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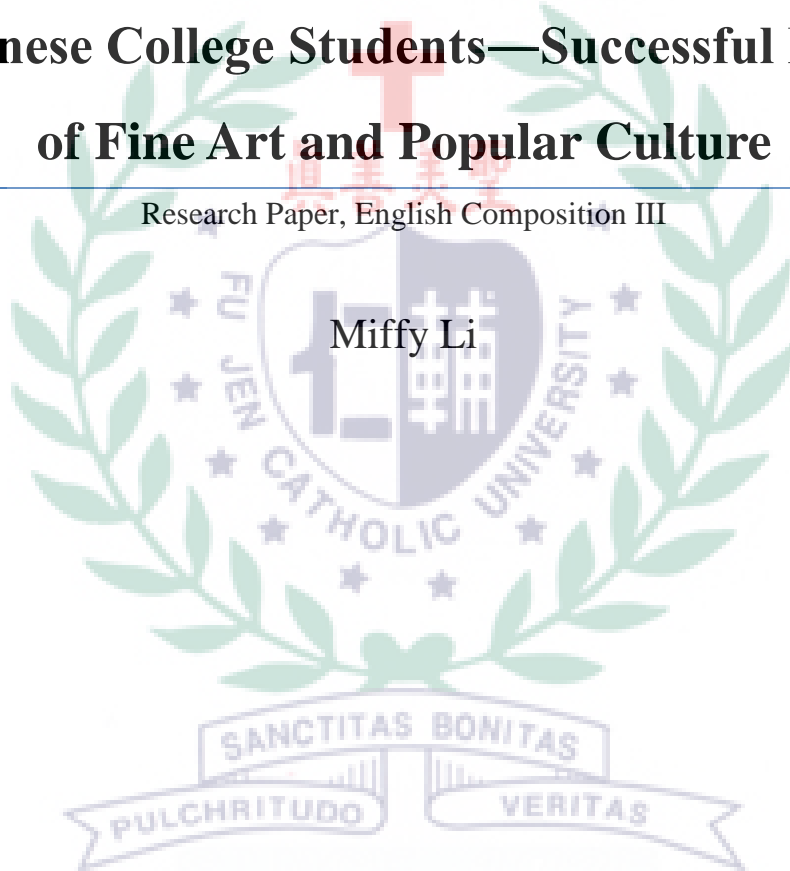
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# **Cultural and Creative Parks Appeal to Taiwanese College Students—Successful Mixing of Fine Art and Popular Culture**

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Research Paper, English Composition III

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## Cultural and Creative Parks Appeal to Taiwanese College Students

### —Successful Mixing of Fine Art and Popular Culture

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## Abstract

Cultural and Creative Parks have been an issue of debate in Taiwan recently, as many criticize them and find them too commercialized. This research paper, however, argues that Cultural and Creative Park, different from museums, can mix art and popular culture successfully. Through interviews and surveys of Taiwanese college students' visiting experiences, I prove that Cultural and Creative Parks appeal to Taiwanese college students and efficiently shorten the distance between art and the multitude.

### Cultural and Creative Parks Appeal to Taiwanese College Students

#### —Successful Mixing of Fine Art and Popular Culture

In Taiwan, Cultural and Creative Industry is new as a government promoted industry. With the subsidies from the government, several Cultural and Creative Parks have been set up in cities and counties in recent years. The Ministry of Culture established the R.O.C. Law for the Development of the Cultural and Creative Industries in 2010 in order to provide support to various cultural and creative industries – defined as “industries that originate from creativity or accumulation of culture which through the formation and application of intellectual properties, possess potential capacities to create wealth and job opportunities, enhance the citizens’ capacity for arts, and elevate the citizens’ living environment” in the Act – by withdrawing a” [c]ertain portion of the National Development Fund [in order to] invest in Cultural and Creative Industries” (Art. 3 and 9). Cultural and Creative Parks hold artistic performances, special festivals, and exhibitions of both popular culture and fine art and they are usually integrated with other business, for instance, restaurants and cultural and creative product stores. The number of visitors is on the rise with time. According to LaVie magazine, The Pier-2 Art Center in Kaohsiung had

three million visitors in 2013 and two million nine hundred and ninety thousand visitors from January to August in 2014. The number of visitors to Song Shan Cultural and Creative Park is over ten million in three years (Lin). As Cultural and Creative Parks gradually gain popularity among the public in Taiwan, some of them become tourist spots and set the trend of visiting exhibitions among the younger generations. Moreover, Cultural and Creative Parks provide youths with a different learning experience from that of museums and change their opinion of exhibitions.

Nevertheless, there is a recent debate on the over-commercialization of Cultural and Creative Parks. As Taipei Times reported, “[s]ince Ko Wen-je (柯文哲) became Taipei mayor late last year, his administration has produced a regular stream of startlingly direct announcements. The latest was a harsh critique of creative and cultural industries, in which the commissioner of the Taipei Department of Urban Development, Lin Jou-min (林洲民), declared Huashan 1914 Creative Park, Songshan Creative Park and several others to be ‘fake cultural parks’ in a Facebook post on [April 12<sup>th</sup>].” On the other hand, ex-Cultural Affairs Department chief Lee Yong-ping (李永萍) replied that Songshan Creative Park is an industry chain, using the profit of BOT to sustain local cultural and creative industries which have low profitability in the initial development stage. I support the idea of industry chain and, for me as a college student, Cultural and Creative Parks can bring significant and new learning experience. Therefore, this research paper does not join the debate over what percentage of commercial area Cultural and Creative Parks should have; rather, I argue that Cultural and Creative Parks successfully mix art and popular culture. Cultural and Creative Parks provide an area where art and popular culture can coexist and interact creatively, which attracts Taiwanese college students in a way different from that of museums. This research paper will discuss how Cultural and Creative Parks shorten the distance between art and the general public and how they are

appealing to Taiwanese college students.

Through observing the factors that make Cultural and Creative Parks popular within a short time and doing the research of individual cases of Cultural and Creative Parks, I propose three hypotheses as follows. First of all, most Taiwanese college students consider visiting Cultural and Creative Parks an entertainment which is popular with their peers. Next, compared with museums, Cultural and Creative Parks are similar in objectives but more accessible to Taiwanese college students as the impression of them is more lighthearted. Combined with other businesses, such as restaurants and cultural and creative product stores, Cultural and Creative Parks attract customers and visitors in a new way. Most importantly, the distance between art and the general public, like that of between high art and popular culture, has been shortened with the playful atmosphere created by the more interactive and less solemn exhibitions in Cultural and Creative Parks. This kind of atmosphere appeals to a wide range of visitors as opposed to purely art aficionados. There is thus at the very least an easily available platform for the masses to experience the impact of art, and at best a potential for the arts to grow as a cultural aspect of society.

To prove the hypotheses, there are some research questions being investigated in this essay through surveys, questionnaires, and analysis:

1. What percentage of Taiwanese college students like to visit Cultural and Creative Parks?
2. Why do Taiwanese college students visit Cultural and Creative Parks?
3. Through what media do Taiwanese college students usually get the information of Cultural and Creative Parks?
4. What attracts Taiwanese college students the most in Cultural and Creative Parks?
5. To Taiwanese college students, do the fine art exhibitions held in the Culture and Creative Parks appear to be more interesting than those in the museums?

6. Do Taiwanese college students think that Cultural and Creative Parks successfully shortened the distance between art and the general public?

### **Literature Review**

Both Wang's and Falk and Dierking's studies of museum experiences can serve as models for Creative and Cultural Parks. Wang argues that the museum offers a setting for self-directed learning, but not controlled learning, to take place (95-96). The setting of museums, and by extension, Cultural and Creative Parks, is normally non-competitive and non-judgmental while being contextually relevant. The museum's learning environment also acts as a social setting for the exchange of high culture with the visitor. In this research, I will use the museum learning model on Cultural and Creative Parks to see if they share the same functions, while being more accessible for the general public.

Of the two studies on museum's functions, moreover, I use John H. Falk and Lynn D. Dierking's museum model as a model framework to design the questionnaire to evaluate the Cultural and Creative Parks. This framework is based on the Interactive Experience Model, which in turn branches out to three contexts. The personal context includes factors such as visitor motive, areas and objects of interest. This helps to create an enjoyable museum experience, where the visitor can fulfill his or her self-expectations of the visit while catering to their own timetable. The social context includes factors such as society-driven activities and visitor interaction with museum guides, all of which can affect the museum experience. Finally, the physical context explains how a museum visit is based on the freedom of each individual visitor, and is based on the artifacts displayed as well as the architecture of the museum itself. The physical setting of the museum itself has a profound impact on the museum visitor (1-7).

Understandably, Cultural and Creative industries, unlike museums, are inseparable from commercial activities. Consequently, the dispute about Cultural and Creative Parks' commercialization arises. According to Zhu, firstly Cultural and Creative Industries create business opportunities for cultures which have none. Secondly, for cultures with economic activities, Cultural and Creative Industries create more opportunities for such activities and enhance their competitiveness.<sup>1</sup> From this aspect, it is clear that the purpose of Cultural and Creative Industries is to encourage cultural and economic growth simultaneously, so the aspect of commercialization is inevitable.

The thing people should acknowledge is that, at some level, commercialization represents popularization. While museums mostly provide a purely artistic environment and a serious atmosphere, Cultural and Creative Parks exhibit arts in a friendlier atmosphere and attract general people who may not hold much interest in fine art with not only novel learning environment but also an alternative for shopping. Therefore, the target group of Cultural and Creative Parks is larger than that of museums, and the exposure of fine art is enhanced. Furthermore, with fine art and popular culture successfully mixed in an air of relaxation and liveliness, Cultural and Creative Parks become popular and serve as a new platform to promote art.

## **Methodology**

To verify the hypothesis mentioned above, this research adopts two methods to collect primary sources of information: questionnaires on two case study exhibitions and general questionnaires on experiences of visiting Cultural and Creative Parks. The investigation target was college students in Taiwan.

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<sup>1</sup>文創的基本思維是：在文化、創意相關活動中創造經濟活動。其中包含兩層意義：第一是從原來沒有經濟活動的文化活動，創造經濟活動；第二是在原帶有經濟活動的文化活動上，創造更多的經濟活動。

Firstly, Disney's Ninetieth Anniversary Exhibition and Chen Cheng Po Hundred-Twentieth Year Exhibition were taken respectively as the cases of fine art and popular culture exhibitions in Song Shan Cultural and Creative Park. Undergraduate student visitors of one or both exhibitions were randomly chosen to do the online questionnaires of their visiting motives and reflections from January to February, 2015. In total, twenty-six responses were collected, including thirteen people visiting Disney's Ninetieth Anniversary Exhibition, twelve, Chen Cheng Po Hundred-Twentieth Year Exhibition, and one visiting both.

Secondly, an online survey was conducted through the website "mySurvey" to understand Taiwanese college students' point of view in Cultural and Creative Parks and their evaluations after their visits to Cultural and Creative Parks in Taiwan. The examples listed in the online questionnaires are from the "2014 Top 10 Cultural and Creative Parks" based on "2014 Taiwan Cultural and Creative Industries 100 Awards" (2014). There were sixty-two respondents but only fifty-nine valid responses, made by those who had the experience of visiting Cultural and Creative Parks.

## **Data Analysis**

### *Online survey analysis*

According to the fifty-nine online survey responses from Taiwanese college students, the majority of Taiwanese college students hold keen interest in Cultural and Creative Parks. Out of the fifty-nine responses, fifty-four are interested; five remain neutral, while no one dislikes them. Song Shan Cultural and Creative Park, Hua Shan 1914 Creative Park and The Pier-2 Art Center were chosen to be their favorite ones.



Entertainment	34%
Tourism	24%
Peer influence	18%
Extracurricular learning	11%
Shopping	6%
Food	5%
Other	2%

The motives of Taiwanese college students visiting Cultural and Creative Parks are categorized into entertainment, tourism, peer influence, extracurricular learning, shopping, and food. Thirty-four percent of the respondents visit Cultural and Creative Parks for entertainment, twenty-four are there as tourists, eighteen are influenced by the trend among peers. However, only six percent visit for the purpose of shopping and five percent for food. Basically, my study shows that youths visit Cultural and Creative Parks for fun, for relaxation, or even for extracurricular learning, instead of consumption of food or goods. Thus, it shows that although the percentage of commercial activity in some Cultural and Creative Parks exceeds the government's regulation, the presence of these activities is not considered the most appealing aspect of the Cultural and Creative Parks for Taiwanese college students. Therefore, when considering the controversy of over-commercialization for Cultural and Creative Parks, my study shows that it does not have a significant impact on Taiwanese college students. As shown from my study, the major reason behind their visit to Cultural and Creative Parks do not include an interest in the commercial aspects of the parks, therefore the claim that the parks are over-commercialized does not ring true. This argument can be further supported by showing the results of the main attractions of

Cultural and Creative Parks in the next paragraph.

Exhibitions	30%
Cultural and creative products	22%
Artistic performance	19%
Special festivals	17%
Street performance	7%
Restaurants	6%
Other	1%

In Cultural and Creative Parks, exhibitions attract Taiwanese college students the most and nineteen percent of the respondents value the artistic performance there, which confirms the idea that Cultural and Creative Parks are supposed to serve artistic purposes rather than business-related ones. Although cultural and creative products are voted second, they are the combination of art, culture and business which helps the general public's artistic appreciation grow. The statistics also shows that Cultural and Creative Parks are another alternative for people to visit exhibitions other than at museums. Cultural and Creative Parks not only provide amusement but also increase opportunity for the masses to understand art. Plus, as mentioned in the previous paragraph the respondents visit Cultural and Creative Parks mainly to seek entertainment, and as shown in this statistics they find exhibitions most attractive. This hence suggests that going to the exhibitions in Cultural and Creative Parks may be a more relaxing and entertaining activity from the seemingly more formal and serious learning experience in museums.

Friends and relatives	29%
Social network posts	26%
Official websites	17%
Advertisement in public places	16%
Online advertisement	10%
Other	2%

Most of the respondents receive the information about Cultural and Creative Parks from their friends and relatives (twenty-nine percent) and social networks (twenty-six percent) such as Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Yet, the official advertisement in public places and the official websites do not have as much effect as the recommendation from their acquaintances.

Sixty-three percent of the respondents claim that they are interested in exhibitions held by both Cultural and Creative Parks and museums, while twenty-nine percent of them prefer the ones in Cultural and Creative Parks. There are around fifty-nine percent of respondents stating that both places have respective features and they hold distinctive kinds of exhibitions. Furthermore, the atmospheres are different as the themes of Cultural and Creative Parks' exhibitions are closer to daily life and popular culture but museums give the impression of professional and serious.

In addition, one of the respondents who is fond of exhibitions and artistic performance claims that "both have their merits; a museum will be more structured and informative while the cultural park offers a more relaxing and free-flowing experience to immerse in the arts." On the other hand, twenty-nine percent of the survey respondents favor Cultural and Creative Parks' exhibitions more because they present art in a more understandable way and some of them are free of charge. It

suggests that Cultural and Creative Parks promote art in an effective way by integrating art with popular culture.

Moreover, up to ninety percent of the respondents agree with the statement that Cultural and Creative Parks successfully make art less distant and increase people's willingness to understand fine art. Several respondents praise that Cultural and Creative Parks hold more interactive exhibitions, which are more appealing and impressive to visitors. Another respondent who is interesting in visiting Cultural and Creative Parks and has been to several ones states that Cultural and Creative Parks allow the common people to have easy access to art by bringing artistic works to the masses, and thus reduces the notion that art is an exclusive source of entertainment meant only for a specific group of people. Hence, it can be proved that Cultural and Creative Parks essentially help to spread the appeal of art to Taiwanese college students.

#### *Case study questionnaire analysis*

My case study serve for me to further find out how popular culture and high art exhibitions are received at Cultural Park and whether they influence each other positively. There are two exhibitions in Song Shan Cultural and Creative Park chosen as the case study, Disney's Ninetieth Anniversary Exhibition and Chen Cheng Po Hundred-Twentieth Year Exhibition. They are representative as one stands for foreign popular culture and the other stands for local fine art.

Foreign popular culture exhibitions such as Disney's Ninetieth Anniversary Exhibition, attract more visitors other than those who are already fond of fine art. The survey shows that when the number of visitors rises, the chances for the local art exhibition to be appreciated are also increased, as almost half of the Disney respondents claim that they would like to visit Chen Cheng Po Hundred-Twentieth

Year Exhibition. Besides, there is one significant attraction of Chen Cheng Po Hundred-Twentieth Year Exhibition, the interactivity, which is the essence of Cultural and Creative Parks. For instance, the visitor can trigger different elements in the painting to receive the background knowledge of it and a spacious area with sensor is designed for children to interact with the geese in Chen's painting. The interactivity breaks the ordinary frame of art exhibitions and this exhibition adopts activities that efficiently motivate visitors' learning and provide them the sense of involvement. This feature makes the exhibition more enthralling. In this case, there may be more people gaining the knowledge of fine art on account of the attraction of the popular culture exhibition.

The questionnaires are randomly distributed to the visitor from different colleges, and there are twenty-six valid questionnaires collected in total. According to the survey result, there are thirteen people visiting Disney's Ninetieth Anniversary Exhibition and twelve visiting Chen Cheng Po Hundred-Twentieth Year Exhibition and one visiting both. Six out of thirteen Disney respondents show their interest in Chen Cheng Po Hundred-Twentieth Year Exhibition and ten out of twelve Chen respondents are interested in Disney's Ninetieth Anniversary Exhibition. These six Disney respondents are willing to visit Chen Cheng Po Hundred-Twentieth Year Exhibition because it is interactive and free of charge; these ten respondents consider Disney's Ninetieth Anniversary Exhibition an fascinating one to visit. On the other hand, the main reason given by those who do not want to go to the other exhibition is that they are not interested in the other exhibition but they will consider visiting if they have spare time or if another exhibition is for free. Hence, the strategy of Cultural and Creative Parks holding some special popular culture exhibitions and some free art exhibitions at the same time is a success in promoting art. Since the two kinds of exhibitions are held in the same area, which may increase the opportunity for

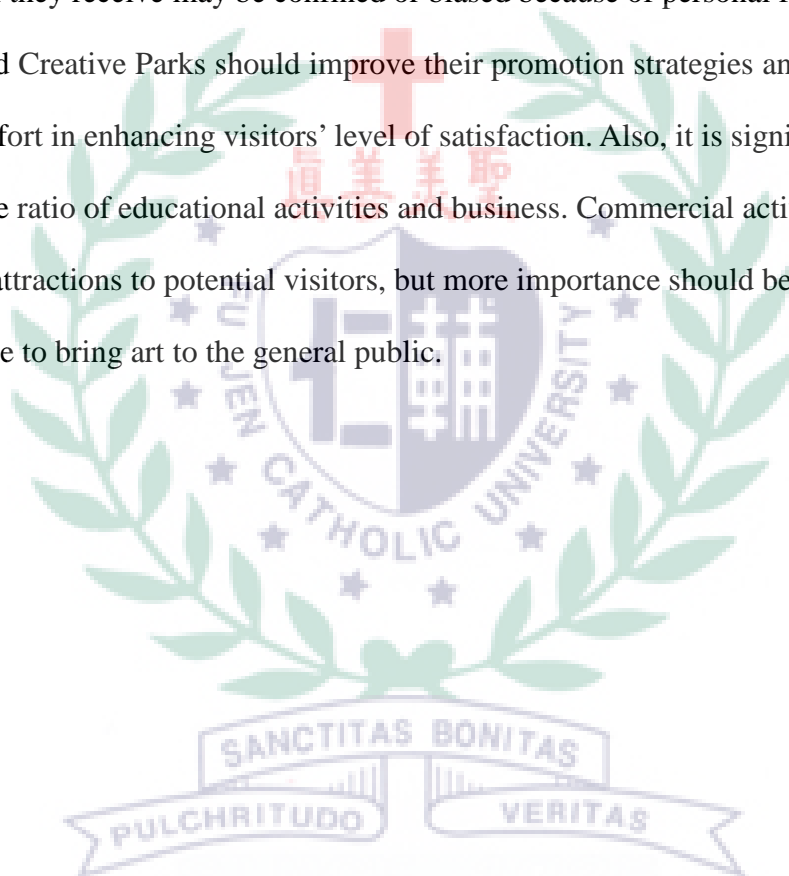
the visitors to pay attention to the exhibitions of different themes, and the art exhibitions cost no entrance fee and possess some attractive features, such as creativity or interactivity, visitors are indirectly encouraged to visit the art exhibitions.

## **Conclusion**

On the basis of the online survey and case study, it can be indicated that Cultural and Creative Parks appeal to Taiwanese college students because they provide a new experience to understand art which differs from the one given by museums. Taiwanese college students value the relaxing atmosphere at Cultural and Creative Parks, mostly influencing by their peers. Although they intend to visit there for entertainment, they, at some level, learn from the exhibitions and raise their appreciation of art since their experiences of visiting are joyful. Unlike museums for which students consider as distant formal educational places, Cultural and Creative Parks are closer to the mass and they serve as a more acceptable platform to introduce fine art to common people. Even if there are some controversies against the commercialization of Cultural and Creative Parks, it is understandable that although there are subsidies from the government, Cultural and Creative Parks still need some alternative sources of revenue to supplement the expenditure so that they are able to continue contributing to sustaining an approachable artistic environment for society. This is evident from a television documentary of Cultural and Creative Parks produced by Taiwan Public Television, in which it is reported that the goal of Cultural and Creative Parks is to support sixty percent of the cultural and creative portion with forty percent of business portion. Moreover, it is proved that consumption is not the major visiting reason for Taiwanese college students. The issue of Cultural and Creative Parks' over-commercialization shall not diminish their contribution to popularizing fine art and integrate it with popular culture. Therefore, Cultural and

Creative Parks can be considered as a successful modification to shorten the distance between art and the multitude which appeals to Taiwanese college students.

Due to the limited scope of this research paper, the managing strategy and its effect are not included. According to the result of questionnaires and surveys, many Taiwanese college students enjoy visiting Cultural and Creative Parks; however, the official propaganda is not as effective as the recommendation of acquaintances. The information they receive may be confined or biased because of personal factors. Thus, Cultural and Creative Parks should improve their promotion strategies and meanwhile, put more effort in enhancing visitors' level of satisfaction. Also, it is significant to maintain the ratio of educational activities and business. Commercial activities can be part of the attractions to potential visitors, but more importance should be placed on the objective to bring art to the general public.





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