Single Sequential Space and Virtualised Meeting Ground:
A Study on the Exhibition Layout of Knowledge in the Museum of London

Hsu Huang*

Abstract   Knowledge about objects has constantly been mentioned by scholars as a very important shaper in organising museum space. It is claimed that through the spatial organisation a museum can enhance visitors’ memory about the contents of exhibitions. Nevertheless, how is this spatial mnemonic constructed, and what is the social consequence of the spatial effects? To answer these questions requires a study where space is analysed using a rigorous method. This research takes the Museum of London (MoL) as a case study to investigate these questions, and it has used the method for layout analysis known as “space syntax.” It is argued in this research that the museum has been building its layout in accordance with the projects of a dominant paradigm relating to the way in which the history of a city is thought to be progressive. The spatial effects of this layout are unfolded in two ways. One is to create a culture of movement which is dominated by the museum as a didactic informational experience; the other is to generate an encounter pattern of “co-presence” which is a mode of visualised social congregation. These effects can be recognised as the embodiment of the contemporary social relationship which is very individualised.

Keywords: museum space, museum exhibitions, exhibition layouts, Museum of London, space syntax

A Brief Introduction to the Museum of London

The Museum of London originated from the amalgamation of two separate museums, the Guildhall Museum and the London Museum. The Guildhall Museum was established by the Corporation of London in 1826, but it was not really a public museum until the Guildhall Library and Museum was built and opened to the public in 1872 (see figure 1).

* Associate Curator, Exhibits Department, National Museum of Natural Science; Email: hsu@nmns.edu.tw

The London Museum had its grand opening at Kensington Palace on 8th April 1912. At that time the exhibits were organized mainly according to the principle of ownership, since most of the objects were on loan from the Royal Family (see figure 2 for the plan).

In 1914, the London Museum moved to Lancaster House. There, the curators began to arrange objects and exhibits in chronological order (see figure 3 for an aerial perspective). In 1948, the Trustees of the London Museum accepted King George’s offer of using part of Kensington Palace as a temporary home. Three years later, the London Museum moved back to Kensington Palace and opened to the public. Once installed in Kensington Palace, London’s history was arranged in a more chronological way (see figure 4). The building appeared at this time as a courtyard house; a spatial form which the Museum of London has clearly followed.

The Museum of London (MoL) was opened on 2nd December 1976. It is situated at the intersection of London Wall and Aldersgate Street, at the south-west corner of the Barbican Redevelopment Area, as it was then. The building was designed by Powell, Moya and Partners as part of the City of London Corporation’s plans for the redevelopment of the western end of London Wall.

Basically, the museum building can also be recognized as a “courtyard house” (see figure 5). There is a main outdoor courtyard surrounded by two floors of exhibition galleries within the building. According to the floor plan in 1998, the museum is

Figure 1. The Guildhall Museum in 1872. The figures are reproduced from The Treasury of London’s Past, Museum of London.
Figure 2. The London Museum at Kensington Palace in 1912. The figure is reproduced from The Treasury of London's Past, Museum of London.

Figure 3. The London Museum at Lancaster House in 1914. The figure is reproduced from The Treasury of London's Past, Museum of London.

Figure 4. The London Museum at Kensington Palace in 1951. The figure is reproduced from The Treasury of London's Past, Museum of London.
Figure 5. Floor plan of the Museum of London in 1998.

Figure 6. The Catwalk sign in the MoL. This photograph is reproduced from A Guide To The Museum Of London, Museum of London.
entered from the upper-level walkway. After coming into the entrance hall, the visitors immediately face the orientation area. A famous index sign called Catwalk\(^2\) (see figure 6) starts from this area, attempting to lead visitors along the main suggested route. Along this suggested route, London’s history is displayed chronologically from Prehistoric London on the entrance floor to Modern London on the lower floor (see figure 7). The Catwalk ends between the Lord Mayor’s Coach and the main staircase. Via the staircase, visitors can go up to the entrance, and then either go out or begin another tour.

**Mapping History into the Sequential Space**

*What makes history possible is that a sub-set of events is found, for a given period, to have approximately the same significance for a contingent of individuals who have not necessarily experienced the events and may even consider them at an interval of several centuries. History is therefore never history, but history-for.* (Claude Levi-Strauss, 1966: 257)

The chronological arrangement of London’s history in the MoL’s galleries, according to Sheppard’s study, was mostly worked out by the curators and the exhibition designers.

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\(^{2}\) The Catwalk sign is a glittering green sign that, according to a brief introduction by the museum, “marks a fast track route around the Museum.” This sign was installed around 1996, but, however, was removed a few years later.
The detailed designs for the spatial arrangement in fact were the results of a triangular tussle involving curators, designer and architects. In order to achieve a chronological arrangement, there were two important issues which had to be resolved at that time. The first was how the proportion of space in the primary chronological galleries was to be allocated for each part of London’s history and, secondly, whether this primary historical narrative should be supplemented by special rooms devoted to such subjects as royal palaces, national government, City company crafts, theatre, fire fighting, insurance and police, toys and games, education, transport and so forth (1991: 72).

These problems were considered by curators to be related to a central controversial idea about the principles of exhibition organization. That is, whether the exhibition should be organized according to the “objects” that museums have conserved or according to the “subject” that the museum curator attempts to present. Curators recognized that, in the past, exhibitions had been organized mainly according to the principle of “object” in a period of time (such as in the London Museum in 1912). For some curators, however, the object-orientated exhibition was considered too disordered. The chronological arrangement was therefore recognized as a way to reorganize objects in a more subject-orientated way, in order to improve this situation. As a result, the idea of subject-orientated display finally defeated the idea of object-orientated display. For Sheppard, the idea of subject-orientated display represents a total rethinking of the exhibition approach, and its triumph has made the MoL the first big comprehensive exhibition of the development of a geographical area from the earliest times to the present (1991: 173). However, we need to examine the ideas behind the subject-orientated and object-orientated approaches which were the focus of that debate. We may wonder if the idea of object-orientated display really has anything to do with the idea of subject-orientated display. In fact, it can be said that any exhibition would be impossible to organize without reference to the idea of subject. Even at the exhibition in the London Museum at Kensington Palace in 1912, the mass of objects there still had a certain logic and ideas which dictated the arrangement of objects. It is unimaginable that some exhibitions, especially museum exhibitions, were organized without subjects. So the problem is not whether the early museum exhibitions were organized with subjects or not, but rather what are the changing views about the order of things. Objects were classified

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3 According to architects Powell and Moya’s Preliminary Report in 1964, in the first scheme of things the Roman and medieval periods were to have had more space than was allocated to the whole modern period from 1700 to the present day; and the subject rooms were to have had almost as much space as the combined total of the primary galleries, from which they were to be physically separate (1964: 24-6). The reason why the Roman and medieval periods occupy more space, for some curators, is simply because the museum has a strong collections from these periods. However, this scheme had been challenged by other curators. One of them was Colin Sorensen, who put forward a very persuasive idea. He argued that the Museum of London was presenting the biography of London, and given that at least two-thirds of all the people who had ever lived in London had done so during the last two hundred and fifty years or so, this period must be fully represented in the galleries. While the collections of the modern period are the weakest, Sorensian attitude was that “If you haven’t got an object, you either go and get one, or you find another way of dealing with the subject - you do not just ignore or exclude it.” (Sheppard, 1991: 172-3)
differently at different points in history. The emergence of this new paradigm was not really concerned with the question of whether or not there should be a subject. What it asked was that all the objects should serve to illustrate the historical continuity of the geographical area - London.

In ensuring the objects played the “right” role in signifying London’s history, it had become seen as increasingly necessary to provide these objects with a new “context” by incorporating some other media. The context is therefore not only provided by the grouping of objects, but also by the use of models, photography, film, information panels and, most importantly, space. In order to guarantee the chronological sequence, the special subject rooms, which were considered to cut across and confuse the chronological arrangement of the primary galleries, were eliminated (Sheppard, 1991: 173). Space in the MoL is more carefully controlled than it was in Lancaster House and Kensington Palace. It is more integrated with other media in order to support and illustrate the idea of chronological history. The MoL can be regarded as a full development of this idea, one which achieved its culmination when the famous Catwalk was installed in 1996.

The Catwalk was clearly an explicit attempt to guide visitors’ movements. The erection of the Catwalk efficiently solved the “problem” caused by the entrance area, where three different choices of routes were provided. Normally, the multiple choices of routes in the entrance area would not be a problem for a public building. However, for a chronological history museum, it could be regarded as the origin of some “intellectual confusion”. Constructing a sign would be a way of clearing up the confusion. Therefore, by means of this sign, the choices of routes were filtered, those “wrong” routes being implicitly eliminated.

The potential intellectual confusion could be further identified by applying the methods of “space syntax” to analyze the axes of museum spaces. Figure 8, 9 show the scattergrams and the map of “axial integration.” Examining the scattergrams for the

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4 If we review the plans of Lancaster House and Kensington Palace, we will find that there was a tendency to organize exhibitions in a chronological way. However, from a chronological perspective, the chronological arrangement in Lancaster House was constantly interrupted by the “special subject rooms;” and in Kensington Palace visitors had to go downstairs by devious routes to find the historical starting point. Compared with the MoL, both of these spaces were not ideally controlled for enhancement of their chronological arrangement.

5 Axial map is a methodological tool for capturing the relationships between spaces. The spatial layout is divided into several “convex spaces” which can be regarded as the spatial units of the layout. Then the longest and fewest straight lines (axial lines) are drawn on the layout without crossing a boundary can be considered. The axial lines pass through all the convex spaces and relate them in the spatial structure as a whole. The relations between all these axial lines can be calculated by computer and classified into seven bands which are represented by seven colours. The seven colours indicate the different degree of integration separately. The most integrated axial lines are colored red, through orange to yellow, green, blue, indigo, and purple for the least integrated. The different degree of integration, to put it simply, indicates that how often the axes would be used by people in terms of the movement in the building. For a detailed theoretical definition about the method please refer to The social logic of space by Hillier and Hanson.
whole museum (figure 9), we find that there is a dot highlighted by a circle high above the regression line, but not so far to the right. This dot could be identified as the entrance axis, which starts from the entrance and passes through the entrance hall, the orientation area, the prehistoric London gallery and ends at the Roman London gallery. This entrance axis is supposed to be the “right route” for museum visitors to follow, but, nevertheless, compared with the axes around the staircase, it is less integrated.

According to the map of axial integration, theoretically there is a strong configurational attraction around the staircase, leading visitors to go down to the lower floor to visit the gallery which visually centres on the famous exhibit of the Lord Mayor’s Coach. This attraction consists of several integrated axes which connect the entrance hall on the upper floor and the Coach on the lower floor. For some visitors, it would be natural to take the integrated route down to the lower floor immediately after they have entered the museum. The Catwalk sign, which starts from the orientation area, was consequently designed to solve this problem. It attempted to pull visitors from the staircase area, to make them follow the less integrated route which is “intellectually right.” It endeavoured to reinforce the weaker axis, through which the “spatially incorrect” path could be remedied. The sign was therefore designed to overcome and divert the “natural movement” in the layout. The case of the MoL shows that the spatial mapping of knowledge does not always result in a natural movement corresponding to the “ideal routes” of knowledge. The Catwalk sign was designed to regulate the visitors’ movement and through this the “insufficiency” of the spatial structure was remedied and the historical narrative was reinforced.

The erection of the Catwalk can be recognized as further differentiating the routes into the “inner” route and the “outer” route. The inner route mainly follows the Catwalk. It is allocated several interactive computer stations which provide the thematic introductions to each period gallery. All the computer stations are situated at the intersections of the inner route and each thematic area (the period gallery). On the other hand, the outer route penetrates the thematic areas which were installed with the exhibits. Basically, the outer route can be recognized as a “single sequence” route, just like the inner route. However, there are intersections between these two routes, providing alternative routes for the

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6 Hillier used this term to describe the relationship between the spatial structure and movement densities along the axial lines in the urban environment. According to him, “Natural movement is the proportion of movement on each (axial) line that is determined by the structure of the urban grid itself rather than by the presence of specific attractions or magnets.” (1996: 161) In the present article I have used this term to refer to the movement influenced by the spatial structure rather than by visual or any other properties in the space.

7 Here I would like to define the “single sequence” as a relative term. Together with the “alternative sequence,” these terms have constituted the polarity of the spatial patterns of museum layout. While the former attempts to minimize visitors’ routes; the latter maximizes these routes. The spectrum of spatial patterns therefore refers to the degree of effort which was made to guarantee that visitors see all the exhibits sequentially in a single route.
visitors. Several parts of the thematic areas provide alternative routes as well. Under these circumstances, the strength of the “single sequence” seems to have been weakened.

Nevertheless, we need to go further and examine the alternative routes in the light of their spatial permeability\(^8\) and visibility. Looking first at permeability, all the alternative

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\(^8\) Permeability is the access and movement that are controlled by the arrangement of spatial units and entrances.
routes can be identified as “ring” routes, which are the “circle lines” in terms of the visitors’ movement. Most of the rings are “local” ring routes because they are not very “deep” in relation to the main route. For the museum visitors who depart from the main route, the local rings make it relatively easy for them to find their way back. Secondly, due to their visibility, most of the local ring routes are to be found within the “visual field” of the main routes, that is, they are “visible rings” both for the inner route and the outer route. These rings are visible and easily detected because they are local and relatively small in scale. Under the circumstances, the visitors could explore these rings without losing orientation. They would explore them without any hesitation and then come back to the main route. Therefore, the alternative routes do not really affect the strength of the “single sequence” in terms of the whole spatial structure.

Theoretically, the patterns of the combination of the spatial arrangements of objects and the routes of visitors’ walking could be numerous. The experience of a museum could therefore be very different. Nonetheless, the experience of a museum can be controlled through the use of spatial techniques. Museum began to be regarded as a specific cultural institution in need of a distinctive architecture of its own since the late eighteenth century (Fabianski, 1990). Among the museums which were custom built, Bennett argued that, the commitment to provide visitors with a linear route within which an “evolutionary itinerary” might be accomplished was a strong one (1995: 181). By means of spatial techniques, the past was organized into a narrative machinery through which they are linked together in sequences leading from the beginning of time to the present.

The implementation of the linear route in museums, according to Bennett, was particularly prevalent during the development of evolutionism in the later decades of the nineteenth century which recognized knowledge as only knowable through the “temporalization of differences.” Walsh has also indicated that, during the nineteenth century, the modern museum attempted to form the didactic linear narrative which often implied a unilinear development of progress. The order of the objects in the MoL has made the City of London knowable and, consequently, this is made explicit in the correspondence between the structure of evolutionary narratives and the structure of a single sequence of spaces. This correspondence has allowed the museum to serve the idea of progress in which a sense of London’s continuous advancement was created.

9 Bennett has suggested viewing the narrative machinery of the museum as providing a context for a performance that was simultaneously bodily and mental inasmuch as the evolutionary narratives it instantiated were realized spatially in the form of routes that the visitor was expected - and often obliged - to complete (1995: 179).


11 When comparing the difference in the order of things between the later Renaissance period and the modern period, Walsh said that: “It should be made clear that the museum displays which emerged during the nineteenth century and are still common today attempted a form of didactic linear narrative, a representation of progress through the ordered display of artefacts.” (1992: 20)
As Walsh has indicated in his book The Representation of the Past in 1992, the underlying theme in the story of London’s development, as represented in the Museum of London’s displays, is that of steady advancement (1992: 36). By means of the serial connection of every period of time by spatial arrangements, the history of London is regarded as continuous and inter-related in a diachrony which actually functions as an idea of progress. To ensure the function of the underlying theme, some spaces in the MoL are compressed and controlled, as Walsh has noted (1992: 36-7):

Despite acknowledging the poverty and problems caused by the expanding urban mass, the underlying theme is that of a progress that is ‘bright’ and welcoming, whilst that temporary set-back, which was the Dark Ages, is displayed in a darkened room. The Dark Ages are represented as a period of history which was an embarrassing hiccup on the road of progress, a road which the visitor knows will come out at the other end, as progress demands that there will always be a light at the end of the evolutionary tunnel. The implied failure of the Dark Ages in producing anything worthwhile is remedied by the Medieval London display, which illustrates London’s chequered rise to pre-eminence not only as the seat of the nation’s Government but as the magnet of society and fashion and as the primary centre of industry and international trade.

The compression of the space of the Dark Ages, if we refer to Figure 4, also appeared in the layout of the London Museum at Kensington Palace in 1951. The view that regards the Dark Ages as a setback in history is in fact very prevalent in Western culture. However, what is interesting is not the reality of the Dark Ages in history, but the consistency of its function in historical narratives. The Dark Ages usually take the role of a “setback” in history, and this role in turn continues to reinforce the idea of progress. The spatial arrangements of this strong sequencing work as part of the narrative apparatus promoting progressive thinking in the MoL. Space, in the case of the MoL, is therefore structured by knowledge, which is made up of the particular ideas created by the order of the objects. It is in this field where knowledge is exercised. Through regulation of the physical movement of visitors, the space endeavours to explain the total history of London, within which the contradiction between the past and the present is surmounted and the idea of progress is promoted.

Visualising Social Encounters in the Integration Core

*The effects of spatial configuration are not on individuals, but on collections of individuals and how they interrelate through space. All that is proposed, in fact, is that a pattern of space in a complex can affect the pattern of co-presence and co-awareness of collections of people who inhabit and visit that complex.* (Bill Hillier, 1996: 378-9)

In 1872, one of the MoL’s predecessors - the Guildhall Museum - was custom built and
opened to the public. It is interesting to review the plan of the Guildhall Museum, which is very different to the gallery tradition of the London museum. According to Sheppard’s study (1991: 23),

The new building, built in a handsome Perpendicular Gothic style, stood on the site of older houses on the west side of Basinghall Street, at right-angles to the Guildhall. It consisted mainly of two arcaded halls placed one over the other. Downstairs was the museum’s new home, an impressive chamber, divided by massive stone piers into nave and aisles, measuring 83 feet in length and 64 feet in breadth, and flanked on the south side by several fireproof monument rooms.

The spatial organization of the Guildhall, the composition of one nave and two side aisles, was very obviously different from that of the old London Museum. Referring to the interior illustrations of Figure 1, we can see that the aisles were employed to display all the objects, while the central nave was mainly used as the meeting ground for the visitors. The aisles where the objects were crowded functioned as a place of adventure for the encounters between the objects and the individual visitor. The central nave seemed to play the role of a place for social association, where the movements and the encounters between the visitors were generated.

For further discussion on this issue, in the followings I will use some space syntax techniques for spatial analysis. When using the method of space syntax, space can be realized through a system constituted by two kinds of elements. The first one is the “axial line” as the note 5 of this article has indicated. The second one is the “convex” space. A convex space is a space all points of which can be joined by a line without the line crossing the boundary of the space. It can also be realised as a space unit within which a “diamond-shape” space is encapsulated. The “diamond-shape” space describes the physical environment that allows people in it to see and to encounter each other simultaneously. The spatial system could therefore be represented as the “convex break-up” where the largest and fewest convex spaces and the linkages between them are drawn to cover all the space. The composition of the different axes and the convexes constitutes the spatial system (convaxial system). Moreover, each axis and convex are recognized gaining its different properties through the organization of the whole spatial system (it can be shown as the convaxial diagram). Among the different properties, as far as this article is concerned, the degree of the “integration” is the most important property which is related to the movement of body. The degree of integration, put simply, theoretically indicates the relative intensity of usage in terms of movement. The high integrated spatial units and axes thus constitute the “integration core” in the spatial system. The different degree of integration of each convex and axis are represented in the maps by different colors. The red indicates the most integrated, and then passing through orange, yellow, green, blue, indigo, to the purple color that shows the most segregated.

By applying the computer modeling techniques, figure 10, 11 show the “convaxial
diagrams” of MoL. According to the convexial analysis, the main axes of the area around the void space of the MoL are the “integration core” of the building. The integration core consists of several integrated convex spaces. Theoretically, they are the places where the phenomenon of co-presence\textsuperscript{12} is provided. However, due to the different spatial patterns, the integration cores have different characteristics, through which the different museum experiences could be created within the same phenomenon.

In Hillier and his colleagues’ very pioneer study on the museum space which is focused on the Tate Gallery in London, the integration core is the place where co-presence and encounters are being taken place. According to their study, the main axis of the Tate connects galleries on the same level on both its sides. A large number of galleries open out into the main axis and are completely visible from the main entrance hall. Encounters between visitors in the Tate are maximized through the proximate relationships between the main axis and the galleries, and the ring movement that the spatial pattern has provided. Thus, “the structure of the gallery probably generates a degree of subliminal familiarity amongst some of the people moving around it” because it makes people co-present who have been co-present in the building elsewhere (1996: 7). The integration core, for Hillier

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.45\textwidth]{convaxialDiagramEntranceLevel.png}
\caption{Convaxial diagram for the entrance level of the MoL.}
\end{figure}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=0.45\textwidth]{convaxialDiagramLowerLevel.png}
\caption{Convaxial diagram for the lower level of the MoL.}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{12} Co-presence is a phenomenon of the gathering and encounter of individuals in a certain space. Hillier argued that this phenomenon is highly influenced by spatial design and being a “social resource” and the primitive form of “our awareness of others.” (1996: 187) A. Giddens has used this term with specific reference to social integration (1984: 64-8).
and his colleagues, is the place where the probabilities of encounter are maximized.

Now if we look back to the convexial diagram of MoL, we can find out that the integration core is basically vertically distributed around the void space near the staircase. It can be recognized as vertically developed due to the fact that convex spaces in the core are mainly visually linked through the void and permeably linked by the staircase. It can also be seen that the convex spaces in the core are organized around the impressive exhibit on the lower floor - the Lord Mayor’s Coach. The two storey void space that is above the Coach and beside the staircase has enabled visitors to see both the Coach and each other in most parts of the integration core. Thus, through the void, the spectacle of co-presence is constituted to centre on the Coach.

The integration core of the MoL reminds us of several examples of museum space such as the rotunda of the Guggenheim museum in New York. The rotunda of the Guggenheim has a strong visual connection with the spiral aisles, which are the main display areas. But the rotunda and the aisles are not necessarily strongly connected in terms of permeability. The spectacle of co-presence is created vertically through the void space. We could go further and analyze the structure of the integration core which is embedded in the same spectacle of co-presence. The integration core of the MoL mainly consists of several convex spaces around the Coach and within the staircase. They are distributed vertically and, compared to the Tate Gallery, they are fragmented. Furthermore, being affected by the spatial pattern and the sign of the Catwalk, the visitor’s movement has been canalized to follow the route of a single sequence. There is an implicit compulsion, produced by the spatial pattern and the sign, which makes the movement irreversible.

Comparison of the cores of the Tate and the MoL can reveal another major difference between them that can be identified by examining their convexial diagrams. This difference is related to the location of the integration core. While the core of the Tate is located near the entrance, the core of the MoL is concentrated around the area of the Lord Mayor’s Coach, which is actually on a different floor to the entrance. In terms of the distance between the core and the entrance, the depth of the core in the MoL is much deeper than that of the Tate.

The integration core is, theoretically, the convex space where congregation happens. However, this is not always the case if the depth of the core is increased. According to Y. K. Choi’s study on the museums, the function of the core can be “virtualized.” Choi has pointed out that “the presence of people in the different museum spaces is not consistently related to the configurational properties of layouts … The number of people visible from a space, however, is very strongly and consistently correlated with the degree of integration of the space.” (1991: 245) In other words, what he found was that the integration core was not the space where the maximum number of people were present, but rather the space where the maximum number of people could be seen. According to Choi’s findings, visibility is in fact replacing permeability and becoming the primary property of spatial
integration. The integration core is no longer the space maximizing random encounters, but the space maximizing visual co-presence. However, it is argued by this research that this phenomenon could be due to the “movement of the integration core.” The integration core has become deeper and thus “de-functionalized.” The “virtualized” integration core, from his point of view, is actually the concomitant of the growing depth of the integration core.

The relation between the depth of the integration core and the phenomenon of virtualization can be supported by a re-analysis of Choi’s empirical study. Of the eight cases Choi selected, there were seven which he considered to be significant in the correlation of the total number of people visible from each convex space with the integration value. According to the convex map of the integration core, five out of these seven cases could be judged to have deep integration cores. These five also show no correlation between the number of people observed in each convex space and the integration value. The depth of the integration core, therefore, marks different degrees and characteristics of co-presence; while a shallow core creates the maximum number of physical encounters through movement, a deep core creates the maximum number of virtual encounters through visibility.

Although both the MoL and the Tate have created the spectacle of co-presence in the integration core, while the spatial pattern of the Tate maximizes the randomness of encounters in the integration core, that of the MoL minimizes it. The spatial pattern of single sequence which serves as a narrative machinery in the MoL has made a visit to the museum similar to holding a ritual. A ritual is, as Hillier has described, “a set of behaviours in which all sequences and all relations are specified by rules … Of its nature, a ritual eliminates the random.” (1996: 244) The visitors’ movement in the museum is specified by the spatial pattern of single sequence. The rules in the MoL have been further emphasized by means of the Catwalk sign. Therefore, through the narrative machinery by which the randomness of encounters is eliminated, the integration core of the MoL is passive in providing the possibility of interaction between visitors. It has become into a place of “virtual meeting ground.”

In the MoL, the function of segregating individuals is not only performed by the space, but also by the design of exhibits. The modern media in the museum, such as the interactive computer (which is mostly interactive with individuals) and the diorama (designed visually for individuals since there is only one position from which the right perspective can be achieved) have not actually provided more chances for interaction among visitors. Other exhibits, such as the telescope (to see further) and the microscope (to magnify) mostly apply modern techniques for the use of the individual. The arrangement of space and exhibits seems to provide facilities for those who seek to avoid encounters with strangers in the public space. The visitors gaze at the objects individually, yet at the same time experience the illusion of collectiveness. The space has allowed this co-existence. It might be interpreted as the embodiment of an increasingly individualized society.
Conclusion

*Architecture is only taken as an element of support, to ensure a certain allocation of people in space, a canalization of their circulation, as well as the coding of their reciprocal relations. So it is not only considered as an element in space, but is especially thought of as a plunge into a field of social relations in which it brings about some specific effects.* (Michel Foucault, 1997: 376-7)

As Foucault has stated in the above quotation, architecture can bring about some specific effects on social relations through the allocation and movement of people in it. However, how can this be achieved in detail? And in what mechanism can architecture have influences on the movement and gathering of people, by which to construct or embody the social relations? This study on the MoL shows that the museum space has, through the properties of spatial configurations, brought out the effects on visitors’ movement and gathering which have then created a sense of the “progress” of history and embodied a very individualised social relation.

The exhibition layout of the MoL is very deeply structured by the ideas about the history of London. The case study of the MoL shows that a particular way to learn history was mapped into its spatial organisation. It is a chronological way of learning history, through which a sense of “progress” is promoted. The classification of the different periods is arranged in a sequential way to illustrate the progress of the city. It is in this respect that this study confirms what Markus (1987) has argued: buildings are classifying devices. The spatial organisations are the embodiments of the “text,” through which the classifications of objects are created. The spatial layout of the Museum of London was very much rooted in the “text,” which was a particular field of knowledge. It is in this sense that knowledge seems to play a very crucial role in terms of the social function of the museum space.

While the spatial structure was dominated by the ideas about history, at the same time a specific kind of social relationship is embodied and formatted for specific societies. The mapping of the knowledge has a side-effect on how visitors encounter each other, and has therefore formed a special kind of “encounter pattern.” The study shows that the most integrated space of the MoL has turned into the “virtualised” meeting ground, where the encounter pattern became “visualised.” This visualisation of the encounter could be recognised as the embodiment of the contemporary social relationship which is very individualised.

It is argued in this research that the layouts of museums, therefore, tend to incorporate two kinds of social ritual. The first ritual involves the transmission of knowledge in a certain spatial form where physical movement is regulated through spatial arrangements. The second ritual involves the social association in the space where the patterns of social encounter are shaped through the properties of spatial configuration. These two kinds of ritual are performed by the museums in contemporary society. In some cases the function
of space is to control and guide movement in the interests of the informational and social contents of the layout, whereas in others the effect of space is to generate a pattern of encounter which is over and above the informational content of the layout. The resolution of these two rituals could be a way of identifying the museum types which appeared in different cultures and at different times. It is in this sense that a typological study on the museum layout could be a method of describing the different roles that the modern museums have played in societies.

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References

單線性空間與虛擬聚會場——倫敦博物館展示空間的知識布局之研究

黃旭*

摘要

根據很多學者的看法，物件的知識是博物館空間的重要形塑者，透過空間的組織，博物館也因此強化了觀眾對展示內容的記憶，但這種空間記憶術是如何被營造的？這種空間所產生的效果會有什麼社會影響？回答這些問題可能需要一個比較精確的空間分析方法。本研究以倫敦博物館 (Museum of London) 為研究對象，並使用「空間語構」(space syntax) 為分析方法探索這些問題。本文認為，倫敦博物館展示空間的布局，依據的是一種支配性的典範，與城市歷史如何被認為是一種「進步」相關。這種布局的空間效果展現在兩方面，第一是創造了一種博物館支配的、教導性經驗的「移動文化」(culture of movement)；第二是生產了一種以視覺為主的、「共同在場」(co-presence) 的接觸模式。本文認為，這些效果可以被認為是一種當代社會關係「個體化」的具體表現 (embodiment)。

關鍵詞：博物館空間、博物館展示、展示布局、倫敦博物館、空間語構

* 黃旭現任國立自然科學博物館展示組副研究員。