

The Discussion of the Influence of Public Art on the Cultural Status of Filipino Community in Hong Kong

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Abstract: The topic of public art and the role of public art in enhancing the cultural status of the Filipino community in Hong Kong is significant. This paper begins by introducing the Filipino community in Hong Kong, outlining its contributions to the city's economic and social structure as well as the difficulties it has had assimilating into Hong Kong society and dealing with issues like discrimination, cultural identity, poverty, and living conditions. Using specific examples, this article analyzes how public art may be a tool to encourage social and cultural development as well as how it might improve the cultural standing of the Filipino population in Hong Kong. The Filipino community in Hong Kong faces challenges related to cultural identity and social standing. They have made significant contributions to the city's development but have a tenuous social standing, often working in low-wage jobs with limited prospects for growth. And the community also faces difficult living conditions. The article as a whole emphasizes the value of public art in fostering cultural identity and fostering a more inclusive society. Additionally, it makes recommendations for how to change the current situation and the issues facing the Filipino community in Hong Kong, including defending their rights and interests and fostering their assimilation into Hong Kong's social culture.

Keywords: Filipino community, cultural status, public art, Hong Kong

1. Introduction

The Filipino community in Hong Kong, the largest ethnic minority with approximately 130,000 people, faces challenges in terms of cultural status and a sense of belonging. Despite their significant contributions to the city's economy and social fabric, Filipinos have a relatively low cultural status and struggle with intimacy in public spaces. Local artists aim to change this through public art, which can support social and cultural development. Artists like Zheng Bo collaborate with the Filipino community, creating socially engaged art that promotes community participation and cultural exchange. This approach fosters cultural pride, belonging, and addresses social issues, making it a valuable form of public art. This article first comprehends the history of the Filipino community in Hong Kong. An introduction to the Filipino communities' history in Hong Kong may contribute to a better understanding of not only the current difficulties and challenges they are facing but also how public art plays its role in elevating the communities' cultural status. By understanding the history of the Filipino community, we can better understand the role of public art in elevating the cultural status of the Filipino community in Hong Kong, and Hong Kong artist Zheng Bo has made an effort to do

so [1]. Moreover, Hong Kong artist Zheng Bo sends a powerful message to Hong Kong with his work *Happy Meal and Sing for Her*: A diversified society is excellent, so Hong Kong has to keep advancing the Filipino community, which has low social status and weak cultural influence. This paper uses specific cases to explore the role of public art in enhancing the cultural status of the Filipino community in Hong Kong.

In conclusion, the purpose of this essay is to examine the issue of how to improve the cultural status of the Filipino community in Hong Kong society through public art. As the Filipino community in Hong Kong faces many challenges and problems, this paper analyzes specific cases to explore the role of public art in enhancing the cultural status of the Filipino community in Hong Kong and proposes measures to intervene in the current situation. Through the research in this paper, the importance of public art in society and the cultural status of the Filipino community in Hong Kong can be better demonstrated.

2. The Cultural Status of the Filipino Community in Hong Kong

The cultural identity of the Filipino population in Hong Kong is challenged, yet some artists, such as Zheng Bo and Jaffa Lam, are utilizing their work to spread awareness and spur social change. Looking back at Hong Kong society, the history of the Filipino community in Hong Kong can be traced back to the early 20th century, when some Filipinos came to Hong Kong to work in low-paying jobs. The Filipino community in Hong Kong has made significant contributions to the city's building and economic development over time by progressively developing its own social network and cultural identity [2]. However, they have a tenuous social standing in Hong Kong. Filipino immigrants in Hong Kong typically work in low-wage, labor-intensive jobs with few career options and prospects for growth. At the same time, these are also some low-income positions in society, which makes it difficult for them to improve their social status. A culture of marginalization and low social status has led to the marginalization and exclusion of community members in Hong Kong society, who are facing economic and social pressures.

The Filipino community in Hong Kong frequently struggles with issues related to cultural identity as a result of living abroad. They can strike a balance between Filipino culture and Hong Kong society, maintain their cultural identity, and integrate into Hong Kong society at the same time, such as by learning Cantonese and Hong Kong culture. However, due to language and cultural differences, as well as the marginalization of Filipino culture in Hong Kong society, some members of the Filipino community in Hong Kong may face social discrimination and discriminatory treatment, affecting their life and work and making it difficult for them to integrate into Hong Kong society [3].

In addition, the Filipino community in Hong Kong faces rather difficult living conditions. Due to the low-paying jobs and high cost of living, the Filipino community in Hong Kong often lives on a shoestring. They usually live in small accommodations and face problems of low income, high rent, and medical coverage. These stressful living conditions make the Filipino community face many difficulties in Hong Kong [4]. There may also be disparities in education and health care services, which have an impact on the health of the children and families of the Filipino community. Logically, low economic income and economic status generally lead to a decline in social status, reducing the Filipino community's cultural influence [5].

However, some creatives have recognized the reality of the marginalization of the Filipino community in Hong Kong society and have used their work to examine and respond to these issues. These artists, such as Zheng Bo's *Sing for Her* and Jaffa Lam's *Chasing an Elusive Nature*, portray the concerns that the Filipino community in Hong Kong is facing through the creation of exquisite works of art, raising the community's awareness and concern about these issues. By utilizing the power of art to inspire social change and find solutions to these issues, he highlights the struggles and concerns of the Filipino community in Hong Kong in a distinctive way [6].

Therefore, there are several issues and gaps that the Filipino community in Hong Kong has that need to be intervened in. The two artists previously stated want to use their artistic creations to spread awareness of the challenges and marginalization the Filipino community in Hong Kong experiences. They want to encourage people to act and solve these issues, such as the low socio-cultural standing of Filipinos in Hong Kong, through exhibiting and expressing their artwork. In the end, they want to better the lives of Filipinos living in Hong Kong and promote and elevate Filipino culture's prominence there.

3. Analysis of the Cultural Status of Local Hong Kong Artists Using Public Art to Intervene in the Filipino Community

Public art is a powerful medium for those of Filipino descent in Hong Kong to articulate their identity, culture, and collective experiences. In particular, it can give visibility to those whose stories have been forgotten or ignored. According to Sharp et al., messages conveyed in public art can bring forth discussions on neglected topics like colonialism, patriarchy, or modern-day labor struggles [1, 2]. In this way, public art can encourage deeper conversations among the Filipino community and greater awareness of the collective effort of Filipinos everywhere. It has the potential to awaken people to an issue, giving them an insight into their heritage and collective experience, and sometimes providing them with a sense of solidarity in a time of struggle [7]. To illustrate how art can be leveraged in this way, two artworks made by Hong Kong artists to explore the prevailing issues impacting the Filipino community can be analyzed. They are *Happy Meal* and *Sing For Her* [1].

The work *Happy Meal*, which leverages familiar imagery to draw attention to Hong Kong and the Filipino communities, represents his purpose to create visibility for Philippine communities in a broader conversation. *Happy Meal* attempts to represent the emotional attachments that some people feel towards certain types of food in Filipino culture. The intention was to open a dialogue to promote deeper understanding between cultures. While this artwork can be interpreted in many different ways, it is clear that its purpose is to shed light on the different histories of different Asian cultures, while showcasing their beauty and individuality.

Sing For Her, meanwhile, uses art as a medium to communicate a social message. Through a virtual choir performance, this piece uses voices to break language barriers, aiming to raise awareness for migrant workers who struggle for rights. It works to encourage Filipino migrants to fight for their rights as part of an effort to reach a broader understanding of human dignity, no matter how limited the resources and capabilities can be. This message seeks to challenge traditional mindsets, aiming to help migrant workers express themselves with courage.

The use of art in the above two works demonstrates various benefits for Filipino communities. On the one hand, Zheng Bo's works encourage greater visibility for the community, inspiring others to celebrate Filipino culture and become familiar with the issues affecting their communities. In addition, his artwork helps to awaken awareness to social injustice and the inefficiencies of public resources, calling on people to act in solidarity and work together to create positive changes. For instance, in *Sing For Her*, Zheng Bo offers a platform for female voices to be heard by providing a space for marginalized women to share their stories and express themselves through singing. By uniting these women through a shared experience of song, the audience gains insight into their lives, sparking empathy and understanding. Also, Zheng Bo's installation piece, *Happy Meal*, features living plants alongside discarded fast-food packaging to emphasize the detrimental effect of the industry's waste on the environment. Using a recognizable visual language of fast-food, this artwork not only encourages reflection on one's own consumption habits, but also challenges the community to become more environmentally aware and responsible.

On the other hand, there have been no radical changes within Filipino communities due to the artist's works. Although awareness has been heightened and emotional value expressed, this is still

insufficient to fully understand the history and unique challenges faced by the Filipino communities. This study argues that the artistic message needs to be more aggressive and hard-hitting, capable of propelling the conversation forward and influencing drastic changes in the attitudes of public authorities and leaders. In this way, emotions can be evoked and people can be engaged in discourse that ameliorated the adverse conditions that minority groups endure.

In conclusion, it can be argued that Zheng Bo's works illustrate a way for Hong Kong artists to engage with the Filipino populace and advocate for a better society. His pieces help create an understanding of the cultural, historical and contemporary issues faced by the Filipino people, making an effort to make a difference in their lives. His art can be seen as a bridge connecting people from the two countries, increasing mutual respect and compassion. Yet, in order to more effectively bring about positive change, his artworks foster a conversation and create more of an impact on viewers' perspectives of Filipino struggles.

4. Conclusion

To sum up, currently there are some challenges and issues in the cultural situation of the Filipino community in Hong Kong. Although the Filipino community constitutes the largest minority group in the Hong Kong population and has made important contributions to Hong Kong's economic and social development, the cultural status of Filipinos in Hong Kong is relatively low. Filipino immigrants mainly work as domestic helpers and laborers in Hong Kong, and they face various challenges in their daily lives. These challenges often result in a limited cultural status of the Filipino community in Hong Kong, who may often face discrimination, exclusion, or neglect. In terms of the use of public culture, some local artists in Hong Kong hope to change the low cultural status of the Filipino community in society through public art. Public art includes sculptures, murals and installation art, etc., displayed in public spaces. It can be used as a tool to support social and cultural development. However, the current public art resources and support of the Filipino community in Hong Kong are relatively insufficient, and they face certain restrictions and difficulties in the use of public culture. However, it is worth noting that this article's limitation lies in its exclusive focus on the condition of the Filipino community in Hong Kong, without incorporating the experiences of other ethnic or racial groups.

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