



Optimizing Flexible Gallery Spaces, As Strategy to Improve User Experience in Art Galleries

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Abstract

The study looks at how flexibility of gallery spaces has improved the experience and sociability of art gallery visitors. The demand for architectural adaptation has increased as present social needs have changed. Due to insufficient systems or poor design planning, most structures designed with flexibility in mind are blocky, ugly, and excessively rigid. Individual galleries will also face future underutilization of space, which will be financially unsustainable. The concept of flexible approaches has been implemented into the design of visual arts galleries, according to recent studies, and is considered to improve social connections and sociability through effective space planning as a community hub. Exhibition venues are increasingly becoming into centers capable of creating lively and friendly interior spaces, rather than just being a gallery or a social symbol. Temporary exhibition space, for example, is ideal for showcasing local artists' work at art events and festivals, providing community people with art experience and information while also enticing tourists to visit the gallery over time. As a result, visual arts galleries are thought to have been designed with the community in mind and to function as a gathering spot. Data was acquired from primary sources including field investigations, case studies, and appraisals of existing art galleries that used flexible methodologies as a strategy for gallery spaces, as well as secondary sources like online sites, documentations and journals, surveys, and other sources. This research looks at the concepts of flexible architecture and how adaptable they are for art galleries in order to meet the demands of boosting the sociability of the user experience.

Keywords: Flexibility, Adaptability, Sociability, Gallery Spaces, User Experience

1.0 Introduction

Art galleries and temporary exhibition venues are becoming more and more integrated into urban environments. Each artist/designer shows himself or herself as a unique sign, denoting identities that have less to do with context and more to do with traditional design principles (Schwitters, 1927). Rather than being just a gallery or a social symbol, exhibition venues are rapidly growing into centers capable of creating lively and sociable interior spaces. Visitors to exhibition venues are exposed to a set of ideas and a way of life that they might use to portray themselves to others. Many designs have movable rooms that aid in the creation of more functional, comfortable, and temporary social spaces. Throughout the twentieth century, the need of adaptable space design has been increasingly apparent. The alternatives being presented at this moment all include sustainability, flexibility, and changeability as common

characteristics. A facility - building or area - utilized for the exhibition of visual arts is referred to as an art museum or art gallery. Aside from the permanent exhibition in the building, the gallery must offer a variety of options and venues for events and exhibitions. As a result, the gallery has a variety of alternatives for servicing a variety of guests, each of whom will most likely have unique needs when they come (Axelsen, 2006). The main goal of this study is to see how beneficial gallery spaces are when they are constructed using adaptable tactics or procedures for the facility's users, including artists, managers, and gallery visitors. The research begins with a survey of the literature on architectural flexibility, its principles, the importance of flexible strategies in gallery space design, and the relationship between flexibility and sociability.

1.1. Definition of Terms

Optimize is a strategy, approach, or methodology for making something (such as a design, system, or decision) as perfect, functional, or effective as possible (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022).

Flexible is characterized as the ability to quickly adjust to new, diverse, or changing requirements (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022).

Art Gallery is a building or section where works of art such as paintings, sculptures, pottery, glass, and weaving are displayed for public viewing and may contain art and art supply sales (Law Insider Dictionary, 2022).

Gallery is a space or structure dedicated to the display of artwork (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022).

Strategy is a behavior, metabolism, or anatomical adaptation that serves or appears to serve a significant function in obtaining evolutionary success (Merriam-Webster Dictionary, 2022).

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Flexibility in Architecture

The term "flexibility" has become increasingly prevalent in architecture since the modernist era. Ludwig Miles Van Der Rohe, one of the most well-known architects at the period, pioneered the open plan philosophy, which consists of adaptable designs and variable areas inside basic rectangular forms (Kim, 2005). Meanwhile, Walter Gropius acknowledged one of the earliest perspectives on flexibility in the 1950s, namely that architecture must be completely adjustable to respond to the basic aspects of modern life (Kim, 2001). Since then,

the desire for flexibility has expanded, necessitating the incorporation of flexibility into the design and research of structures by architects. Flexibility was created as a critical concept in design by Yona Friedman, who released the first manifesto on the issue in 1958, termed "mobile architecture" (Motisi, Nannini, & Torino, 2017). The building's mobility is in doubt, not the occupants', who are granted the freedom to use the area as they see fit. Professor Robert Kronenburg defined flexible architecture as "fluid architecture that becomes absolute once mankind occupies and uses it." This design has four features, according to him: adaptation, mobility, transformation, and interaction (Kronenburg, 2004).

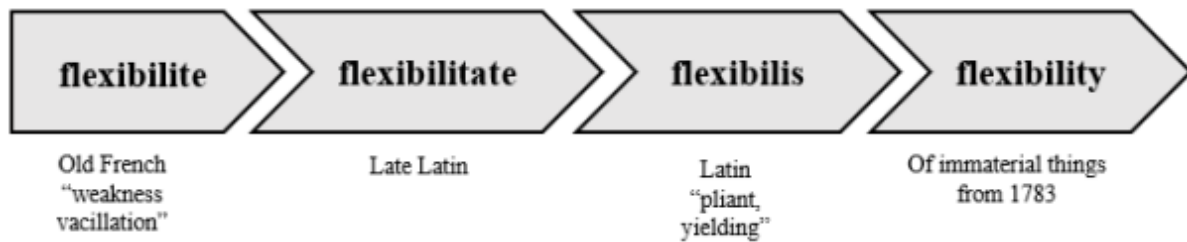


Figure 2.1: Etymology of Flexibility

Source: www.etymonline.com

2.2 Principles of Flexible Architecture

Adaptation

The capacity to adapt is the first quality of flexibility. In this way, the building design can have a variety of layouts. It's also known as an open structure since it has a large amount of open space that can be used at any moment (Acharya, 2013). This is a marketing approach for promoting flexible structures to tourists and users of locations that can accommodate a wide range of events and uses. Weddings, badminton tournaments, and graduation ceremonies, for example, might all be held in a multipurpose hall.



Figure 2.2: Example of Adaptable Architecture; Schaulager with Combination of Storage and Exhibition Space

Source: www.schaulager.org, 2003

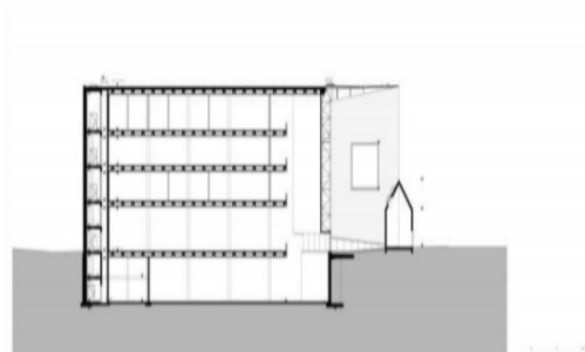


Figure 2.3: Example of Adaptable Architecture; Section View of Schaulager with Combination of Storage and Exhibition Space

Source: www.schaulager.org, 2003

Mobility

Apart from that, mobility, which permits a structure to physically move from one area to another, is incompatible with the goals of a gallery. This form of architecture will undoubtedly be used in galleries in the future if there is a demand from a vibrant community.



Figure 2.4: Example of Mobile Architecture, Halley Vi Antarctic Research Station, that became Mobile Home for 50 Scientists at Antarctic

Source: Slavid, R, 2010, www.architectural-review.com

Transformation

The next level is the ability to change form, volume, shape, or appearance without developing new structures, skin, or internal space. Metamorphosis is the ability of a gallery space to change its form or appearance, such as expand or compress.



Figure 2.5: Example of Transformation architecture, The Avenue Artist Square

Source: Slavid, R, 2010, www.architectural-review.com

Interaction

Finally, there's interactivity, which is linked to the interactive gallery space's technology system. People and appliances in the architectural environment can engage with interactive architecture. Buildings "interact" when they naturally or intuitively adapt to human demands, and people become participants rather than users (Acharya, 2013).



Figure 2.6: Example of Interactive Architecture, Kiefer technic showroom with façade itself is functioning as a shading device however given the users to manage the angle of the panel, and quantity of sunlight transmitted into the interior space.

Source: www. Arch2o.com

2.3 Importance of Flexible Gallery Spaces

Increase the building's useful life and future usability in terms of art exhibitions and provide artists the opportunity to arrange the spaces as they see fit. Because each artist's notion for showing their work is unique, this is crucial. As a result, the flexibility approach will help suit the needs and desires of artists to effectively display their creativity. Another factor to consider is flexibility space, which helps to limit available space and eliminate underutilized areas, resulting in longer-term consequences on the built environment.

2.4 Relation Between Flexibility and Sociability

Figure 2.7 shows a diagram of an art gallery and its impact on society, which includes economic, social, cultural, and political aspects.

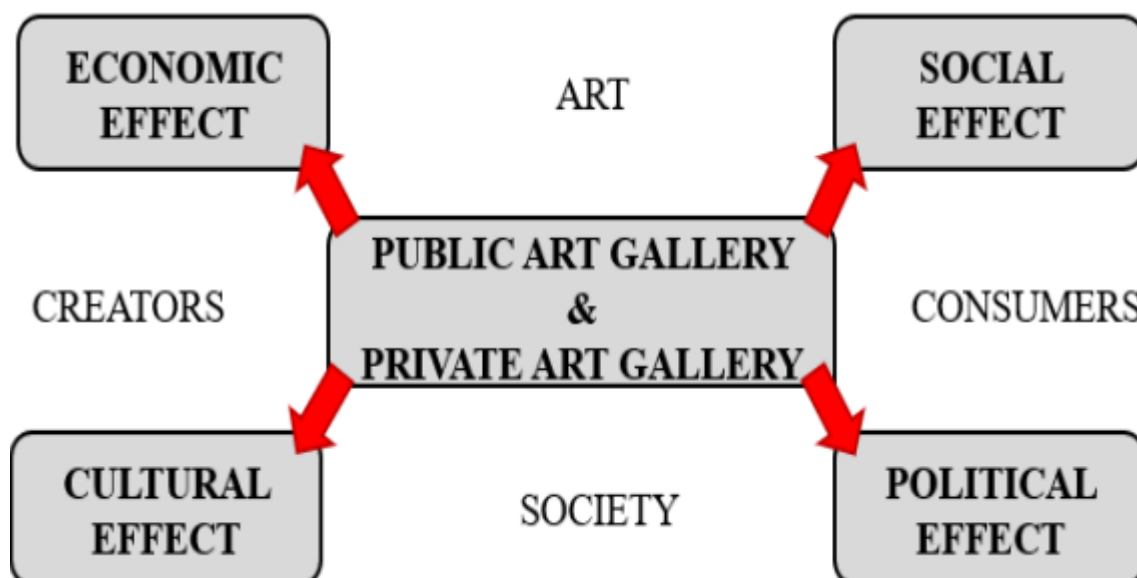


Figure 2.7: Diagram of A modified diamond model public art gallery and effects

Source: Adopted from Gandhi (2008)

Research Questions

The concept of design flexibility (flexible architecture), which is in high demand in the architecture industry, particularly in the twenty-first century, is difficult to dismiss as tools for architects to design innovative and creative spaces that can adapt and transform to meet social, economic, cultural, and political demands and needs. In order to provide a better understanding of the concept of design flexibility for the development of users' experience in art galleries, four research areas resulting from the previous definition are addressed:

- i. What is flexibility in architecture?
- ii. What are the principles of flexible architecture?
- iii. What is the importance of flexible gallery spaces to the users?
- iv. What is the relation between flexibility and sociability?

Art galleries are rapidly becoming into centers capable of providing vibrant and convivial interior spaces, rather than only being exhibition sites. To address these issues, case studies were used.

3.0 Methodology

This chapter discusses the research methodology. The purpose of this study is to determine how flexible gallery spaces have improved the experience and sociability of art gallery visitors. It looks into architectural flexibility, its principles, the value of flexible gallery spaces, and the relationship between flexibility and sociability. The study analyzed and compared the findings of case studies of art galleries created with the notion of flexible approaches in gallery spaces to determine the impact on facility users' experiences. The data

was acquired through a review of current literature and research on the utility of including flexible gallery space design tactics and approaches in both established and developing art galleries.

4.0 Findings and Discussions

This chapter looked at the design of flexibility methods in gallery spaces in three well-known art galleries to see how effective and successful they are for the gallery users.

4.1 Shuyang Art Gallery, Suqian City, China



Figure 4.1: Aerial views of Shuyang Art Gallery

Source: Arch Daily, picture by Joanna Wong

The Shuyang Art Gallery is located in the hometown of traditional calligraphy and is positioned as the calligraphy art gallery to display and inherit Shuyang calligraphic style. The concept of architecture abstracts the most fundamental three colors, black, white, and red, of Chinese calligraphy from rice-paper, brush-pen, seal and creates a pure space experience with pure colors. The largest exhibition hall along the street has the red-bricked exterior wall, like a condensed seal printed on the elegant scroll of ink and wash.

The Flexibility Strategies in Shuyang Art Gallery

- i. The largest exhibition hall and all the exhibition halls are open spaces without fixed wall demarcations, which can be arranged freely according to the exhibition needs.
- ii. The glass corridor connects the exhibition halls in order to facilitate continuous exhibition.
- iii. Three stories of light wells provide a bright and transparent internal area.
- iv. The concept of architecture abstracts the most fundamental three colors, black, white, and red, of Chinese calligraphy from rice-paper, brush-pen, seal and creates a pure space experience with pure colors.
- v.



Figure 4.2: Interior views of Shuyang Art Gallery

Source: Arch Daily, picture by Joanna Wong

4.2 National Visual Arts Gallery (NVAG), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia



Figure 4.3: Approach View of National Visual Arts Gallery (NVAG)

Source: Balai Seni Visual Negara (2019)



Figure 4.4: Side View of National Visual Arts Gallery (NVAG)

Source: Balai Seni Visual Negara (2019)

The National Visual Arts Gallery is Malaysia's national art gallery, and it is housed in a striking modern edifice with a blue glass pyramid roof near Lake Titiwangsa in northeast Kuala Lumpur. It was founded in 1998 to become the country's leading center for visual arts development and a repository for the national collection. It replaced a former National Art Gallery, which first opened in 1958 and was located in Jalan Ampang (now the Malaysian Tourism Centre) before transferring to Jalan Sultan Hishammuddin (now the Majestic Hotel).

The Flexibility Strategies in National Visual Arts Gallery (NVAG)

- i. Central atrium suitable for big scale display and temporary exhibition space gallery, provides continuous journey of the users or visitors with exhibition display and enhances interaction with other users or visitors.

- ii. Outside the museum, in the courtyard, there are two glass-walled art cabins where artworks can be viewed and purchased.



Figure 4.5: Interior View of central atrium National Visual Arts Gallery (NVAG)

Source: Robert Harding (2019)



Figure 4.6: Interior gallery view of National Visual Arts Gallery (NVAG)

Source: Balai Seni Visual Negara (2019)

4.3 Nike Art Gallery Centre, Lagos, Nigeria.



Figure 4.7: Approach View of Nike Art Gallery Centre

Source: culturalheritageonline.com (2019-2021)



Figure 4.8: Back View of Nike Art Gallery Centre

Source: culturalheritageonline.com (2019-2021)

The Nike Art Foundation of Nigeria is the sole initiative of Chief (Mrs.) Nike Okundaye with the principal objective of using it to develop and enhance Nigeria cultural heritage. The Nike Art Gallery in Lagos is the largest with four floors of artworks of different descriptions such as paintings in different media, batik and adire fabrics, embroidery, appliqué, beadworks, pen & ink drawing on paper and canvas, aluminum and copper works and sculptures also in different media, all set out in the most conducive climatic condition. The Lagos Nike art gallery is a hub for art lovers, art collectors and visiting tourists in 55 Nigeria. A mixed grill of ethnic, traditional and contemporary artworks is found in all the branches of Nike art galleries in Nigeria.

The Flexibility Strategies in Nike Art Gallery Centre

- i. The concept of the interior of the building gallery on four floors connected by corridors, columns and beams aids flexibility in the gallery spaces.
- ii. The building facade wall art inscriptions depict the facility use.



Figure 4.9: Interior view of gallery, Nike Art Gallery Centre

Source: Solape Jegede (2020)

5.0 Conclusion and Recommendations

Sociability has become a widely recognized concept as a result of art shows. The arts gallery not only serves as a venue for displaying artwork, but it also serves as a community gathering spot. Therefore, activities must be tailored to meet their needs. As a result, when a community visits a facility that meets their needs, they will feel welcome. It also makes workshops and ethnic dance classes more accessible. For the audience in the area, the artworks on show will bring back memories and reflect history. New artists can be found and cultivated in art galleries, and their work can be marketed and sold to artists at various phases of their careers.

However, in order to improve the user experience and sociability of art galleries, gallery spaces must adapt and allow more flexibility. Art galleries must be created with flexibility in mind; they must be environmentally friendly, flexible, transformable, and interactive. In order to communicate effectively, an art gallery must have symbolism, personality, and flexibility. The desired experience must be presented to the best of the design's ability to hold attention and quickly demystify the normal inquisitions of art museum visitors. In general, sustainability must be addressed in the design of art galleries.

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