calm when entering the space, and can get the feeling of "everything being empty" and "life being like a dream" or the attitude of "following fate and being far away" and "being detached and free" in the connection and relationship between people, people and things, and people and nature.

6. CONCLUSION

Zen was originally developed from Buddhism and then integrated into Chinese culture. Whether it is poetry, songs, or calligraphy, painting and gardens, Zen runs through them. As a guiding principle of Buddhist Scripture, the Heart Sutra contains the artistic conception of Zen. Whether it is the traditional culture or the content of the Heart Sutra, Zen takes emptiness as its state, and the sense of infinity has become a typical feature of Zen. To incorporate the artistic conception of Zen into installation art, the most important thing is to form a good connection among words, Zen and space, so as to make Zen into a book, express Zen with books, and transform Zen with context.

In writing design, in order to express the artistic conception of Zen with form, it is necessary to make the pen have the artistic conception of Zen, and use geometry to form the illusory wisdom of Prajna. To view the artistic conception of Zen with the quality, the universe is absorbed into it with the mirror material of quality and mind. The viewer seems to be in reality and unreal, and understands the Buddhist principle that all dharmas are empty. In the installation design of the Heart Sutra, the text will be changed from profound to free and easy, and the rigidity will be changed into soft, focusing on the irritability and anger of the body, and then moving to a deeper or more basic level. In the space design, it is necessary to pay attention to the blank and place the ancient Buddha in the space. To calm down with the meditation, it is suggested to get rid of external interference. With space, it can clear away karma and delusions. With pure mind, people can meditate. At that moment, people's minds will gradually calm down and reach the state of emptiness in which all natural things are integrated. Finally, from the field to the word, from the word to the field, people can appreciate the Zen of "viewing the reality as the phantom", and finally return to nature.

The phantom realm of Zen is to get rid of ostentation and to show a simple appearance in form. Although simplicity is the method, the connotation is not the purpose of simplicity, but

rich and abundant. It is just the so-called "in-depth simplicity" that is the way to spread the artistic conception.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

This paper is independently completed by Yunchuan Liu.

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