

# Research on the Application of Visual Elements of Intangible Cultural Heritage in the Design of Contemporary Cultural and Creative Products

-- A Case Study of Nanjing Velvet Flowers

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**Abstract:** The rapid development of global cultural creativity has made local culture and regional culture advocated, and intangible cultural heritage containing unique cultural genes and cultural values has become an important source of cultural creative design. Nanjing is a famous cultural city with a history of more than 2,500 years, rich in culture and art, and its wide variety of intangible cultural heritage with distinctive characteristics is also remarkable, which can become a creative source of cultural and creative products. The application of cultural elements from Nanjing's intangible cultural heritage to the design of cultural and creative products can enhance the cultural connotation and cultural uniqueness of products, and also provide new ideas for the inheritance of Nanjing's intangible heritage in modern society. Based on the premise of Nanjing's intangible cultural heritage, velvet flowers, this paper focuses on the application of intangible cultural heritage in the design of cultural and creative products. Firstly, the background, definition, attributes, and design status of cultural and creative products are analyzed. Secondly, the design principles and application methods of intangible heritage, velvet flowers, in cultural and creative products are summarized, and the extraction and transformation methods of cultural elements in the design of cultural and creative products are proposed. Then, the characteristics and value of Nanjing velvet flowers are summarized, and the feasibility of cultural and creative products as the inheritance path of Nanjing velvet flowers is discussed through the analysis of the current situation of Nanjing velvet flowers. Finally, the design practice of Nanjing velvet flower is carried out as an example to promote the inheritance and development of Nanjing's intangible cultural heritage.

**Keywords:** Intangible Cultural Heritage; Cultural and Creative Product Design; Nanjing Velvet Flower.

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## 1. Overview of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Cultural and Creative Products

### 1.1. Background and Definition of Cultural and Creative Products

After being greatly satisfied, it arose in the context of turning to higher spiritual needs. At the same time, under the impact of the global multicultural pattern and cultural competition among countries, people began to seek distinctive and maverick character, and personal creativity began to be liberated. In this context, some nationalities and regions, in the diversified, open competition and cooperation, have sought the uniqueness of culture, so the distinctive local culture has become the basis of the cultural and creative industry, more and more countries realize that in order to create their own cultural brands in the increasingly open world pattern, they need to be creative-oriented, inject local unique culture into products, and cultural and creative products came into being.

Due to the different historical and cultural environments and social and cultural concepts of various countries in the world, the definition of cultural and creative industries in different countries is also different, such as the United Kingdom calls it "creative industry", South Korea calls it "cultural industry", and the United States calls it "copyright industry". The concept of cultural and creative industries is derived from the concept of "cultural industry" proposed by the Frankfurt School, which was first officially named as a

creative industry by the United Kingdom, and then adopted and adjusted by many countries. Generally speaking, the cultural and creative industry is an industrial cluster that takes culture and creativity as the core and combines modern science and technology to design and produce products or provide related services that meet consumer needs. Due to the differences in the definition of cultural and creative industries from country to country, the classification of cultural and creative industries also varies, but in their classification. Shanghai is generally based on art, service, design, film and television and other industries.

There is no uniform definition of cultural and creative products, and there are not many studies in this regard, and some scholars have given their own views on the definition of cultural and creative products. Wei Pengju believes that cultural and creative products are the products produced by the cultural and creative industry, including the two parts of cultural and creative content and hardware carrier, and their particularity lies in cultural and creative content. Gao Xiaokang's book "Cultural Industry Creativity and Planning" mentioned that cultural products are products created through people's labor to meet people's spiritual needs. Lin Rongtai, a professor at the Institute of Creative Design at National Taiwan University of the Arts, believes that cultural and creative products carry the cultural factors contained in cultural artifacts in a modern form, and such products can meet people's spiritual needs." Liao Shizhang believes that cultural and creative products are external objects that carry cultural connotations and creative techniques. Based on the various views of scholars on the definition of cultural and

creative products, the author believes that cultural and creative products are products that take culture and creativity as the core, transform cultural elements into creative elements through modern technology and design, and make the two innovatively combine products that meet the needs of modern aesthetics and use.

Since there is no unified definition of cultural and creative products in the academic community, their classification methods are also different. According to the industrial chain of cultural and creative products, scholar Pi Yongsheng divided cultural and creative products into three categories: content cultural and creative products, including traditional culture and popular research and innovation, animated films, news and publications, etc.; Creative cultural and creative products, using design creativity to transfer culture to products; Extended cultural and creative products can provide intangible processes and services for experiencing culture.

## **1.2. Intangible Cultural Heritage - Introduction to Nanjing Velvet Flowers**

Nanjing velvet flowers are a traditional handicraft unique to Nanjing and are the characteristic symbol of the city. It first originated from the "palace flower" of the Tang Dynasty, that is, the velvet flower. It is said that Yang Guifei of the Tang Dynasty often covered her sideburns with velvet flowers, coupled with the soft texture and bright color of the velvet flowers, she was favored by the concubines in the palace and "all accustomed to each other". Traditional Chinese velvet flowers are traditional folk crafts in which silk is boiled and dyed, strips of pile of different specifications are made from extra-fine copper wire, and then plated into various styles of flowers for women and children to wear. According to records such as the Jing Chu Dynasty and the Book of Wei, velvet crafts began in the Jin Dynasty or the Southern and Northern Dynasties. The lady in Gu Kaizhi's "Female History Monitor" in the Jin Dynasty has artificially made fake flowers on her head. In the late Qing Dynasty and early years of the Republic of China, Beijing, Jiangsu Nanjing and Yangzhou have become famous traditional production areas for velvet flowers. The homonym of velvet flower means "glory", and it flowed into the people at the end of the Qing Dynasty and the beginning of the people, and was mainly worn during the Spring Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Mid-Autumn Festival and wedding celebrations. Traditional velvet varieties include sideburns, hat flowers, corsages, opera flowers, etc., among which sideburns are the most favored. Its shape and content mostly use folk auspicious themes, and produce some beautiful images of flowers, birds and other animals and plants. From the appearance point of view, Nanjing velvet flowers are exquisite in workmanship, simple and vivid in shape, rich in color, folk color and local atmosphere are very strong, implying auspicious happiness, expressing people's desire for a better and happy life. However, due to the long learning process, high production costs, and long operation cycles, it is on the verge of being lost. Therefore, drawing on the traditional handicraft Nanjing velvet flower art elements and designing and producing the characteristic derivatives of the velvet flower that meet the needs of the modern market is particularly meaningful for inheriting this precious intangible cultural heritage.

With the gradual expansion of the influence of globalization ideology, the penetration of Western cultural value system and technical value system into China's social life, coupled with the development of China's economy and

the subversion of traditional concepts, many Chinese are biased in their traditional culture. On the one hand, some people use Western value evaluation standards to view traditional Chinese folk art, making good or bad trade-offs; On the other hand, in order to confront Western culture, some people overemphasize the "purity" of Chinese folk art, and oppose any form of change and innovation. These two views are inevitably a bit extreme, but they truly express the knowledge and understanding of some people in the current society about Chinese traditional culture. "Anthropological and sociological studies have shown that globalization is formed by the combination of a large number of local and regional processes", and absorbing foreign cultures on the basis of retaining the original traditional culture can make the social life of the region richer and more diverse, and the people have more choices. The same embarrassing situation has emerged for the value judgment of Nanjing velvet flowers. As an excellent traditional handicraft in China, Nanjing's glorious past can no longer evoke people's memories, the elderly is gradually leaving, the young are gone, and the gap in the middle seems to be irreparable. The change of social atmosphere and aesthetic consciousness has gradually faded out of people's sight, and the understanding of its value has become increasingly marginalized, which is far from the mainstream aesthetic concept of society. Nanjing velvet flowers are easily ignored and forgotten due to their marginalized value. Promoting the cultural values of Nanjing velvet culture and handicraft skills through the dissemination of Nanjing velvet culture can change people's bias in understanding Nanjing velvet flower to a certain extent.

## **1.3. Analysis of the Design Status of Nanjing Velvet Flowers and Cultural and Creative Products**

### **1.3.1. Analysis of the Current Situation of Nanjing Velvet Flower**

Exquisite and distinctive decorations are more and more loved by the majority of female consumers. When designing some hair accessories, corsages, earrings and other accessories, you can design jewelry as bows, cartoon images of various small animals and characters, the shape or simple and modern, or meticulous retro, suitable for different preferences and the aesthetic needs of consumers of different ages. In addition, the common pattern design patterns of velvet flowers are used in the product design of interior decoration paintings, handbags, cosmetic bags and even ornaments, and made into various derivatives can also evoke consumers' resonance with the artistic beauty of Nanjing velvet flowers.

The beauty of velvet flowers is not only expressed in a rational and logical way, it is structural, spatial, through color, strip, plane, form, structure, integrating a variety of symbols, semantics to act on people with sensual images. According to modern design concepts, subtraction is used to design traditional colors, words, shapes and other factors. Cut the complex and simplify, with less to win more, touch the audience to resonate with it. The subtractive design of the pattern conveys a clear meaning and strengthens its symbolic characteristics through the refinement and simplification of the traditional pattern

### **1.3.2. Analysis of the Current Situation of Cultural and Creative Product Design**

At present, the Chinese creative development of the world

is more prominent, including the United Kingdom, the United States, South Korea, Japan, Italy, Germany, and the Nordic countries. The UK put forward the concept of Wenta creativity as early as 19%, and it is also the first country to promote the industrialization of cultural creativity, paying attention to design to provide creative added value for products. In the United States, the development of cultural creativity ranks among the best in the world, and cultural and creative products occupy an important source of the national economy. Moreover, the United States pays more attention to the protection of product copyright, and perfect policies and regulations ensure the economic benefits brought by cultural and creative products. South Korea is one of the first countries in Asia to recognize the importance of culture and creativity, attaches great importance to the status of creativity and design, and proposes the "Design Korea" strategy. The emphasis on culture and creativity has enabled South Korea to successfully transform into an innovative country, and a number of excellent independent innovation enterprises have emerged, successfully occupying an important position in the world cultural and creative field. Japan is heavily influenced by the West, and also attaches great importance to cultural creativity, and has established the policy of "building a nation through culture" at 19% to actively promote the development of creativity and design in its own country. It is worth learning from the fact that although Japan has been influenced by the West in the process of innovation, it has maintained its cultural independence, and has been able to recognize its own advantages in the wave of world cultural creativity, and has developed a very advantageous industry such as the animation industry.

After the reform and opening up, with the economic growth and the establishment of the market economy system, China first mentioned the concept of cultural industry in 1992, established the Department of Cultural Industry in 1998, and formally proposed the concept of "cultural industry" in the 10th Five-Year Plan of the Fifth Plenary Session of the 15th Central Committee in 2000. After years of efforts, China began to flourish cultural creativity, and cultural and creative products began to be produced and exported in large quantities. At present, China's cultural and creative products are mainly handicrafts, art and cultural products, digital and music products, etc. During this period, the Party Central Committee and the government implemented a series of policies and measures to accelerate the development of cultural and creative industries, and local governments also paid attention to it, and most cities put forward the strategic goal of building a cultural city, taking cultural creativity as an important support for urban development. In addition to the formulation of relevant policies, various localities actively organize relevant cultural and creative expos, festivals, design competitions, etc., such as China Creative Festival, Tianjin International Cultural and Creative Exhibition Fair, Guizhou Cultural and Creative Product Design Competition, etc.

## **2. Design Principles of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Creative Products**

### **2.1. Cultural Principles**

The principle of culture is the first principle in the design of cultural and creative products, and is the basis for the combination of intangible cultural heritage culture and cultural and creative product design.

First, culture is the core of cultural and creative products, and cultural and creative products carrying certain cultural connotations are different from ordinary products with special spiritual attributes, which is the intangible value of cultural and creative products. In the design of cultural and creative products, products that lack cultural connotation are actually the same as ordinary products, and cannot be called cultural and creative products. Intangible cultural heritage is full of unique cultural content, and the essence and characteristics of intangible cultural heritage must be expressed when designing cultural and creative products, and the design of cultural and creative products without substantive cultural significance or unable to correctly convey cultural information is a failure. Second, cultural and creative products can convey the cultural information they carry to consumers in a tangible form, causing consumers to resonate emotionally and spiritually, and this resonance and feelings vary based on different personal experiences and different cultural levels. Intangible cultural heritage is an intangible cultural wealth created by people of different ethnic groups and regions, and the cultural connotations inherited in different intangible cultural heritage items are also different. When designing intangible cultural heritage and creative products, it is necessary to have a certain understanding of the corresponding intangible cultural heritage culture, and carry out targeted selection and refinement of different intangible cultural heritage cultures according to the product market positioning, so that such a design can resonate with consumers. Third, the culture in cultural and creative products must be excellent and worthy of inheritance, and the design of sample delivery will have lasting vitality and longevity; Vulgar and bad culture cannot become the creative source of cultural and creative product design, otherwise it is only superficial sensory stimulation and a fresh curiosity, and its design life is short, and the design connotation is empty. The identification of intangible cultural heritage items needs to be reviewed by the government and experts, so intangible cultural heritage is the representative of the excellent culture of various regions and nationalities, has excellent quality characteristics, and inherits and carries forward the excellent culture of the nation in cultural and creative products, such a design is durable and meaningful.

### **2.2. Principle of Innovation**

The design of cultural and creative products is not a simple copy or rigid copy of existing culture, but a creative thinking and processing of existing culture from the perspective of conforming to the aesthetic taste and lifestyle of modern people.

The principle of creativity is an important principle of intangible cultural heritage in the design of cultural and creative products, and is the basis for the transformation of intangible cultural heritage into creativity. First, the design of cultural and creative products needs to transform cultural elements into creative elements through innovative thinking, and reprocess and design the original shapes, patterns, colors, etc., so as to avoid mediocrity, homogeneity and uniformity of design. Intangible cultural heritage is not a product of the sending era, its aesthetic characteristics and artistic style do not meet modern aesthetic standards, ancient craft technology is difficult to adopt the mechanization model of the industrial era, the use mode and function are no longer suitable for modern life, so how to make intangible cultural heritage culture re-enter the modern vision in cultural and creative

products is a problem that needs to be solved. Innovation is the key to breaking through the difficulties of intangible cultural heritage and integrating modern civilization, and through design creativity, intangible cultural heritage and creative products are more in line with the aesthetic needs of modern people, so that they can return to function and practicality in modern lifestyle. Second, the premise of the design of intangible cultural heritage and creative products is that it is based on the inheritance of intangible cultural heritage, and it is meaningless to only pay attention to creativity without the connotation of intangible cultural heritage or to distort intangible cultural heritage in creativity. Therefore, the design of intangible cultural heritage and creative products should adhere to the unity of culture and creativity, and convey the more ingenious design of intangible cultural heritage through innovation, while avoiding the destruction or distortion of intangible cultural heritage.

### **2.3. Functional Principles**

Although the core value of cultural and creative products lies in their cultural attributes, as a product itself, it needs to be functional. Functionality has become the basic principle of product design to meet people's needs.

First of all, intangible cultural heritage and creative products should have practical functions, it is not simply an ornament for the reproduction of intangible cultural heritage, but only focuses on ornamental and artistic and ignores its daily use function, which deviates from the essence of the productive protection of intangible cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage is created by the people in production and life, and should continue to be protected and passed on in the people's lives, and it is necessary to distinguish from the "museum-style" protection of intangible cultural heritage, so that cultural and creative products with practical functions can continue to revitalize intangible cultural heritage in people's daily life, let intangible cultural heritage enter thousands of households, and realize the living inheritance of intangible cultural heritage. Secondly, intangible cultural heritage cultural and creative products should have a commemorative function, and the cultural and creative products carrying intangible cultural heritage themselves contain cultural connotations, cause experiential necessary feelings based on personal experience or personal perception, evoke a specific memory, and have certain commemorative significance. Finally, the functionality of intangible cultural heritage and creative products is the unity of the practical function acting on the material aspect and the commemorative function acting on the spiritual aspect, and this functional design should be reasonable and appropriate, and people should understand the operation of the product in a reasonable way, and the intangible cultural heritage content should fit the use environment of the product, so that people can get the established experience in the use of the product.

### **2.4. Principle of Feasibility**

The development and design of cultural and creative products need to go through market research and analysis, have a clear positioning and target group, so that creativity has the possibility of practical operation, especially when some intangible cultural heritage items are no longer suitable for modern market economy and science and technology, the feasibility principle of intangible cultural heritage and creative product design is very important.

First, intangible cultural heritage and creative products

need to be operable through creativity. At the beginning of the design work, it is necessary to consider its target group, audience needs, social and cultural environment, determine the functional positioning and cultural positioning of the product, and in what way to convey cultural information, what process technology and material materials are used to express the product. Due to the particularity of intangible cultural heritage, it is not suitable for the market economy of modern society, and only by fully considering the feasibility of design, such intangible cultural heritage and creative products have development prospects and can adapt to market demand and bring economic benefits. Second, the feasibility principle also requires that cultural and creative products should be "tailored" according to different intangible cultural heritage cultures when designing, so as to avoid blindly pursuing economic benefits and causing damage to intangible cultural heritage and rigid application of intangible cultural heritage, which will only make intangible cultural heritage "change" and lose the significance of inheriting intangible cultural heritage in cultural and creative products.

## **3. The Application of Intangible Cultural Heritage and Creative Elements in Design**

### **3.1. Collage and Reproduction**

Collage and reproduction are the direct and intuitive combination of cultural and creative elements and products in design creation. Collage and reproduction are the direct transfer of transformed graphics, colors and other creative elements or materials to the appearance of the product, which is an objective and visual form of expression. However, this design method is not equivalent to the direct and unthinking "take-ism", and must be handled reasonably and skillfully so that the creative elements are in line with the design concept of the product itself, so that the product can be accepted and recognized by consumers.

### **3.2. Symbolism and Metaphor**

Symbolism and metaphor are the indirect expression of the message to be expressed in the design, both using one thing to represent another. Both express implicit meaning with the help of external objects, the difference is that the relationship between the symbol and the borrowed object can be free, and the two cannot be directly related; However, the idea expressed by the metaphor is that the borrowed thing has a certain correlation, and the correlation of seed sending is hidden through a certain technique. The use of symbolism and metaphor can express the design concept more implicitly, making the connotation of the design richer and more intriguing.

### **3.3. Grafting and Expansion**

Grafting and expansion is a means of extending design based on creative elements. Grafting can combine a variety of design elements into a product, which can be the mutual grafting of shapes, colors, and external expressions of materials, or the combination of these external images with ideological creative elements such as emotional expression and behavioral habits, so as to convey richer information; Expansion is to carry out value-added design in terms of product function, use mode and use, increase the diversity and added value of products, and be more competitive in the market.

## 4. Summary

Based on the research of scholars at home and abroad, the author believes that it is necessary to have a clear understanding of the concept of intangible cultural heritage before conducting research related to intangible cultural heritage. Intangible cultural heritage refers to those skills or techniques that exist in social activities such as performing, telling, living and producing experiences or making certain objects by people or individuals in various places. In the definition of its concept, it must be distinguished from tangible cultural heritage, and the core of intangible cultural heritage is precisely those invisible skills, techniques, life and production experience, etc. that cannot be seen or touched. It is worth noting that the "immaterial" in the concept of intangible cultural heritage does not mean that it is completely separated from the material. Wen Jiabao once said, "Intangible cultural heritage also has materiality, and it is necessary to combine the intangible nature of intangible cultural heritage with materiality." It can be said that intangible cultural heritage does not exist independently of materials, but material is a tangible carrier of intangible cultural heritage, and intangible cultural heritage can be displayed and preserved in a materialized form, which is an issue that needs attention in the protection and inheritance of intangible cultural heritage.

Therefore, the inheritance of Nanjing velvet flowers also needs to be driven by innovation, and cross-border integration with cultural and creative product design to promote Nanjing

velvet flowers and people's lives and tourism are more closely linked.

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