



Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts
Graphic design department
Visual Communication Design



A STUDY ON THE VISUAL IMAGE DESIGN AND APPLICATION OF PINGXIANG NUO CULTURE

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ISSUES AND RELEVANCE

01. Why is this topic important

Pingxiang Nuo is a “living fossil” of intangible cultural heritage, yet it faces a knowledge gap and a lack of design adaptation; visual identity design can help promote its living transmission.

02. What do you want to research or create?

Drawing on Nuo masks, Nuo dances, and Nuo temples as resources, we have developed the “Nuo·New Image” visual identity system.

03. How is it connected to culture, design, people, or history?

By connecting intangible cultural heritage, visual design, young audiences, and local history, traditional Nuo culture can enter contemporary life through a modern aesthetic.

04. What is the cultural, historical, or social background of this theme?

Pingxiang Nuo originated in the early Han Dynasty and reached its peak during the Ming Dynasty. Nuo masks were inscribed on the National List of Intangible Cultural Heritage in 2006, and Nuo dance was inscribed in 2021. Faced with the challenges of modernization, its transmission has weakened, creating an urgent need for design-driven adaptation and dynamic dissemination.



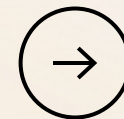
Thesis Information

- **Master's Thesis Topic:**
A Study on the Visual Design and Application of Pingxiang Nuo Culture
- **Object of Research:**
Pingxiang City, Jiangxi Province
- **Subject of Research:**
Graphic approaches to the representation of cultural heritage
- **Territorial and Chronological Scope:**
China, Pingxiang, historical and cultural heritage (past to present)

Project Background and Research Objectives

“Nuo” is an ancient Chinese ritual for warding off evil spirits and praying for blessings, and Nuo masks are its central medium. The Nuo culture of Pingxiang, Jiangxi, dates back to the early Han Dynasty and has been passed down for over 2,000 years. Nuo masks feature bold, rugged designs and vivid colors, possessing significant artistic and scholarly value. However, existing research has largely focused on Nuo dance, while studies on Nuo masks remain insufficient, and their contemporary design adaptations are limited. This paper adopts a design semiotics perspective to decode and reconstruct Pingxiang Nuo masks, exploring pathways for their contemporary design adaptation and living heritage transmission.

By synthesizing and summarizing relevant research on Pingxiang Nuo culture, this paper provides a theoretical foundation. It contributes to a more comprehensive understanding of the intrinsic elements of Pingxiang Nuo culture—namely, Nuo masks, Nuo dances, and Nuo temples—thereby enriching theoretical research on Nuo culture in the Pingxiang region and offering a theoretical basis for the public to fully understand Pingxiang Nuo culture as well as for the development and study of Nuo culture in other regions.



Research Content and Methods



Against the backdrop of the challenges facing the preservation of Pingxiang Nuo culture, this paper focuses on the visual elements and cultural significance of Nuo masks, Nuo dances, and Nuo temples, and applies cultural translation theory to the design of cultural and creative products and derivatives. The study is divided into five sections: Introduction, Overview of Pingxiang Nuo, Artistic Elements and Aesthetic Extraction, Case Studies and Methodological Synthesis, and Design Practice. The research methodology integrates literature review, field research, case analysis, design semiotics, and design practice, forming a research pathway of “theory—research—analysis—practice—evaluation.”

Research Source

- 1.Zhang J . Faith, Function, and Transformation: A Study of the Nuo Culture in Pingxiang, Jiangxi[J].Pacific International Journal,2025.
- 2.Shengzhou S ,Yurevich A M ,Chun W , et al. Mixotrophy, a more promising culture mode: multi-faceted elaboration of carbon and energy metabolism mechanisms to optimize microalgae culture.[J].Bioresource technology,2023.
3. Jang Ga-yong, Zhang Jia Long, Jang Dong-ryeol, et al. A Study on the Sublime Beauty of the “Na” Mask as Depicted in the Chinese Animation *My Red Whale* [J]. Journal of Comics and Animation Studies, 2022.
- 4.Lei . Mask – ArtsCross/Danscross London[J].Choreographic Practices,2016,7(2):213-218.
- 5.Mayumi A ,Kazuyoshi U ,Shigehisa A , et al. A promising culture model for analyzing the interaction between adipose tissue and cardiomyocytes.[J].Endocrinology,2011,152(4):1599605.

Survey results

01.Design Principles and Methods

With cultural translation as the core concept, this project integrates design semiotics, visual communication design, the living transmission of intangible cultural heritage, and systematic design theory to transform the visual elements of Pingxiang's Nuo masks, Nuo dances, and Nuo temples into a modern design language. Using methods such as literature review, field research, case analysis, design semiotics, and design practice—supplemented by user testing and iterative optimization—the project forms a closed-loop process of “theory—research—analysis—practice—evaluation.” The approach follows the path of “extraction—simplification—reconstruction—application,” guided by the principles of cultural authenticity, distinctiveness, systematicity, contemporary relevance, and practicality.

02. Technical route

First, define the research objectives and collect relevant materials on Nuo masks, Nuo dances, and Nuo temples within Pingxiang's Nuo culture; then conduct a needs analysis and target audience research; next, formulate design principles, strategies, and technical solutions; subsequently, extract, simplify, and reconstruct visual elements to execute the visual identity design; finally, create content to present the research findings. The specific process is as follows: first, establish research objectives and collect information; then, analyze needs and conduct user research; next, determine design strategies and select relevant technologies; following that, process elements and complete the visual design; and finally, present the research findings in the form of a visual identity system, cultural and creative products, dynamic videos, and other formats.

Key Reference Projects

Visual outcome(s):

1. Basic Visual Identity System Design
2. Applied Visual Design
3. Exhibition and Communication Design

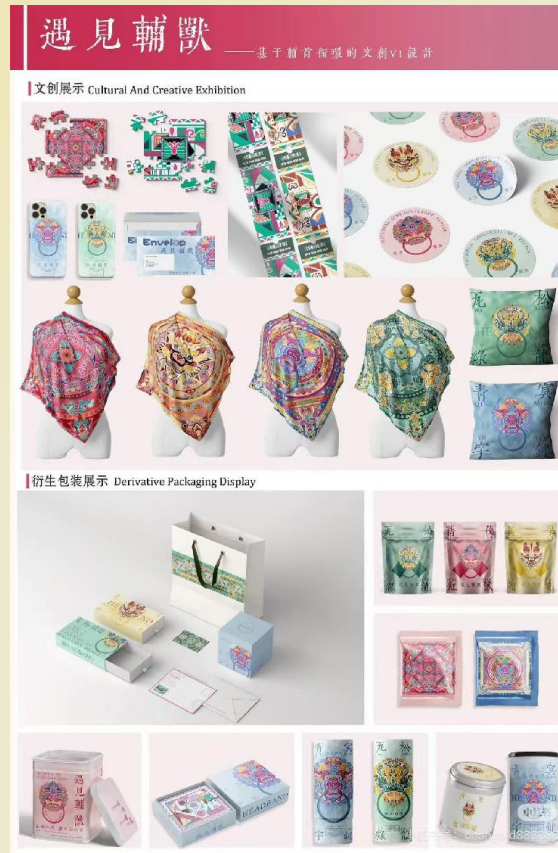
Design [Nuo masks] using software such as Photoshop and Illustrator



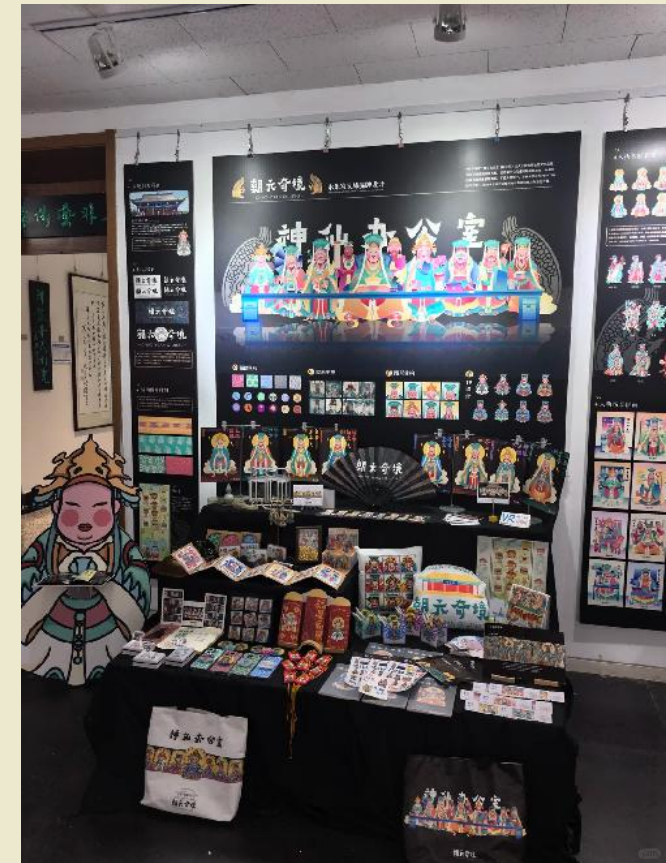
design inspired by Nuo culture

Key Reference Projects

Design of derivative products



VisuaPhysical exhibition



Concept sketch



1. An attempt to geometrize the symbols of Nuo masks, generalizing core features such as the flame-shaped eyebrows, fangs, animal horns, and the five-color system into basic shapes like circles, triangles, and arcs, resulting in multiple drafts of logos and supplementary graphics;



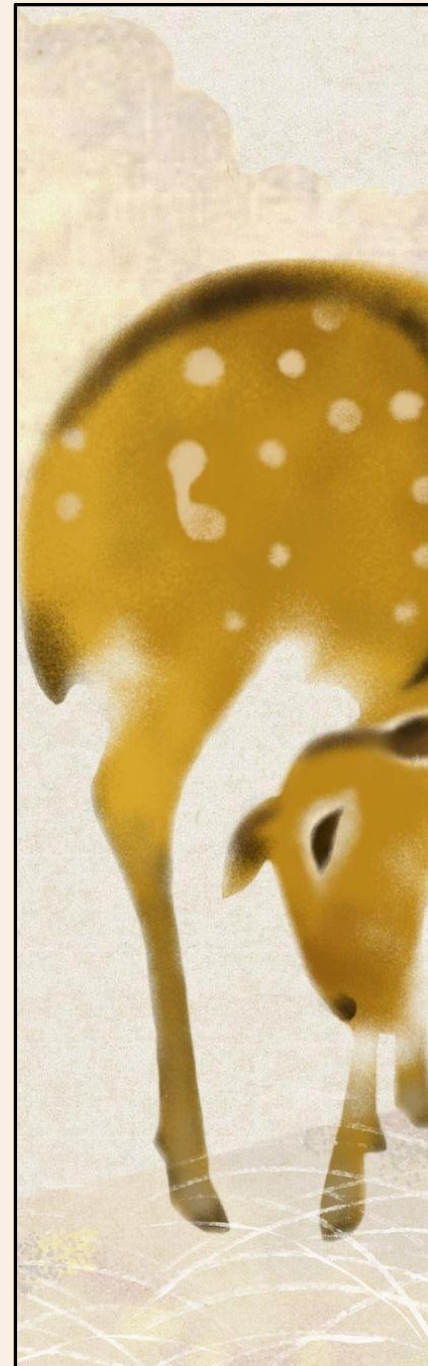
2. Silhouette-based representations of Nuo dance movements, extracting poses such as the “Three-Step Gang” and “Five-Direction Steps” and transforming them into dynamic lines, silhouette poses, and sequential frame graphics;



3. Extraction and reconstruction of decorative patterns from Nuo temples, distilling border, background, and grid elements from architectural outlines, meander patterns, cloud motifs, and shrine structures;



4. Conducted comprehensive visual composition experiments, testing various combinations of the logo with the standard typeface, primary and secondary colors, and graphics with layout.



Initial Design Sketches

Collection and Analysis of
Historical and Cultural Information

Principles and Methods
of Visual Identity Design

Visual Content
Design

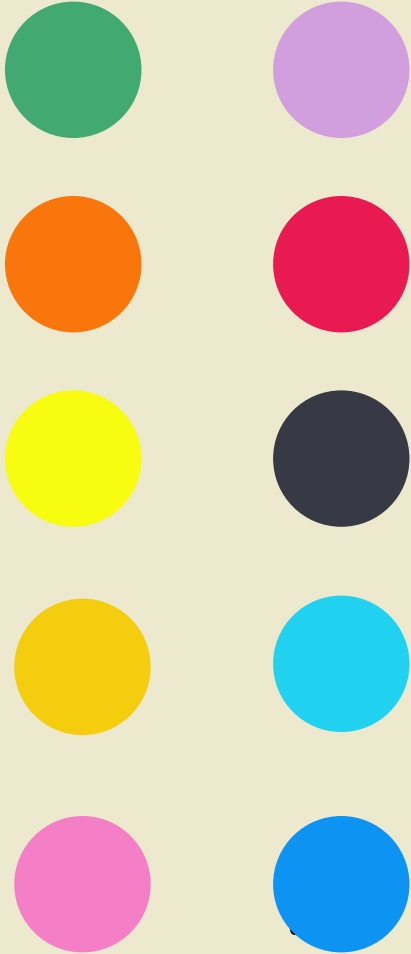
Visual Design
Communication Strategies

Visual Design Communication
Strategies

Font



Color



Initial Design Sketches

Collection and Analysis of
Historical and Cultural Information

Principles and Methods
of Visual Identity Design

Visual Content
Design

Visual Design
Communication Strategies

Visual Design Communication
Strategies



Element



Element

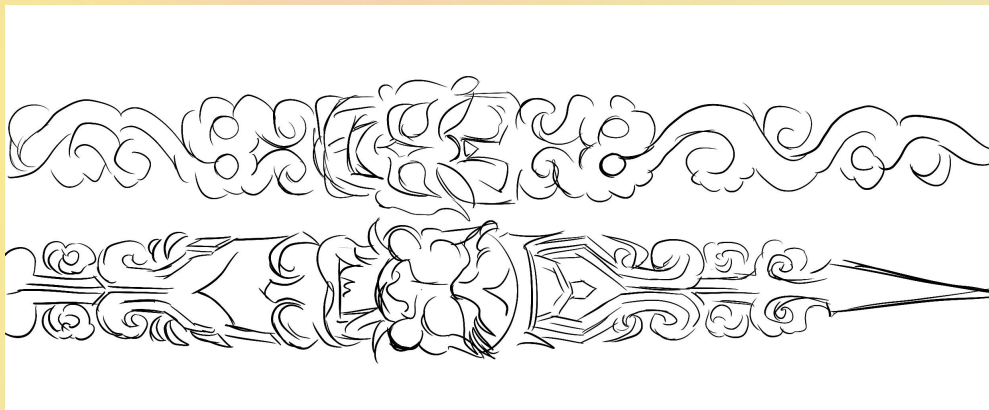
Initial Design Sketches *

Rough visual diagram explanatory

text:

1. Geometrizing and stylizing elements of the Nuo ritual to create a logo
2. It's using Procreate software on iPad
3. Improve the color and shape of details and related content

Extraction of Patterns



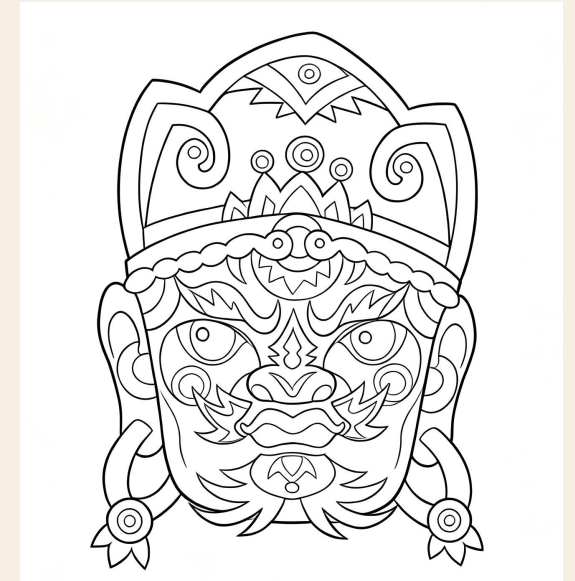
Extraction of Nuo Mask Elements



Initial Design Sketches *

Rough visual diagram explanatory text:

1. Geometrizing and stylizing elements of the Nuo ritual to create a logo
2. It's using Procreate software on iPad
3. Improve the color and shape of details and related content



Black-and-White Visual Design Drafts

During the preliminary design sketch phase, elements of the Nuo mask were transformed into graphic concepts. The sketches were primarily hand-drawn, with a focus on exploring multiple design options for the logo, supporting graphics, character designs, color schemes, and layout.

For the logo sketches, elements of the Nuo masks—such as flaming eyebrows, fangs, and animal horns—were geometrically abstracted. By combining basic shapes like circles, triangles, and arcs, multiple logo drafts were created. The character sketches simplified and “cutefied” the Nuo mask characters while retaining their core identifying features, exploring modern visual expressions.



Color Design



The five masks each correspond to a unique color scheme, with each color serving a specific purpose: red wards off evil spirits, green symbolizes vitality and well-being, blue promotes calmness and harmony, and yellow attracts wealth and good fortune. The interplay of warm and cool colors creates a balanced visual rhythm.

The design features a sleek, all-black background that highlights the vibrant main visual. It preserves the raw, rugged, sacred, and spirited folk essence of Pingxiang's Nuo culture while aligning with the visual aesthetics of modern cultural and creative products and blessing cards, achieving an innovative fusion of traditional intangible cultural heritage and contemporary visual trends.

Poster Design

Poster design is the core application of the Nuo visual identity system in print media. The design uses the Nuo mask as its central visual element and employs established logos, auxiliary graphics, standard colors, and layout guidelines to create a series of posters centered around the Nuo mask. The visuals feature geometric, flat Nuo mask symbols as their central element. Through modern color combinations within a five-color palette—red, black, yellow, white, and green—they create a poster language that balances cultural identity with visual impact. The series includes cultural promotion posters, exhibition posters, and social media posters, each tailored for offline display and online dissemination, respectively, to test the visual system's adaptability and communicative effectiveness across different sizes and contexts.



President's Design *



Amulet Charms



Sticker Design

Textures were added to the original graphic design.



Promotions and Announcements

Billboards are a form of advertising medium that conveys information through visual displays; their core function is to increase visibility and communicate a message, and they are widely used in the commercial sector.



Postcards



Desk Calendar



Derivative Design

Derivative design serves as the medium through which core visual and cultural symbols are brought to life, fulfilling multiple functions including visual expansion, cultural dissemination, brand empowerment, and commercial transformation.



Derivative Design



Derivative Design



Derivative Design



Conclusion

This study focuses on the visual elements of Nuo masks, Nuo dances, and Nuo temples within Pingxiang's Nuo culture. By comprehensively employing methods such as literature review, field research, case analysis, design semiotics, and design practice, this study constructed a three-dimensional visual resource genealogy centered on “object—body—space.” It proposed design principles of “cultural significance, distinctiveness, systematicity, contemporaneity, and practicality,” and completed the “Nuo·New Image” visual identity system along with the design of cultural and creative derivative products. The research has yielded positive results in cultural heritage preservation, academic reference, and industrial empowerment. Although there are still shortcomings in terms of field coverage, the scale of user testing, and the depth of digitization, these can be optimized in the future through new technologies such as AR and AI, thereby driving the upgrading and development of Pingxiang's Nuo culture IP.



THANK YOU !
