Returning to Memory

An Exhibition of Oracle Bone Script

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A research project submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Cultural and Creative Practice

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ABSTRACT

RESEARCH QUESTION

How can curatorial strategies be used to promote ancient Chinese prophetic texts known as oracle bone script, to engage and reconnect a contemporary audience with this historical writing form?

Oracle bone script was the earliest form of Chinese characters carved on turtle plastrons and animal bones using a sharp tool. Oracle bone script was used for divination[1] through fire in the Shang dynasty (c.1600-1046 BCE). This research explores ways to promote and enhance audience interest in the script through storytelling strategies that use interactive technology in an exhibition context. Through the course of this study, I found that there is a lack of publicity and cultural engagement with oracle bone script and that this has contributed to the general public knowing little about its historical importance. Therefore, I have created a proposal for an exhibition that showcases, through various means, this significant Chinese historical legacy.

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[1] Divination, "the foretelling of future events or discovery of what is hidden or obscure by supernatural or magical means".
Rowan K. Flad, "Divination and Power," *Current Anthropology*, 49, no. 3 (2008) http://dx.doi.org/10.1086/588495.

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Attestation of Authorship

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly indicated), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

31 May 2019

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Ethics

Ethics approval was not needed.

Confidential Material

No confidential material was used.

Positioning myself as a curator

When I was a child, I often studied Chinese calligraphy with my father on the weekends, in his study. I encountered the challenge of learning calligraphy when I was in high school, where I focused on studying skills such as structure, brushwork methods and writing rules. Then I realised that although calligraphy skills were important, they were not the only way to make progress with calligraphy. Understanding the meaning of Chinese characters were also important for anyone who would like to learn calligraphy, including me. It was very rare to have the meanings of Chinese characters explained in either elementary school or university.

An important motivation for proposing this curatorial project is that I have recognised a need to address an issue raised by the director of the Henan Museum, Xiaolin Ma in his proposal "strengthening the promotion of oracle bone script"[2] (2019); that the general public in China still knows very little about its culture. As a curator, Xiaolin Ma's text made me reflect on the importance of not only preserving our heritage but also questioning the role of re-discovery and re-investment. When artefacts are situated within institutions whose primary role is the "preservation" of history, how can curators re-discover and re-invest the artefacts with meaning relevant to a contemporary audience? Some artefacts have their inherent poetry. However, this is not true of most exhibits and curators need to endow them with a context. Traditional curatorial practices are no longer sufficient – simply placing artefacts inside glass cases with some brief notes on their provenance does not bring history alive. The artefacts define the textual experience, such as those I had with my father, as well as the story-telling embodied in the object's historical relevance.

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[2] Yingying Zhang, Henan Museum. "Xiaolin Ma: Strengthening the Promotion of oracle bone script," assessed March 4, 2019, http://www.chnmus.net/sitesources/hnsbwy/page_pc/wbzx/mtgz/article41a2fe097e004c6f81c3b2f8ab7e9f0d.html

Introduction

Oracle bone script is an important part of Chinese culture and history. "Oracle bone script is a well-developed writing system, suggesting that the Chinese character's origins may lie earlier than the late second millennium BC."[3] Oracle bone script involves many of the various aspects of Chinese culture through writing.[4] It reflects not only the social production, daily life, convention, religion and moral standards of the Shang dynasty but also reflects ideological understanding and cultural psychology known through the earliest archives of ancient China and even humankind.[5]

In the context of modernisation and globalisation, oracle bone script faces a dilemma; the general public in China still knows very little about its culture. That said, the difficulties of researching oracle bone script have lessened since it was listed in UNESCO's "Memory of the World" Program in 2017.[6] Although the Chinese public has recently recognised the script, an effective means of communication needs to be found to enable the public to have a deeper understanding of the essence of oracle bone script.

This research project will explore the role of exhibition as a means of protecting and raising questions about oracle bone script. The purpose of this project is to revive interest in oracle bone script in the contemporary era, especially amongst the general population in China.

The project is divided into six chapters. The first chapter is the introduction of the project, followed by the second, which explores some key contexts. This includes a brief history of oracle bone script, as well as a storytelling and interactive strategy for the proposed *Oracle Bone Script* exhibition. The third section describes the methodologies and methods I have adopted to study this project. The fourth chapter analyses information about the strategy for promoting oracle bone script. The fifth chapter is my curatorial proposal for *Oracle Bone Script*. The final section is the conclusion of the project.

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[3] Martin, Kern. *Early Chinese literature, beginnings through Western Han* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010),1-155.
[4] Emily, Mark, "Daily Life in Ancient China," *Ancient History Encyclopedia*, published on 27 April 2016, https://www.ancient.eu/article/890/.
[5] Ibid.
[6] United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, "Memory of the World Program," assessed September 16, 2018, https://zh.unesco.org/node/270182
UNESCO established the Memory of the World Program in 1992. This program aims to rescue and protect vanishing intangible cultural heritage, to enhance an understanding of cultural heritage and its importance throughout the world.

Contextual Review

In this chapter, I explore some key contexts, including a brief history of oracle bone script, as well as developing a storytelling and interactive strategy for the curation of a proposed *Oracle Bone Script* exhibition .

A Brief History of Oracle Bone Script

For this project, an understanding of the history of oracle bone script was important to help me to consider how to create a contemporary exhibition that provides visitors with a more nuanced historical awareness and active relationship to the past.

"Chinese characters from the earliest Chinese hieroglyphs to today's simple characters have undergone through over three thousand years, it has experienced several times of evolution into different script forms."[7] Oracle bone script was the earliest form of Chinese characters used on animal bones or turtle plastrons (Figure 1). In the Shang dynasty (c.1600-1046 BCE), oracle bone script was used for divination by fire, rather than appreciation.[8] Weng Xi states that divination was a source of state power in the Shang dynasty.[9]

According to historical records, oracle bone script was first discovered by Yirong Wang in 1899.[10] "By 1928, the source of the bones had been traced to a village near Anyang in Henan Province, which was excavated by the Academia Sinica between 1928 and 1937"[11]. By 2012, 150,000 pieces of oracle bone script were unearthed from the ruins of Yin and other places, including more than 4,500 distinctive characters. To date, more than 1,700 characters have been interpreted, most of them as prayers by Shang rulers at divination and sacrificial rites.

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[7] The Chinese characters evolved through Oracle Bone Script, Bronze Script, Seal Script, Official Script and Regular Script. (See Appendix A).
Bi Wei, "The origin and evolvement of Chinese Characters," *Gdańskie Studia Azji Wschodniej* no.05 (2014):33-44.
file:///Users/apple/Downloads/3-%20GSAW%20z.%205.pdf
[8] Rowan K. Flad, "Divination and Power: A Multiregional View of the Development of Oracle Bone Divination in Early China," *Current Anthropology* 49, no. 3 (June 2008), 403-437. https://doi.org/10.1086/588495
[9] Ibid.
[10] Weng Xi, "The Discovery of Oracle Bones and the Locating of Yinxu Site," *North China Illustrated*,1931, 89.
[11] Kern, Martin. "Early Chinese Literature, Beginnings through Western Han." The Cambridge History of Chinese Literature 1 (2010): 1-115.

Figure 1. Shang King predicts an illness for his wife, Fu Hao. Photographed by The Palace Museum, Beijing, 2018.

Developing a Storytelling Strategy

A key aim of this research is to understand the background, function, and historical significance of oracle bone script as a means of improving the general public's engagement and interest. It is essential to apply storytelling in the exhibition. The reason being that storytelling enables people to imagine themselves in the story, shifting between time dimensions and realities, and constructing new memories. Whether older people or children understand it, storytelling has the features of simplicity, popularity and excellent communication. More importantly, "people think in

narratives and through narratives by using and understanding specific objects".[12] J. K. Nielsen pointed out that a narrative creates engagement.[13] Various disciplines, including education and history, have enthusiastically embraced storytelling as a teaching and research strategy. For example, stories have been adapted by history teachers to engage children to learn the subject. Similarly, storytelling in the exhibition might enable visitors to better connect with oracle bone script. "In the *Death: The Last Taboo Exhibition* (2003), visitors were moved by the last section which contained a series of showcases containing personal stories surrounding the death of loved ones".[14] This indicates that visitors could relate to the content and objects through the power of the personal story. It is also evident that storytelling is key to engaging audiences and influencing viewers' experiences, where the curator needs to decide what to include, what goes where, and how to tie it together. Thus, the exhibition needs a good story and to make connections that are easy to comprehend.

In my project, recognising a strategy for storytelling in the exhibition is important. I employ a linear narrative in the exhibition to help the audience understand the background, function and important historical meaning of oracle bone script.

Interactivity

I believe that narrative strategy is not enough to engage audiences in the exhibition. It is necessary to combine interactive technology with cultural heritage to connect the younger generation and internet-savvy public. Interactivity is very important for visitors. Paul stated that an audience would be more engaged when they have more opportunities for interaction.[15] In addition, the archaeologist and curator Garcia Morales stated that an interactive exhibition could provide a context and a high level of engagement for audiences.[16] Thus, I began to investigate the power and influence of interactive technology.

These interactions can work in different ways, such as touching the exhibition's artefacts in some way or learning from a multimedia installation. The integration of interactive technology and cultural heritage may create a space that enables a good response from visitors and provides the

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[12] Emilie Sitzia, "Narrative Theories and Learning in Contemporary Art Museums: A Theoretical Exploration," *Stedelijk Studies,* 4, (2016).

[13] Jane K. Nielsen. "Museum Communication and Storytelling: Articulating Understandings within the Museum Structure." *Museum Management and Curatorship 32*, no. 5 (2017): 440-55.

[14] "Death: The Last Taboo Exhibition," *Australia Museum*, October 25, 2018, https://australianmuseum.net.au/about/history/exhibitions/death-the-last-taboo/

[15] Paul F. Marty. "An Introduction to Museum Informatics." *Museum Informatics: People, Information, and Technology in Museums*, 2 (2008): 1.

[16] Zulma Lin Garcia Morales. "Cold War, Hot Topic: Museum Representations Of Communism in Post-Socialist Central and Eastern Europe." 2012.

best knowledge and information to educate people interactively.[17] Multimedia in a heritage exhibition allows a museum to increase opportunities for interactivity, or to provide simulated experiences.[18] In addition, hands-on interactivity improves access to real objects and phenomena.

Influenced by these theories, I think that interactivity is a key to highlighting the background, function, and historical significance of oracle bone script, while improving the general public's enthusiasm and interest.

Survey of Relevant Curatorial Practice
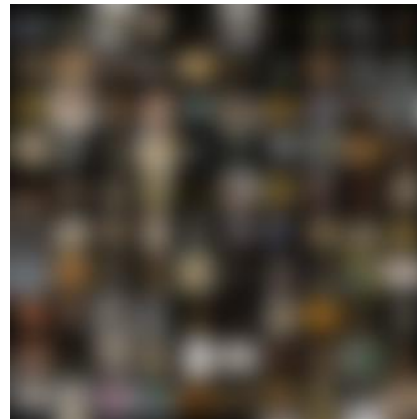
Figure 2. A History of the World in 100 Objects, 2010. The British Museum, London
https://www.britishmuseum.org/explore/a_history_of_the_world.aspx

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[17] Aimi Farhana Hashim, Mohd Zafrullah Mohd Taib, and Aida Alias. "The Integration of Interactive Display Method and Heritage Exhibition at Museum." *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences, 153* (2014): 308-16.
[18] Ibid., 45.

A History of the World in 100 Objects was a joint project of BBC Radio 4 and the British Museum, curated by British Museum director, Neil MacGregor (Figure 2). MacGregor used objects of ancient art, industry, technology and arms from the British Museum's collections. The 100 objects tell us human stories about the people who used them, how they lived, what they believed, and changes affecting their society.

The project, *A History of the World in 100 Objects,* introduced me to chronological narrative and radio broadcast, which popularised this method of curatorial strategy. This project took a chronological narrative approach to represent a two-million-year-old story of humanity, dividing past civilisations into different periods. *A History of the World in 100 Objects* website is a portal through which users can explore the objects discussed in the program, download the radio programs as podcasts, or comment on the objects themselves.[19]

In my project, I will employ a chronological narrative to divide the discovery of the story of oracle bone script into different periods. In addition, I can also draw on radio programs and publish Oracle bone script through an official account on the social media platform Wechat, where pictures and messages can be published and feedback collected about the exhibition.

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[19] "A History of the World in 100 Objects," *The British Museum*, October 10, 2018 http://www.bbc.co.uk/ahistoryoftheworld/

Research Design

I have used a mixed methodology approach to combine historical research with ethnography as it offers an integration of theory and practice that can inform curatorial strategy. This approach to research methodology "provides an explanation to why out of the methods out there you have selected this particular set, and what it is that you are trying to do with them,"[20] which can help me to explore the possible strategies for effectively revitalising oracle bone script. This research will be carried out using case study, observation and 3D visualisation methods. These research methods provide various techniques for exploring and analysing information.[21] Gray and Malins stated that research methods are guided by methodology and the proposed question.[22] These methods will be processed through the mixed methodology framework.

Methodology

Historical Research

"Historical research is not merely to describe 'what' has happened and 'when,' but to present a factually supported rationale that explains 'why' these things might have happened."[23] Historical research is also concerned with the accumulation of facts and their organisation; its main focus is their interpretation.[24]Through historical research, I seek answers to understand what Shang dynasty oracle bone script was used for; why divination culture occurred in the Shang Dynasty; and why oracle bone script gradually declined through history.

Through historical research, I attempt to investigate certain causes behind the decline of oracle bone script to discover a possible solution to promote the script in contemporary society. The reason for the decline is that, in general, the promotion of oracle bone script is insufficient.[25] Although some museums and TV stations have carried out publicity and promotional activities, the general public still knows very little about

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[20] Carole Gray and Julian Malins. *Visualizing Research: A Guide to the Research Process in Art and Design*. Routledge, 2016.

[21] Ibid.,56.

[22] Ibid.,78.

[23] Gjoko Muratovski. *Research for Designers: A Guide to Methods and Practice*. Los Angeles: Sage, 2015, 94.

[24] Ibid., 94.

[25] Yingying Zhang, Henan Museum, "Xiaolin Ma: Strengthening the promotion of oracle bone script," assessed March 4, 2019, http://www.chnmus.net/sitesources/hnsbwy/page_pc/wbzx/mtgz/article41a2fe097e004c6f81c3b2f8ab7e9f0d.html

the culture of oracle bone script.[26] Most oracle bone script is still stored in the warehouses of museums or the Archaeological Research Institute.[27] It is difficult for the public to have close contact with these artefacts. One possible solution is to fully display the oracle bone script in public and promote its knowledge and culture in a more interactive way; thus, I conduct a 'cause and effect analysis.' This does not describe the historical process of the ups and downs of the oracle, but analyses the causes and consequences of these events. In general, conducting historical research may help me to systematically judge and evaluate the validity of several hypotheses and the potential approaches validating the aim of this research.

Ethnographic Research

Ethnographic Research can be broadly defined as "a type of study that provides rich, holistic insight into various cultures and sub-cultures (people's views and actions), and the environment that surrounds them (space and location, etc.)."[28]

In my research project, I applied a broad definition of ethnographic research. Gaining access to the oracle bone script community who live in Anyang and observing their activities was vital for identifying promotional strategies for the exhibition inscriptions. The Anyang government conducts the Shang Cultural Tourism Festival every year from September to October. This local festival integrates culture, tourism, economic and trade activities to attract a greater number of visitors. Meanwhile, some local shops like Ba Nu Hotpot (Figure 3) use the oracle bone script as their brand logo. Moreover, according to my observation in Anyang, it seems that youth do not have the passion for or desire to engage with oracle bone script compared to older audiences. Their performances in an oracle bone script exhibition were relatively lacklustre. By observing and communicating with local people, the value of social interaction, behaviors, beliefs and perceptions can be identified, providing a bridge to connect oracle bone script and the general public. This can then be used to provoke interest in and an increased awareness of these artefacts.

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[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Ibid., 57.

Figure 3. Ba Nu Hotpot using oracle bone script as their brand logo. The logo "Ba" means long-armed people who lived in the southwestern jungle area and were good at climbing trees in ancient times. Photographed by Yaxiao Li in Yong Ming street, Henan, Anyang, 2018.

Methods

1. Case study

"A case study is a qualitative research framework that provides the tools for researchers to study a complex phenomenon by using a variety of data."[29] Defining the context of these case studies enabled me as the researcher to "determine the broader relevance with the research project."[30] In my research project, case studies were used to investigate the unique or exceptional qualities of cases for the sake of promoting

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[29] Muratovski, *Research for Designers*, 50.

[30] Ibid., 50.

and understanding these cases and their practices in similar situations. Case study information was collected from different cultural heritage exhibitions, including the project *A History of the World in 100 Objects*. The case study successfully utilised a narrative strategy, where I learned to explore the story from the objects themselves, which enables the audience to reconnect with the cultural heritage of oracle bone script.

2. Observation and Site Visit

Observation is an approach to engaging with the activities of the community, taking photographs of artefacts to reference the depth of understanding of the community members' behaviour and thinking.[31] To observe the oracle bone script community, in this research project, I observed, photographed and filmed oracle bone script exhibitions. Through physical and emotional observation in the Yinxu museum, I became familiar with current problems in the exhibition. I found that the narrative connection displayed in each showroom was not strong. For example, there are five showrooms in the Yinxu Museum. Each showroom only displayed one type of artefact (Figure 4 and Figure 5). The interactivity of the exhibition is not very strong either, as most of them are in traditional display form. The exhibition did not fully utilise new media technologies, such as stereo, television and touch screen, to showcase the oracle bone script and engage the audience. This technology may have enabled the curatorial plan to have more depth and connection with the artefacts.

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[31] Muratovski, *Research for Designers*, 60.

Figure 4. Shang dynasty civilization exhibition. Photographed by Yaxiao Li in Yinxu Museum, Henan, Anyang, 2018.

Figure 5. Shang dynasty civilisation exhibition. Photographed by Yaxiao Li in Yinxu Museum, Henan, Anyang, 2018.

3. 3D Visualisation

The method of visualising ideas through a three-dimensional technique such as scale or computer modelling can be used to communicate and understand complex ideas in a way that two-dimensional information cannot. I chose to work with *Sketch Up* software to create the spatial design as it offered a modelling of the space that included movement through the exhibition (Figure 6). This model demonstrates the special concept of form and space created by the idea of circulation. Consequently, mapping the exhibition space enabled me to ensure an uninterrupted flow of foot traffic to permit and induce the visitor to view all exhibits.
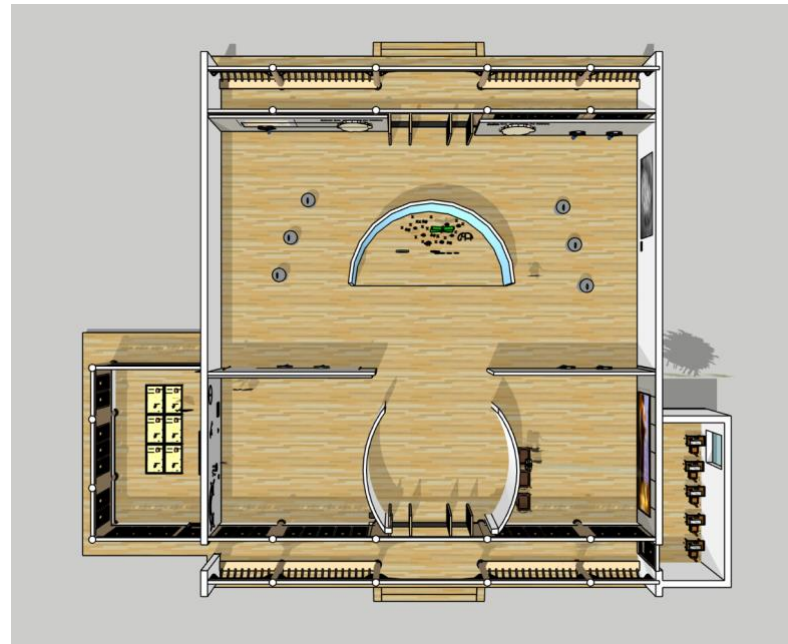
Figure 6. Exhibition layout for Oracle Bone Script. Designed by Yaxiao Li, 2019.

Concept and Development

This chapter will explain how I intended to curate the *Oracle Bone Script* exhibition through narrative strategy and interactivity.

Figure 7. Beijing Siheyuan, The beauty of Siheyuan, Beijing, China.

Siheyuan refers to a traditional form of residence in the middle and the north of China catering to the needs of large populations in ancient China. In Chinese, the name Siheyuan means "four rooms encircle a courtyard." The ancient Chinese city usually separated land as squares to maximise land usage. The architectural form of Siheyuan is one of squares and for large family living, this shape offered privacy for groups of family members.

Influenced by the design of Beijing Siheyuan, I have separated the exhibition space into squares to ensure both the flow of human traffic and each room's privacy and function. The entrance of a Siheyuan was normally positioned at the corner of its courtyard instead of directly facing the main room. If the entrance was facing the main room, they would put a Ying Bi wall between the main room and the entrance. This layout provided visual aesthetic and provide privacy. The Ying Bi wall gave me an idea for the exhibition entrance. The entrance will be positioned at the center of the exhibition space, and the name of the exhibition will be on the wall.
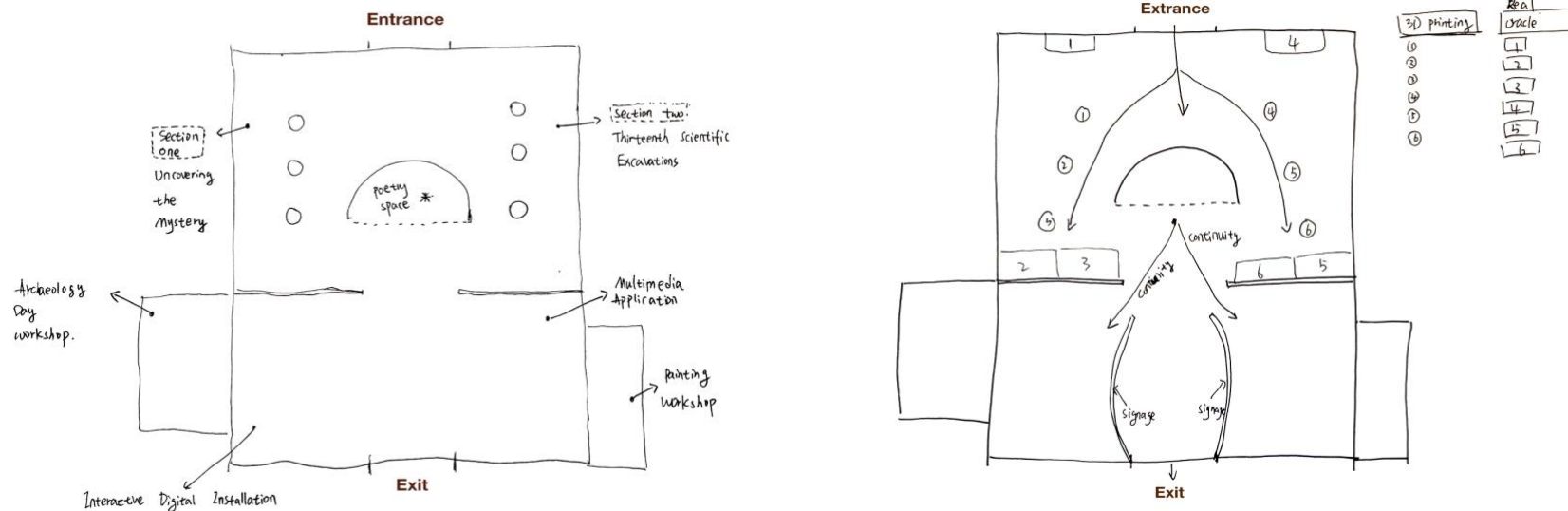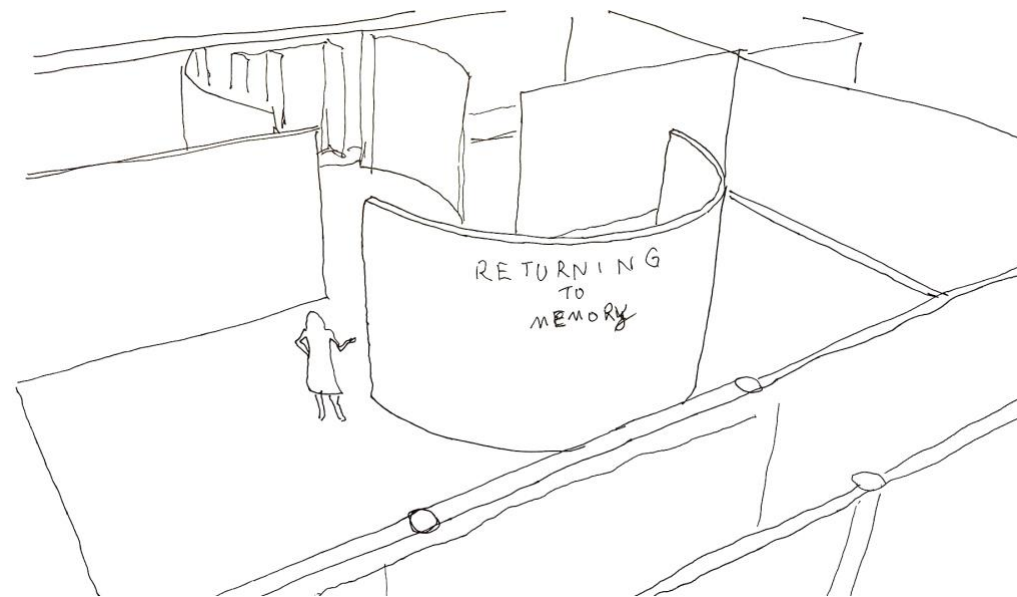

Figure 8 and 9. Exhibition layout development, inspired by Beijing Siheyuan. Drawn by Yaxiao Li, 2019.

Figure 10. Ying Bi wall in Beijing Siheyuan. Photographed by Yaxiao Li, 2017.

Figure 11. The Ying Bi wall inspired by the Ying Bi wall in Beijing Siheyuan.

Developing narrative concepts

When we talk about narrative today, we inevitably link it with literary kinds of narrative such as the novel or short story. In the art museum, "storytelling is a method of communicating the qualities and attributes of art through a story".[32] It helps the visitor to better understand the artefacts and form their own meaning from stories. The story is a medium linked to the objects. "When the stories connected to objects are explored it becomes more interesting to the viewer because it helps him or her understand new viewpoints".[33]

The narrative structure went through a shift during the process of development. In my early experiments, I was largely working on the history and reality of oracle bone script. A chronological diagram was used to organise the historical events by date. However, I realised that I could not include all the information for the audience. I had to decide what to cover, what goes where, and how to tie it together. Therefore, I decided to choose one key point from the oracle bone script story. Seymour Chatman pointed out that "narrative also includes media other than purely oral or written narrative discourses."[34] This inspired me to think about how to use new media and interactive technology to tell a story that would allow me to engage a more contemporary audience in to the *Oracle Bone Script* exhibition.

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[32] Hayley P. Trinkoff. "Storytelling in Art Museums." (2015).
[33] Ibid.,24.
[34] Monika Fludernik. *An Introduction to Narratology*. Routledge, 2009.

Discussion

1. Curatorial statement

The *Oracle Bone Script* exhibition is divided into two sections (Figure 12). Section One is titled *Uncovering the Mystery* and Section Two is titled Th*e Thirteenth Scientific Excavation by Academia Sinica, 1936*. In this exhibition, I am going to exhibit six objects. In Section One, oracle bone script collections from Wang Yirong and Luo Zhengyu will be exhibited. In Section Two, three pieces of oracle bone script unearthed during the thirteenth scientific excavation will be displayed. The six pieces of 3D printed versions of oracle bones will also be displayed. Visitors can touch these artefacts, which will allow them to get closer to the history and text.
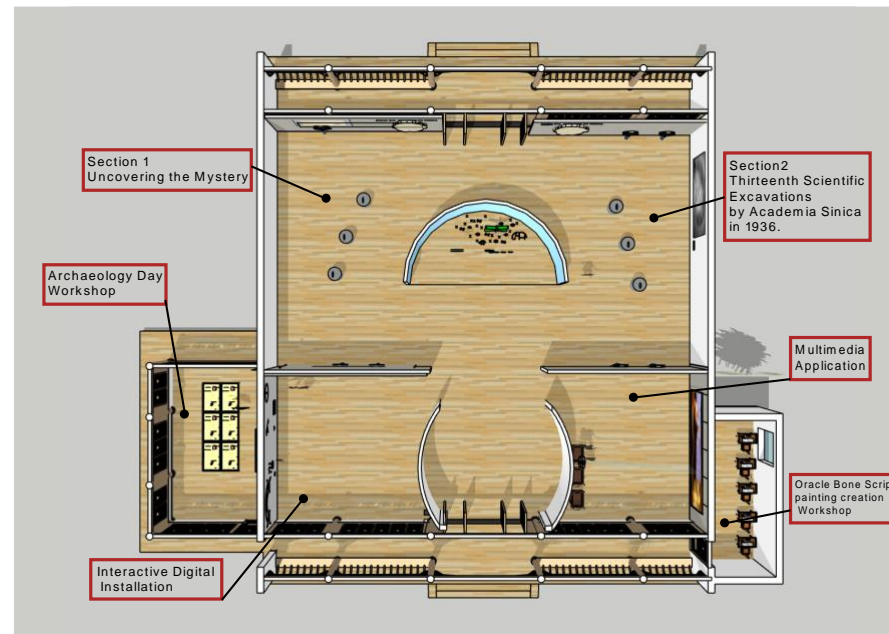
Figure 12. Exhibition layout. Designed by Yaxiao Li. 2019.

In Section One, I will focus on the personal stories of experiences with oracle bone script including the stories of Wang Yirong, Liu E, and Luo Zhengyu. I especially designed two scenes of Wang Yirong's story to engage the audience's visual and physical senses. This section will use three pieces of oracle bone script collected by these scholars as display objects to unlock their history. Displaying the three objects that relate to the personal story enables the audience to better understand oracle bone script and build a relationship between the objects and the personal stories of the three scholars.

Section Two uses oracle bone script artefacts discovered in the thirteenth scientific excavation as displayed objects to unlock the story of the excavation in 1936.

Section One: Uncovering the Mystery

In Section One, I will present these personal stories of Oracle bone script through a combination of written panels, three pieces of oracle bone script and two scene reproductions (Figure 13 and Figure 14). The years between 1889 to 1928 were a popular period of private excavation. There were nine large-scale excavations during this period. More than 80,000 pieces of oracle bone script were discovered.

The story of the discovery of oracle bone script in 1899 by Wang Yirong.
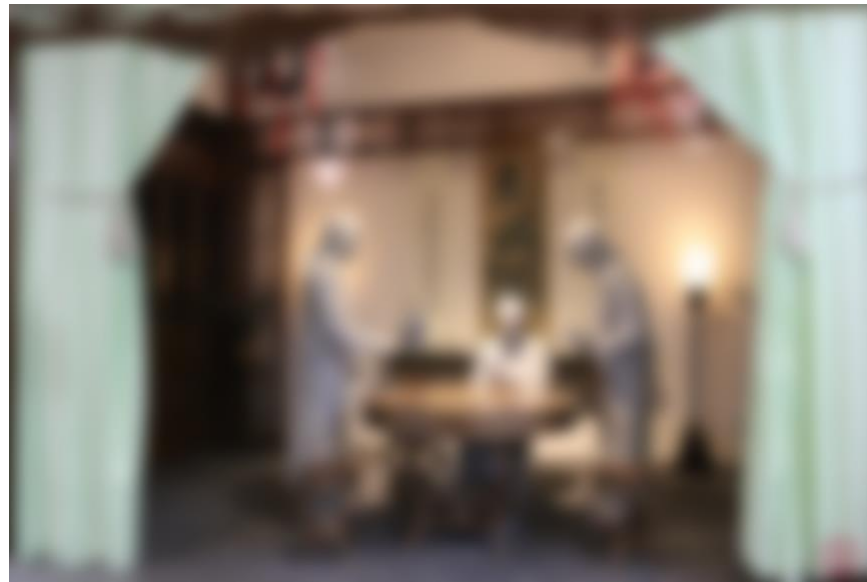
Figure 13. A life-size reproduction of the discovery of oracle bone script in 1899 by Wang Yirong, depicting Wang using a magnifying glass to explore inscriptions. Wang Yirong Memorial in Yantai, China, 2019. (The scene reproduction will be displayed in Section One of the exhibition)
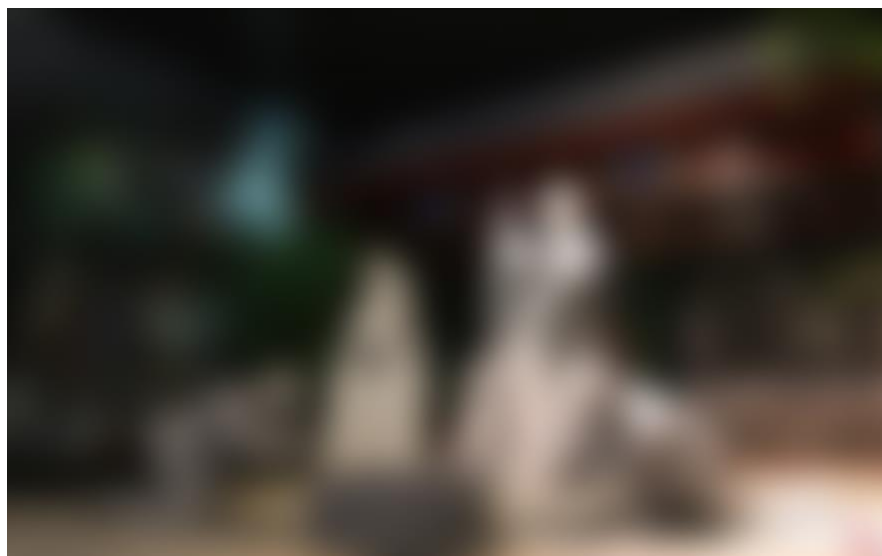
Figure 14. A three-dimensional, life-size model of Wang Yirong's suicide. Wang Yirong Memorial in Yantai, China, 2019. (A reproduction will be displayed in Section One of the exhibition)

Oracle bone script was first discovered in 1899 by antiquarian Wang Yirong, although local farmers had been unearthing the artefacts in Anyang for several years before that. It was Wang Yirong who found that the inscriptions on animal bones and tortoise shells looked like a form of writing.[35] One account of Wang's discovery during 1899 was that he was suffering from malaria (a parasitic disease affecting the liver) and a traditional Chinese pharmacy prescribed him dragon bones. One day he noticed that a bone fragment floating in his herbal soup had some interesting inscriptions on it. (Figure 13), which he traced to ancient hieroglyphics. He then started to collect many oracle bone script artefacts from the Chinese pharmacy in Beijing and a local businessman.

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[35] Endymion Porter Wilkinson. *Chinese History: A Manual.* Vol. 52: Harvard University Asia Center, 2000, 391.

In 1900, his work on oracle bone script was stopped when he took a local command post during the Boxer Rebellion.[36] When an international force occupied Beijing in August, Wang committed suicide, together with his wife and daughter-in-law (Figure 14).[37]

Figure 15. The oracle bone script collection of Wang Yirong. Wang Yirong Memorial, 2019. (It will be displayed in Section One of the exhibition)

Oracle bone script of the late Shang dynasty showing sacrificial activity.
Size: 17cm length, 7cm wide.
It was donated by Wang Yirong's granddaughter, Wang Fuchong.

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[36] The Boxer Rebellion was an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and anti-Christian uprising that took place in China toward the end of the Qing dynasty between 1899 and 1901.
[37] Peter Hessler. *Oracle Bones: A Journey through Time in China*. Harper Perennial London, 2007,137.

Liu E (1857-1909) published the first book about oracle bone script.
Because of economic difficulties, Wang Yirong's second son, Wang Hanfu, sold more than 1,000 pieces of Wang Yirong's oracle bone script collection to Liu E. When Liu E had collected five thousand oracle bone fragments from Wang and others, he published the first volume of examples and rubbings in 1903 in the book *Tie Yun Cang Gui.* He correctly identified the names of the Shang kings, thus identifying the oracle bones as artefacts from the Shang reign. He subsequently identified thirty-four characters. Liu also did business as well as writing the book and studying oracle bone script artefacts. In 1909, he died from a cerebral haemorrhage.

Luo Zhengyu discovered Anyang[38] Xiaotun village[39] as the 'cradle' of oracle bone script in 1910. (Figure 16)

Figure 16. A map of Anyang Xiaotun village, 2019.

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[38] Anyang is a city in Henan province, central China.
[39] The source of the oracle bone script was eventually traced to the small village of Xiaotun, just outside Anyang.
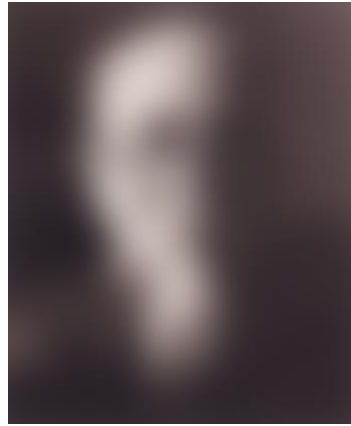
Figure 17. Luo Zhengyu (1866-1940), Zhengyu Luo memorial, 2019, http://jn.huaien.com/g1003353/p_4790.htm

In 1901, Luo Zhengyu saw oracle bone script artefacts for the first time in Liu E's home. He helped Liu to rub the oracle bone script into the book, *Tie Yun Cang Gui*. In 1906, Luo started to collect oracle bone script. He collected over 30,000 oracle bones and published several volumes of text. In 1910, he also discovered that Anyang Xiaotun village was the cradle of oracle bone script.

Figure 18. The oracle bone script collections of Luo Zhengyu. The left oracle bone script shows sacrificial activity, and the right oracle bone script shows military activity in the late Shang dynasty. (It will be displayed in Section One of the exhibition)

Section Two: Thirteenth Scientific Excavation by Academia Sinica, 1936

Section Two of the exhibition will introduce the 13th excavation of 1936. From 1928 to 1937 fifteen excavation seasons were conducted in Anyang under the auspices of Academia Sinica. During the 13th excavation in 1936, the H127 oracle bone pit was found in the north of Xiaotun village and 17096 pieces of oracle bone script were unearthed, including 300 pieces of complete tortoise shell, the most amazing discovery since the Yin Ruins excavation. The work of stripping artefacts was extremely labour intensive and could not be completed in a short period. Excavators discussed solutions such as transporting the oracle bone pit in a large wooden box (Figure 19). Finally, the pit arrived at the Nanjing History Institute and scholars slowly rubbed, stripped and recorded the artefacts it contained (Figure 20).

Figure 19. Placing the oracle bone pit in a large wooden box. Photographed by the Institute of Archaeology, 1936. (The picture will be displayed in Section Two of the exhibition)

Figure 20. Dong Zuobin, Luo Zhengyu and Hu Houxuan rubbing, stripping and recording the oracle bone pit in the Nanjing History Institute. Photographed by the Institute of Archaeology, 1936. (The picture will be displayed in Section Two of the exhibition)

Figure 21. Reformed tortoise shell unearthed in the thirteenth scientific excavation. (The reformed tortoise shell will be displayed in the exhibition)

Many carapace pieces were transformed into perforated oval shapes in the YH127 oracle bone pit (Figure 21). From this, we know that oracle bone scripts may also be threaded into a book, which is one reason why I selected this tortoise shell object.
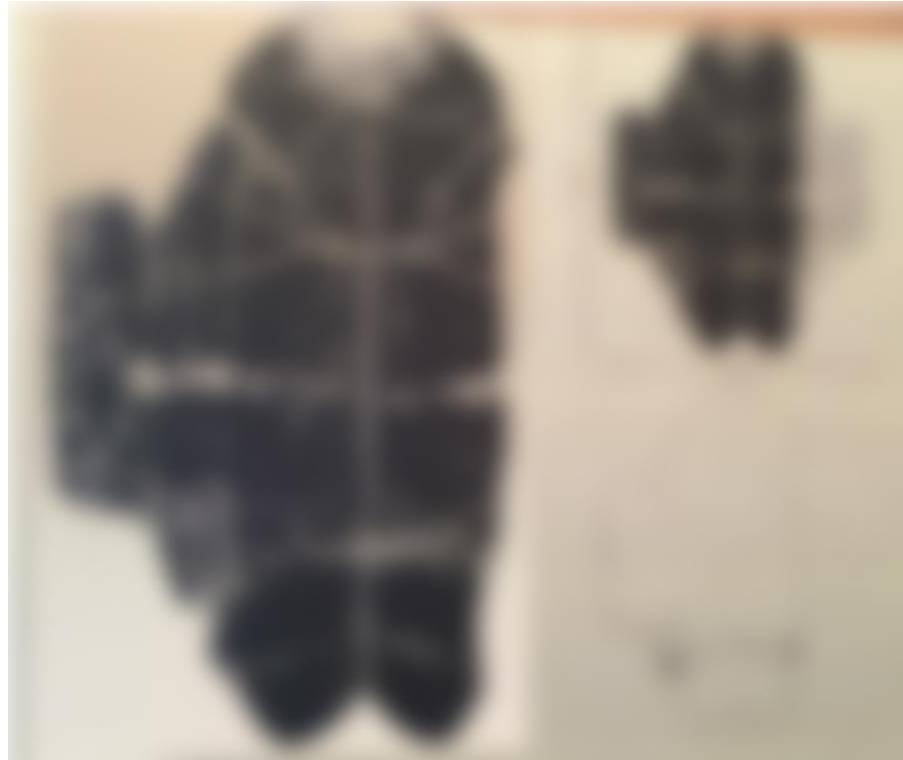
Figure 22. The largest tortoise shell unearthed in the thirteenth scientific excavation. (The largest tortoise shell will be displayed in the exhibition)

In 1899, the largest turtle shell ever seen since the discovery of oracle bones was found in the H127 oracle bone pit. It was 44cm long and 35cm wide. According to identification, this turtle did not come from Anyang, but from the Malay Peninsula, which is why I selected this object.

Figure 23. Oracle bone script was painted with vermilion ink. (The painted oracle bone script will be displayed in the exhibition)

In the thirteenth excavation, the scholars found that questions and prognostications were increasingly written with brushes and cinnabar ink, which degraded over time (Figure 23). Because the Shang dynasty already had written pigments and brushes we know that oracle bone scripts were written first and then carved, which is why I selected this object.

2. Multimedia Installation

Figure 24. Multimedia application room. Designed by Yaxiao Li, 2019.

The exhibition will include a large multimedia installation in an individual room (Figure 24). The video shows a general history of oracle bone script about divination in the Shang dynasty. The function of the oracle bone script and the process of the divination are introduced by the multimedia installation. When the audience enters the room a real scene of divination in the Shang dynasty appears on the multimedia screen.

The visual effects will be supported by the sound of burning as the drill holes on the oracle bone appear to crack, and the divination appears in an animated form.

## 3. Interactive digital installation

Figure 25. Multimedia application room. Designed by Yaxiao Li, 2019.

Oracle Bone Script Worlds is an immersive, interactive character system developed for the *Oracle Bone Script* exhibition. The interactive digital installation is composed of two 8 meters wide, 3 meters high multimedia screens above, consisting of oracle bone script collections (Figure 25).

The audience can use shadow to touch a projected Chinese character and the animation that a character embodies will appear. For example, touching the character "水" , shui meaning river), flowing water will appear, while choosing "火" (huo meaning fire), a burning flame rises on the digital wall. Behind the interactive digital installation there will be a 360-degree computer-generated space. The objects that are from the characters are placed at various positions within that space and the physical connections between them will be calculated in real time.

4. Venue
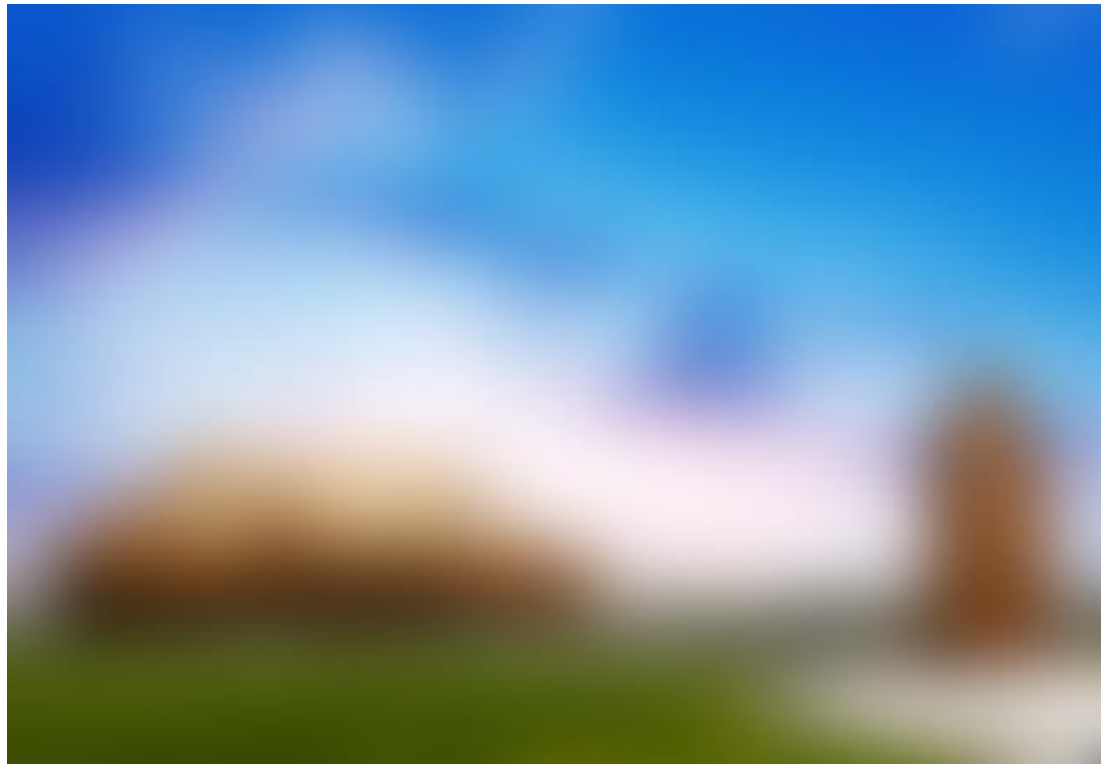
Figure 26. National Museum of Chinese Writing in Anyang, 2019.

The exhibition venue is the National Museum of Chinese Writing in Anyang, Henan, China. NMCW is a building combining a modern architectural style and the Shang Dynasty's court design (Figure 26). The National Museum of Chinese Writing is constructed for preserving, showcasing and studying cultural relics.

The first reason to choose this place is that my project fits the museum's mission well. The mission of the museum is to preserve, showcase and study cultural relics. Secondly, NMCW is in Anyang, the 'cradle' of oracle bone script. It has rich Shang culture, and oracle bone script can be seen everywhere, as demonstrated by the logo design of a hot pot restaurant. The place can attract a potential audience.

5. The budget

The *Oracle Bone Script* exhibition is an ambitious project that involves a great number of objects and installation works, which will require a significant investment of time and funds. This exhibition will require approximately $30,000 for production plus an additional $5,000 for distribution and marketing.

Exhibition rental: $8,000
Exhibition displays: $4,000
Space renovation: $800
Printed graphics: $1,000
Show services (power and lighting): $1,000
Hotel costs: $500
Staff costs: $5,000
Production and equipment transportation: $3,000
Promotional material: $200
Publicity: $1,200
Other and contingencies: $1,800

6. The possible sponsor and partners

The exhibition fundraising strategy takes a sole approach, seeking funding from the China Culture Foundation.[40] The China Culture Foundation is committed to preserving Chinese civilisation and supporting global Chinese cultural research and communication, cultural exchanges and cultural industry development related projects. The China Culture Foundation mainly supports the following three areas: Firstly, systematic compilation and study of Chinese cultural resources. Secondly, overseas exchange and dissemination of Chinese culture. Thirdly, attempts to transform cultural resources into cultural industries. My project fits the Foundation's second mission well, because the purpose of the project is to communicate and promote oracle bone script. Moreover, the project attempts to transform oracle bone script into a public exhibition.

This exhibition's partners will include:
- An expert in oracle bone script to determine the authenticity of cultural heritage.
- Digital Agency Method (*CrystalCG*),[41] to provide digital interactive technical support.
- Social Media Apps (such as Wechat) to spread news about programs and events, and give detailed information about the exhibition.
- Student volunteers from a Chinese university in Anyang, Henan who will introduce oracle bone script artefacts and guide visitors to participate in the interactive experience.

7. Public Program

"As had been recognized since the early nineteenth century, museums, by their very nature, are educational institutions."[42] Therefore, the exhibition placed a hands-on experience, "Archaeology day", and oracle bone script painting creation at the end of the exhibition.

Archaeology Day Workshop

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[40] China Culture Foundation, http://www.ccf.org.mo/en/
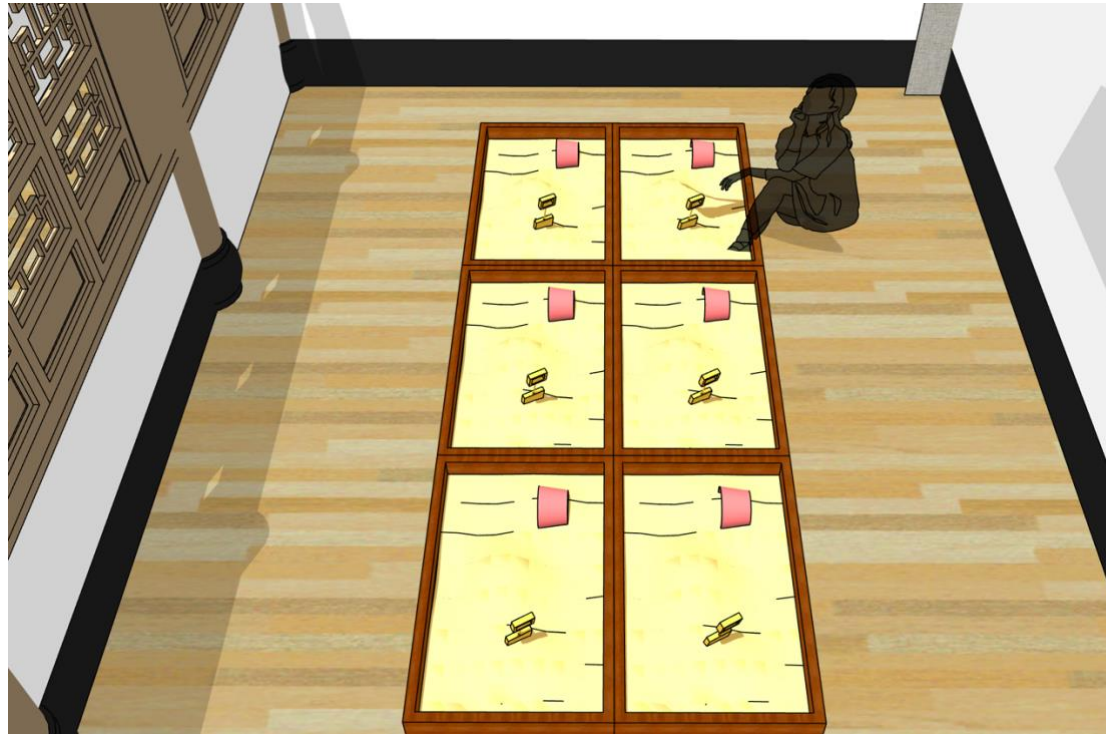[41] Digital Agency, CrystalCG, http://www.crystalcg.com/nav/2.html
[42] George E. Hein. "Museum Education." *A companion to museum studies,* (2006): 340-52.

*Figure 27. Archaeology day workshop room. Designed by Yaxiao Li, 2019.*

Figure 28. Archaeology day workshop room. Designed by Yaxiao Li, 2019.

In the exhibition, audiences can enjoy the archaeology day workshop. The purpose of this workshop is to raise awareness among the general public about the significance of preserving cultural heritage.

The workshop creates an archaeological site with six partitions. The monitor will show real scenes from the archaeological excavation of oracle bone script artefacts and explain some archaeological techniques: the location gridding technique and archaeological excavation. Oracle bone pieces will be buried in the sand for discovery. The instructor will explain to the audience that the excavation is done "by grid" and "by layers". Visitors dig in the grids assigned by the instructor. In the workshop, shovels, brushes and sticks will be provided. Each audience numbers,

records and describes their findings on a card when oracle bone pieces are dug up. They can take the fieldwork home but not the oracle bone pieces as these will serve for the next workshop.

Oracle bone script painting creation workshop
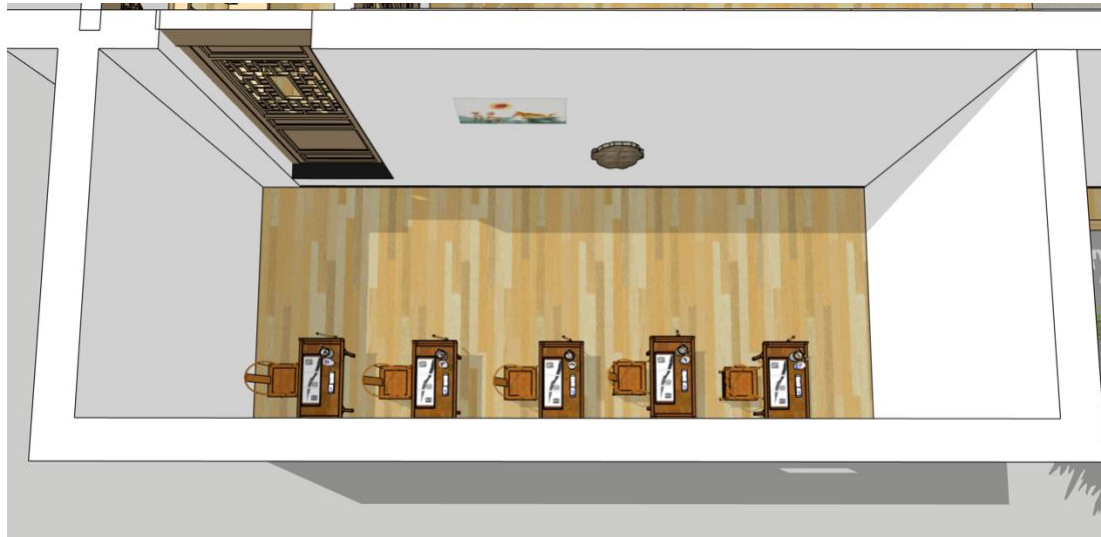
Figure 29. The oracle bone script painting room. Designed by Yaxiao Li, 2019.

Figure 30. Oracle bone script painting room. Designed by Yaxiao Li, 2019.

This workshop will create some teaching lessons of oracle painting creation for kids. Focusing on a child's daily life, the workshop will select 36 commonly used Chinese characters such as the sun and the mountain and make them into attractive oracle bones to illustrate the earliest origin, structural, and cultural connotations of Chinese characters.

These will be used as a theme to create a painting by encouraging the child to use their imagination and to turn a single Chinese character into an oracle bone story. The audience would learn about the pictographs of animals, plants, and natural objects found on oracle bones and fall in love with oracle bone script and the study of pictographs. Tim Caulton stated that "a hands-on session has clear educational objectives which encourage individuals or groups of people working together to understand real objects or real phenomena through physical exploration which

involves choices and initiative"[43]. The audience can take their own oracle bone painting back home, which will greatly enlarge the audience's impression of oracle bone script and recollection of the exhibition experience.

8. Marketing: Social Media Wechat platform

One possible solution for promoting an exhibition of oracle bone script is to combine traditional culture and contemporary technology. This exhibition will be promoted on a Social Media Wechat platform. Since WeChat has such a large user base, promoting oracle bone script on this platform could help to create new interest in it as a lively, modern art form for the contemporary era.

The existing official WeChat account, accessed through the National Museum of Chinese Writing, enables the audience to communicate and interact with the curator. The account operator will use text, pictures, voice messages and video to create a online interactive marketing platform. The account will also feature updated events, stories and information about the *Oracle Bone Script* exhibition, collect feedback from the visitors.

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[43] Tim, Caulton. *Hands-on exhibitions: managing interactive museums and science centres*. Routledge, 2006.

Conclusion

With the rapid development of urbanisation and modernisation in China, it not only brings opportunities but also challenges in terms of the protection of intangible cultural heritage. Therefore, curatorial practice such as an exhibition, is a good platform to promote, display and communicate struggling cultural heritage with a contemporary audience. The exhibition will be useful in protecting and saving oracle bone script artefacts.

This research project has found that lack of publicity has contributed to the Chinese people knowing little about the culture of oracle bone script. It has also found that the lack of publicity might be overcome through the use of storytelling and interactive technology in the exhibition.

The following action of this research will apply oracle bone script to design a series of cultural and creative products (souvenirs) for the contemporary audience as a promotion strategy; bringing the story of oracle bone script home. A website will be designed as an extension of this project, which expand the boundaries of space and time and enables a wider communication to the audience. The general public will realise the value of oracle bone script and keep it alive in the future, with the support of the exhibition.

Appendix A

Table 1. Historical Evolvution of Chinese Characters.

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