

# Reflective report on the relational aesthetics theory and the artwork practice in Volcano Theatre

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Jieying Liang, 2024

## 1. Introduction

Nicolas Bourriaud's theory of Relational Aesthetics, introduced in the 1990s, suggests that artworks are not merely material objects or independent visual experiences but also carriers of social relationships and interpersonal interactions. In this framework, artists create social situations or relationships, and the audience becomes an active participant or co-creator of the artwork. I believe this framework can be applied to urban renewal, particularly in the transformation and operation of Creative Enterprise Zones (CEZ). This remains unexplored in academic research and artist practice. Based on my experience in urban renewal within CEZs, I propose that urban renewal should begin with the reconstruction of relational aesthetics as its core.

Urban renewal covers various areas, including residential, commercial, cultural heritage, public facilities, and industrial zone transformation. My research will focus on the transformation of old industrial zones into CEZs, areas integrating commercial, office, social, and residential spaces through micro-renovation. I hypothesize that this process represents the reconstruction of relational aesthetics. Through theoretical derivation, case studies, participant observation, and artistic practice, I aim to demonstrate how CEZs foster interpersonal relationships through spatial design and operational strategies, aligning with the core concepts of relational aesthetics and expanding on Bourriaud's relational aesthetic framework. My research will explore how relational art practices within CEZs can rebuild social relations, promote interaction, strengthen community ties, and redefine urban space.

For the artistic practice aspect in Volcano Theatre, I chose the rock climbing room as a space for experimentation. Similar to micro-renovation in urban renewal (a method involving partial demolition and reconstruction while maintaining the original structure), I transformed the climbing room into an interactive art installation titled "Time Temple." Visitors enter this space to feel, think, communicate, and interact, becoming part of the artwork itself. Although the climbing room seemed out of place in the exhibition, this contrast inspired the concept for my artistic practice.

In "Time Temple," I used "time" as the creative theme and applied the theory of relational aesthetics. This theory emphasizes the relationships between the artist and audience, among participants, and between art and the social environment.

1. Artists and audiences: co-creating artistic experiences.
2. Audience to audience: social connections formed through participation.
3. Art and social environment: the role of art in a specific socio-cultural context and its impact on social relations.

To embody these relationships, I set up six clock devices, cosmic stone sculptures, and spatial interventions. The installation invites participants to engage physically and mentally, shifting their perception of time and movement. This work tests the hypothesis that spatial renewal can rebuild relationships and cultural connections through art, providing a tangible, experiential embodiment of the theory.

The primary goal of "Time Temple" is to explore the application of relational aesthetics in the real world by studying how spatial dynamics can encourage new forms of interaction and reflection. The installation is a practical experiment in the theory of relational aesthetics, creating social connections through art and supporting the idea that urban regeneration can be understood as reconstructing social relationships.

This spatial installation serves as a reflective case for my research and as a dynamic experimental expression of the relational aesthetics theory. The second part of this report will further develop the discussion on relational aesthetics from theoretical cross-disciplinary perspectives, including aesthetics, urban space design, sociology, and community participation theory. It will also compare relational art to similar categories like participatory art, community art, and public art. The third part will interpret the use of materials like lines, AI paintings, clocks, and stones in forming "Time Temple" and explore how artistic experience reshapes the perception of space and time. The fourth part will assess the impact of the installation, offering reflective criticism and expanding on the role of relational aesthetics in urban revitalization. This symbiotic relationship between theory and practice ensures that they influence and promote each other.

## 2. Literature background

### 2.1 Definition of relational aesthetics and its development from traditional aesthetics

Relational aesthetics, proposed by Nicolas Bourriaud in the 1990s, positions art as a medium for creating and reproducing interpersonal relationships. His book *Relational Aesthetics* (1998) provides a contemporary art theory that judges artworks based on their ability to foster social interaction. This theory aligns with the tradition of avant-garde art, aiming to address social problems through artistic practice (Bourriaud, 1998). Art history can be viewed as the evolution of relationships: from man and God in Medieval art, to man and the physical world in the Renaissance, and finally to interpersonal relationships in the 1990s. Bourriaud argues that the value of contemporary art lies in its capacity to promote social interactions, forming new networks and experiences (Bourriaud, 1998).

Relational aesthetics builds on concepts from Western Marxism, such as alienation and reification, discussed by Guy Debord in *The Society of the Spectacle* (Debord, 1967). Bourriaud critiques the commodification of human relationships, emphasizing the role of art in reconnecting people (Wang, 2013). The theory draws from Weber's rationalization, Lukács's reification, and the critical theory of the Frankfurt School. These ideas

are central to relational aesthetics, which attempts to restore social connections in an increasingly fragmented world (Bourriaud, 1998).

In the current information society, art strives to reestablish connections among individuals, which are increasingly mediated by technology. Relational aesthetics uses the following concepts to understand and analyze social relationships: **Social interstice**, where art functions as a social medium; **Encounter**, the state in which art brings people together; **Conviviality**, promoting harmonious social relations; and **Micro-utopia**, where everyday social interactions replace grand ideological utopias (Bourriaud, 1998). Relational aesthetics represents a shift from traditional aesthetics toward dynamic, interactive social practices, resonating with earlier movements such as Situationism (Debord, 1967) and Fluxus (Maciunas, 1963). Unlike Debord's pessimistic view of the "spectacle society," Bourriaud believes art can rebuild genuine social connections. This theory also connects with Joseph Beuys's Social Sculpture, which posits that "everyone is an artist" and that art plays an active role in societal change (Beuys, 1982).

## **2.2 Discussing relational aesthetics from the perspective of aesthetics and art theory**

Historically, relational aesthetics is part of the evolution of aesthetic thought. Kant's Critique of Judgment (1790) emphasizes the subjective nature of beauty, describing it as "purposiveness without purpose." Hegel built on this idea, proposing that art expresses the culture and spirit of its time, representing a form of spiritual and social expression (Lectures on Aesthetics, 1835). Diderot's emphasis on the interactive relationship between the audience and artwork, as discussed in Salon (1759), laid the foundation for the participatory nature of relational aesthetics.

Walter Benjamin's The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction (1936) highlights how technological progress transformed art from an elite object into something more accessible and social. This shift provided theoretical support for relational aesthetics, as it moved away from the object-centered art of the past. Beuys's Social Sculpture further reinforced the idea that art is a tool for creating and reshaping social relations (Beuys, 1982).

Deleuze and Guattari's A Thousand Plateaus (1980) introduced the concept of the "rhizome"—a decentralized, non-hierarchical network—mirroring the dynamic, relational networks that art fosters in relational aesthetics. They argued that art and social relations are fluid and constantly changing. Their earlier work, Anti-Oedipus (1972), discussed how subjectivity is continuously generated through social relations, an idea central to relational aesthetics (Deleuze & Guattari, 1980).

## **2.3 Understanding relational aesthetics from the perspectives of sociology, sociology of aesthetics, and the relationship between art and society**

From a sociological perspective, relational aesthetics can be understood through Marx's concept of alienation in Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts (1844). Marx argued that capitalism isolates individuals from their labor, creating a fragmented society. Relational aesthetics attempts to overcome this alienation by fostering direct, interpersonal interactions through art (Bourriaud, 1998). Marx's concept of "commodity

fetishism" (1867) also applies here, as relational aesthetics seeks to resist the objectification of social relations by focusing on human connections, rather than the commodification of interactions. Weber's notion of rationalization, discussed in *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* (1905), emphasized the separation of life spheres in modern society. Bourriaud viewed relational aesthetics as a response to this separation, aiming to rebuild social connections in a world dominated by functional, impersonal relationships (Bourriaud, 1998). Similarly, Simmel's work on the sociology of aesthetics, as outlined in *The Differentiation of the Social* (1890), emphasized the social nature of beauty, a concept central to relational aesthetics. Bourdieu's *Distinction* (1984) argued that art is shaped by its social context, with cultural capital influencing how people interact with and evaluate art. Bourriaud built on this idea, proposing that relational art functions as a framework for social interaction, with the artist serving as a "planner" of social relations (Bourriaud, 1998).

## **2.4 Discussion from similar art categories: participatory art, community art, public art, art intervention, and place-making**

### **2.4.1 Participatory Art and Relational Aesthetics**

Participatory art, like relational aesthetics, emphasizes audience involvement. However, participatory art often focuses on collective action and social activism, while relational aesthetics seeks to generate social relations in a more open-ended manner. Claire Bishop critiqued relational aesthetics for oversimplifying social interaction and ignoring the power dynamics and antagonism present in real society (Bishop, 2004).

### **2.4.2 Community Art and Relational Aesthetics**

Community art is an art practice that focuses on cooperation with specific community groups. It usually focuses on art education and public welfare activities. Community art shares a focus on interpersonal interaction, but its goals often involve deeper engagement with social issues such as race, class, and power. Lacy (1995) criticized relational aesthetics for its lack of depth in addressing these issues, while Kester (2011) argued that it reduces social interaction to an aesthetic experience, ignoring its ethical dimensions. Helguera (2011) suggested that relational aesthetics often remains confined to the art world, while community art seeks to create lasting social change in real-world contexts.

### **2.4.3 Public Art and Relational Aesthetics**

Public art, which engages with public spaces, overlaps with relational aesthetics in its emphasis on social interaction. Both forms challenge traditional art boundaries, bringing art into public life. However, public art often focuses on improving and beautifying spaces, while relational aesthetics emphasizes social relationships within those spaces (Doherty, 2005).

### **2.4.4 Art Intervention and Relational Aesthetics**

Art intervention directly engages with specific social or political contexts, aiming to provoke reflection or change (Bishop, 2012). Relational aesthetics, on the other hand, seeks to enhance existing social relationships rather than confront or disrupt them. Both explore the intersection of art and society, but with different aims and methods.

#### 2.4.5 Placemaking and Relational Aesthetics

Placemaking focuses on transforming public spaces to enhance community well-being through collaboration and participation (Project for Public Spaces, 2012). While both relational aesthetics and placemaking emphasize social interaction, placemaking prioritizes functionality and the practical needs of the community, while relational aesthetics focuses on the creation of interpersonal relationships through artistic situations.

### 2.5 History and theoretical development of urban renewal

In order to better explore how relational aesthetics can play a role in urban renewal and Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ), theories related to urban renewal are also crucial. Urban renewal theories, such as those proposed by Jacobs (1961) and Roberts (2000), emphasize the importance of revitalizing declining areas through social interaction and community engagement. The creative city theory (Landry, 2000; Florida, 2002) also highlights the role of cultural industries in urban regeneration, which aligns with relational aesthetics' goal of fostering social connections.

Placemaking theory, as discussed by Whyte (1980), offers a practical framework for exploring how relational aesthetics can be applied to urban spaces. Relational aesthetics focuses on social dynamics within art, while placemaking aims to improve physical spaces. The combination of these theories can enhance both social interaction and spatial functionality in urban renewal projects.

### 2.6 Gaps and shortcomings

Although relational aesthetics has been well studied in art theory, its application in urban revitalization remains underexplored. While theories like participatory art and placemaking help us understand art's role in social dynamics, further research is needed to fully integrate relational aesthetics into urban renewal practices.

## 3. Artistic Creation Practice in Volcano Theatre

### 3.1 Creative practice in space

I am grateful for this opportunity to create art in Volcano Theatre, which allows me to conduct an experiment on my understanding of relational aesthetics. I transformed the climbing room in the Volcano Theatre into a place I call "Time Temple". First of all, the reason why I chose this place for creation has been explained in the first part of the previous article which it is relative with urban renewal. The innovative transformation of space has always been my creative direction. I used ropes to surround the climbing room, creating a visual effect similar to the laser beam in James Bond movies. This is done because I want people to enter this space with their bodies in a movable way, rather than walking upright like we usually do. I believe that only by opening the body can we open the mind.

I created six clocks in the room, and the six clocks can make the sound of DIDADIDA at the same time. This is because the rock climbing room is airtight and has its own echo effect. The six clocks correspond to six themes:

(1) The first clock is the folder clock, which represents the folder where I keep my academic papers the past year and represents my study time.

(2) The second and third clocks are tea time boxes, representing my leisure time. One box contains tea I bought in Swansea, and the other box contains tea I bought in York, both of which carry memories of my travels in the UK. They represent my desire to give all items a time limit, just like my time in the UK. In my previous artwork, I also used these two clocks representing the time for dream and the time for self, which is different from the physical time. Time is not only a scale, but it should be a feeling and memory in our mind. For example, a person sleep for 10 minutes may make a dream for a year. The other example, when a person enters a flow state, their perception of time changes significantly, a phenomenon often referred to as time distortion. Flow state is a psychological state of deep focus and immersion in an activity, during which people tend to lose track of time. Specific time perceptions in a flow state may include: 1. Time acceleration: Many people feel that time passes much faster than it actually does when they are in a flow state. Several hours of work may feel like only a short period has passed. This occurs because attention is so focused on the task at hand that the individual becomes unaware of the passage of time. 2. Time suspension: Some individuals feel as though time "stops" or they lose any sense of time when in a flow state. This happens when they are deeply engaged and fully immersed in the present activity, causing time to seem irrelevant. 3. Time elongation: In rarer instances, a flow state can make time feel prolonged, especially during highly complex or technically demanding activities. People may experience each moment more vividly, creating a sensation that time has slowed down. Time perception in a flow state is subjective and varies by individual, but it generally involves a sense of detachment from or distortion of the passage of time.

(3) The other three clocks correspond to the three sets of paintings I generated using AI, representing the time I interacted with AI. Each painting corresponds to a different theme:

**The first painting** is my imaginary story of a cat and a rabbit creating the world. The cat and rabbit symbolize night and day, like Yin and Yang in Taoism. They are in a process of transformation - the cat's ears grow longer and become a rabbit, and the rabbit's tail grows longer and becomes the cat's tail. The medium of this transformation is an apple. The cat eats the red apple and turns back into a kind rabbit, and the kind rabbit eats the green apple and turns back into an evil cat. This transformation process also involves their love of British "skin potatoes". I did not give specific instructions, but told the AI this story in a narrative way, allowing it to generate images that represent the AI's thought process.

**The second painting** is also generated by AI and records the frequencies of sound vibrations. Sound frequencies can resonate with body frequencies and affect emotions, just like classical music was tuned to 432 Hz and changed to 440 Hz after World War II, which has different effects on people's emotions. This painting is composed of images formed by vibrations of different frequencies, including Solfeggio scale (it refers to a set of specific frequencies that are believed to have healing properties and are used in meditation, sound therapy, and spiritual practices. The most commonly referenced frequencies include 396 Hz, 417 Hz, 528 Hz, 639 Hz, 741 Hz, and 852 Hz.) It is believed that it can help to heal cells, relieve pain, clear negative energy and enhance intuitive awareness. I also included frequencies that people emit during sleep. The

images are made of these frequencies and are assigned a time, representing the environmental time around us.

**The third painting** is also generated by AI and represents my mental state when I meditate in space. It reflects my connection with the power of nature and the stars, and my perception of the energy of time. The theme of this painting revolves around meditation on the stars, the perception of time, the left and right hemispheres of the brain, various organs of the body, and bees - bees and honey are my source of energy because I like to eat honey.

**In addition**, I created a group of stones arranged in the shape of the Big Dipper at the entrance of the Time temple. For me, the Big Dipper is the most important constellation because the North Star has stayed in the sky for thousands of years and is not affected by time.

On the wall I hung an installation showing seven different constellations, inspired by looking at the stars using Google Sky Maps one night in Swansea. I depicted the constellations in stone and combined them with Taoist symbols. That was the concept behind the creation of the whole room.

### 3.2 Interaction Design

For interactive design, I set 3 core rules in the exhibition area:

**Rule No.1**, audience must take off your shoes when entering the space: this is motivated by the protection of the site, but if think it further, it is a screening of intimacy. Because, not everyone is willing to take off their shoes. However, whether you are willing to take off your shoes has actually become a screening process for the target group. In relational art, you cannot attract everyone, but only a small number of people who can resonate with your work, so that they can experience a subtle relationship pleasure in the work. At the moment of taking off shoes, stepping on the thick sponge is a reservation for the pleasure of physical release. As mentioned in Section 2 above, the experience of beauty lies in a universal and purposeless pleasure. Therefore, only those who are willing to take off their shoes can become the interactive audience of this work. If people are unwilling or impulsive enough to take off their shoes, they can not feel body pleasures in the space.

**Rule No.2**, no talking or holding hands: "if you come alone, please do not speak after entering; if you come with more than one person, please hold hands with all your companions and keep your hands together until leave ". Because physical contact is the most basic relationship experience. While it is a coincidence that most of the spatial works I have made in the past few years require taking off shoes. Maybe this is part of the "prior image" in my mind.

**Rule No.3**, only can interact with me on Instagram: " I am inside, but I will not see you, but welcome to talk to me on Instagram by following me. I or my robot will reply to you immediately, but you will never be able to tell when it is me and when it is my robot ". In this rule, I hope to build a relationship between the audience and the social media robot. I set up the robot to automatically reply on my Instagram. Nowadays,

chatbots can already answer most chat questions, and I can also see the chat content, but the audience cannot tell whether the person talking to you on Instagram is a real person or a robot. I was on site for 5 days in the exhibit, I hope to establish these level of relationship with the audience.

I also set up a message interaction area at the entrance of the exhibition area. I placed my personal website <https://jieyingl.cargo.site> and Instagram QR code in the message interaction area , as well as a white paper for visitors to leave messages.

### **3.3 Creation Expectations**

The expected outcomes of the “Temple of Time” project are expected to reinforce the concepts explored in relational aesthetics and participatory art. The project was designed and implemented to test the theoretical proposition that art can be a medium to promote social interaction and build community cohesion. By transforming the space into a non-linear, participatory manner, participants will engage with themes of time, space, and consciousness. The participants’ interactions with the various symbolic elements within “Time Temple” are expected to generate new social experiences and networks, which Bourriaud believes are the core values of relational art.

Secondly, demonstrating the organic relationship between practice and theory. The design of the installation and its interaction with participants illustrates the principles of relational aesthetics, highlighting how art can transform spaces and foster deeper social connections. This symbiotic relationship ensures that theoretical insights are not just abstract ideas, but are based on tangible empirical evidence.

Thirdly, provides a vivid, illustrative example of how art can be used as a tool for social and cultural regeneration within urban spaces. The installation not only engaged participants physically , but also invited them to reflect on broader themes of time, change, and social interaction. This reflection will hopefully provide valuable insights into how art can reshape social dynamics, insights that can be further explored in future research. It helps bridge the gap between theory and practice, making abstract concepts more accessible and understandable to a wider audience.

## **4. Discussion**

### **4.1 Discussion on my core experimental**

#### **(1) Why choose "time" as the theme?**

When I first stepped into the climbing room, the sensation of weightlessness caused by the thick sponge floor reminded me of gravitational time dilation from general relativity. In stronger gravitational fields, time moves slower, while in weaker ones, it speeds up. The compressed sponge reduced the gravitational reaction force, creating a sense of being "sucked in," which made time seem to pass faster. This experience, along with a shift in focus to the feet, distracted from the passage of time and created a relaxed feeling where time was less noticeable. Inspired by this illusion of time, I chose to explore time as a central theme in my work.

This connects to the philosophical ideas of Hegel's "absolute spirit" and Kant's "transcendental time stipulation." I believed that time must exist in our absolute spirit, hoping to evoke the audience's awareness of time's deeper meaning. However, most visitors did not resonate with this concept. The only strong reaction I observed was from a visitor who laughed at an installation of a cat biting an apple, simply because it reminded him of his own cat. He did not take off his shoes, which may suggest a missed connection between the artwork and the visitor's experience of time.

## **(2) Experiments focusing on the body itself**

The work encouraged participants to engage with their bodies by requiring them to remove their shoes upon entering, symbolizing a release from everyday constraints. The sound of six clocks ticking simultaneously, combined with the echo in the space, was intended to calm the visitors and help them focus on their heartbeat—an effect I hoped would lead them to reconnect with their physical selves.

However, few visitors were willing to fully engage by entering the space and sitting quietly. Among those who did, about 30% chose to crawl in, imitating cats—a behavior likely influenced by their own experiences as cat owners. This observation led me to wonder if cats act as guides for reconnecting with our bodies. Nevertheless, participation remained limited. One visitor suggested that the lines I installed to simulate an infrared challenge, inspired by James Bond, may have been perceived as barriers rather than opportunities for movement, preventing full interaction with the space. Additionally, the cleanliness of the environment could have discouraged visitors from removing their shoes, as people may feel more comfortable taking off shoes in pristine environments, such as mosques in Abu Dhabi or Brunei.

## **(3) Why want to go in?**

Some visitors hesitated to enter, asking whether they needed to complete tasks, enter a passcode, or if prizes were involved. These questions reflect the lingering influence of teleological thinking—the idea that everything must have a clear purpose or goal. Bourriaud, in *Relational Aesthetics*, criticized the remnants of this teleological view from modernity, arguing that modernity no longer follows a fixed rationalist or political goal (Bourriaud, 1998). Despite the rejection of teleology in modern art, it remains ingrained in many people's minds.

When I created a similar space in China, people entered more readily, likely influenced by the country's "internet celebrity" economy, where leisure activities often involve taking photos and checking in at trendy spots to share on social media. In these cases, the purpose of entering the space was not to experience the art but to capture unique images. This phenomenon may explain the surge in visitors to contemporary art exhibitions in China—driven by social media trends rather than a genuine love of art. In contrast, the UK lacks a strong culture of internet check-ins, and few people take photos in everyday life, resulting in fewer visitors entering my space. This observation led me to consider whether providing visitors with a clear "purpose" could increase engagement, though this might dilute the intended spontaneity of the work, losing the "screening" factor of whether someone is truly willing to take off their shoes and engage.

## **(4) What value can I provide to others?**

Bourriaud said, "Artistic activities are a game, and its form, mode and function evolve with the times and social context, and are not static." In my interpretation, I want to rewrite a four-character Chinese idiom "YOU XI REN JIAN 游戏人间" to define my understanding of art. These four characters translated into English as "travel and play between people and space." This is my requirement for my own creation, and it is also the attitude that I think artists should have towards artistic creation. Therefore, I hope to provide others with a game in a real space, with interaction between people. This is the value I hope to create. But unfortunately, when I built this game space in Volcano, no one was willing to play in it, which was the failure of my creation.

Michel de Certeau suggested that "artists are tenants of culture" (Certeau, 1984). I wondered which culture I should draw upon to create an art space that resonates with people. Perhaps the physical experience of cats and their body aesthetic could inspire a culture of engagement, inviting participants to reconnect with their bodies and emotions in a playful and meaningful way.

## **4.2 Discussion of the Framework of Relational Aesthetics**

Bourriaud's theoretical framework in Relational Aesthetics is presented in a non-structured, essayistic style. Combining his ideas with Claire Bishop's critique in "Antagonism and Relational Aesthetics" (2004), I summarized the following five core elements as a framework of relational aesthetics and applied them to my creative practice:

### **1. Artworks as carriers of social relations and tools for communication and cooperation**

Relational aesthetics holds that art is not a standalone object but a medium for social interaction. Artists create spaces where the audience participates, making communication and collaboration integral to the work. The value of the artwork lies in the relationships it generates. In my experiment, the lack of participants and the limited interaction within the space made the work less successful in promoting these social connections. Although I documented some communication and collaboration, the interaction did not reach the level necessary to generate and activate social relationships.

### **2. Resisting isolated individualism**

Relational aesthetics emerged as a response to the individualism and consumerism of modern society, aiming to rebuild connections between people (Bourriaud, 1998). In my creation, the sense of loneliness reflected my own personal isolation. However, I was pleased to meet like-minded individuals who understood my creative intentions, and I tried to counteract isolation by encouraging visitors to leave messages in a guestbook. This aspect of the work helped to foster some connections.

### **3. Redefinition of space and environment**

In relational aesthetics, artists often transform traditional exhibition spaces into interactive platforms. I believe my remodeling of the climbing room into an immersive installation was successful. Participants could move through the space, walking between laser-like ropes that symbolized breaking traditional movements to open their minds. The space's design, which encouraged

relaxation and reflection on the passage of time, seemed to be effective, as evidenced by the overall feedback, photos, and video records.

#### **4. Prominence of the time dimension**

Relational art unfolds over time, allowing relationships to develop gradually. In Time Temple, the six clocks represented different perceptions of time—learning, relaxation, and interaction with artificial intelligence. Time was not just a unit of measurement but an experiential concept. However, the exhibition's short duration (8 days) limited the accumulation of experiences, and many friends I invited missed the opportunity to engage due to time constraints.

#### **5. Analysis of three pairs of relationships**

The three pairs of relationships central to relational aesthetics are: artist and audience (co-creation), audience to audience (social connection), and art and environment (impact on social relations). In Time Temple, co-creation was minimal, with only one visitor actively engaging with the space. Audience-to-audience interaction was also limited by the small number of participants. However, the reshaping of the space was successful, with one couple over 60 commenting that they enjoyed the physical and mental challenge the space presented. The three sets of relationships require more time and a larger audience to fully manifest, which I aim to improve in future projects.

## **5. Conclusion**

### **5.1 Conclusion of Artworks practice in Volcano Theater**

I transformed an art gallery's climbing room into the "Temple of Time", inviting participants to cross laser-like ropes, symbolizing a break from traditional physical movements to open the mind, aiming to explore the intersection of time, space and consciousness, drawing on themes from Taoism, sound frequencies and cosmic symbolism. The aim of this work is to investigate how the physical and conceptual elements of time affect social interaction and individual perception in a shared space. Methodologically, the installation employs participatory art techniques, inviting the audience to interact with the space in a way that challenges their usual physical and mental habits. By fusing concepts such as time, movement and spatial meditation, "Time Temple" is a creative experiment and a space for reflection, highlighting the organic relationship between practical work and the theoretical foundations of my research.

### **5.2 Theoretical and practical summary**

Through an analysis of relational aesthetics theory and combined with the practice, explores its application and potential in urban renewal and CEZ transformation. First, a detailed review of the historical development and concept of relational aesthetics were being made, and proposes that art is not only a visual or material product, but also a process of generating social relations. Through the theoretical interpretation of Nicolas Bourriaud, three core relationships between artists, audiences, and social environment were emphasizes. In this framework, art becomes a medium to promote social interaction.

Through the creative practice at the Volcano Theatre, it shows how to reshape people's perception of space and time through time-themed art installations, and explores the social function of art works in public spaces.

Although the creative practice encountered challenges such as low audience participation and limited spatial interaction, new thinking directions for future creations by reflecting on cultural differences and audience behavior. Moreover, a gap in the application of relational aesthetics in urban renewal has been written, and proposes a research direction for further exploring the construction of social relations in Creative Enterprise Zone (CEZ) in my future research.

In general, this article provides a new perspective for the practical application of relational aesthetics theory in real space, and proposes the possibility of reshaping social relations and enhancing spatial interactive experience through art, which is innovative in both theory and practice.

### 5.3 Next steps

My next step is collecting the exhibitions and related artists' works mentioned by Bourriaud as relational art. For example, in 1996, Bourriaud held an exhibition called "Traffic" at the Bordeaux Museum of Contemporary Art in France. In this exhibition, he first used the concept of relational aesthetics to summarize the exhibited artworks, including Dominique Gonzalez-Foerster, Liam Gillick, Pierre Huyghe and Rirkrit Tiravanija. After this exhibition, Bourriaud curated the exhibition "Contact: Relational Art from the 1990s to the Present" at the San Francisco Academy of Art in the United States in 2002. The exhibition invited some artists from the 1996 "Traffic" exhibition, such as Tiravanija and Huyghe. Each of the above artists is worth studying. I plan to accumulate these case materials, and provide more specific practical nutrients for my next creation.

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