

Industrial Heritage Brand Revitalization Design from the Perspective of Cultural Memory: A Case Study of Huangchuan Cotton Mill Site

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Research Background and Significance



01 Why is this topic important?

With the acceleration of urbanization, many old industrial sites have been abandoned. Industrial heritage carries the collective memories of generations of workers, but it faces problems like weakening cultural memory, limited ways of sharing, and young people not knowing much about it.

02 What should I study and design?

Using the old site of Huangchuan Cotton Mill as a case study, we are building the 'Guangzhou Weaving' brand visual identity system. Through brand design, we aim to bring new life to abandoned industrial heritage and reshape local cultural memory.

03 Connection with culture, design, and people?

Visual design is a medium for spreading cultural memory. Brand design can turn abstract industrial cultural memories into straightforward visual language, connecting the collective memory of older workers with the cultural identity of the younger generation.

04 What's the historical background and social environment?

China has entered a period of urban renewal and industrial transformation, with a lot of small and medium-sized industrial heritage urgently needing revitalization. The cultural and creative industries have become a new driving force for urban renewal and the development of local cultural brands.

Basic information about the paper

Paper Title:

Industrial Heritage Brand Revitalization Design from the Perspective of Cultural Memory: A Case Study of Huangchuan Cotton Mill Site

Research object:

Abandoned Huangchuan Cotton Mill in Huangchuan County, Henan Province (ancient Guangzhou) and its industrial cultural resources

Research Topic:

Design and Communication Strategy of Brand Visual Identity System for Industrial Heritage from the Perspective of Cultural Memory

Spatio-temporal scope:

Historical development from its establishment in the 1950s to its abandonment in the early 2000s + contemporary brand design practice



Background of the research object

Huangchuan (ancient Guangzhou) is located in the southeastern part of Henan Province. It serves as a vital transportation hub and key industrial town in southern Henan. Huangchuan Cotton Mill was first built in the 1950s. It ranks among the earliest state-owned textile enterprises in southern Henan after the founding of New China. At its peak, it employed thousands of workers. It was not only a major local economic pillar but also carries the collective memories and life emotions of several generations of people in Guangzhou.

- Historical evolution: Founded in the 1950s → Reached its heyday in the 1980s–1990s → Restructured and ceased production in the early 2000s → The factory site has been abandoned and idle to this day
- Cultural value: As a representative relic of the state-owned industrial era in southern Henan, it is an important physical carrier of local industrial civilization and collective memories from the planned economy era
- Current issues: Buildings within the factory compound are aging and dilapidated; cultural memories are gradually fading; the younger generation lacks sufficient understanding of local industrial history; there is a shortage of effective branding communication and approaches for revitalization and adaptive reuse

Research Content and Methods

Research content

1. Sort out relevant theories of cultural memory and the revitalization of industrial heritage
2. Investigate the historical background and cultural resources of Huangchuan Cotton Mill
3. Analyze the memory perception and brand preferences of target groups
4. Extract the principles for visual design of industrial heritage brands
5. Complete the design of the visual identity system for the "Guangzhou Weaving" brand
6. Explore paths for brand communication and revitalization application

Research methods

- Literature research method: Sort out theories related to cultural memory, industrial heritage and brand design
- Field investigation method: Inspect the former site of the cotton mill, and record architectural remains and industrial equipment
- Questionnaire survey method: Understand local residents' memory cognition of the cotton mill and brand preferences
- Case analysis method: Study excellent cases of brand revitalization of industrial heritage at home and abroad
- Design practice method: Use software such as PS and AI to complete the practice of brand visual design

References

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- [2] 【王采莲,陈蕊.基于文化记忆理论的工业遗产活化设计策略研究[J].设计,2022,35(15):89-91.】
- [3] 【吕建昌.中西部地区工业遗产旅游开发的思考——以三线工业遗产为例[J].贵州社会科学,2021,(4):153-160.DOI:10.13713/j.cnki.cssci.2021.04.019.】
- [4] 【王华,曾卫,周钰婷.工业遗产旅游的开发原则与模式研究[J].建筑与文化,2017,(3):207-208.】
- [5] 【梁浩.文化记忆视角下工业遗产旅游品牌视觉形象设计:以南充丝绸源点景区为例[D].四川农业大学,2024.DOI:10.27345/d.cnki.gsnyu.2024.000455.】

Research Findings and Design Principles

Principle of Authenticity

Preserve the authentic industrial elements and historical symbols of the cotton mill, and respect the authenticity of local cultural memories

Principle of emotional resonance

Evoke the collective memories of veteran workers through visual design and forge the cultural identity of the younger generation

Systematic principle

Establish a unified and complete brand visual identity system to ensure the consistency and systematic nature of the brand image

Contemporary Adaptation Principle

On the basis of preserving historical culture, adapt to contemporary aesthetic standards and communication needs, and achieve the integration of tradition and modernity

Research Conclusion: Local middle-aged and elderly people hold deep emotional memories of the cotton mill, while the younger generation lacks relevant awareness. Most respondents expect the industrial heritage to be revitalized through branding and cultural and creative development, rather than simply being demolished or sealed off.

07 • COMPARATIVE CASES

Reference project



Hanxi
Textile

LOGO Design



Shandon
Hanxi Textile

VI Design



Sunshine

VI Manual



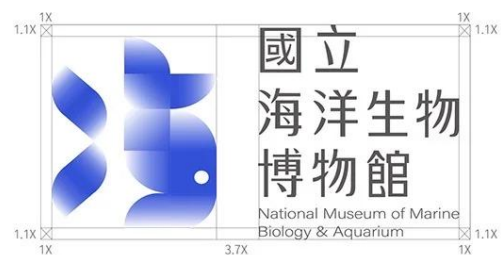
Zhichen
g Hui

Extended design

08 • BENCHMARK

Reference Project 2

■ 安全範圍與最小使用尺寸

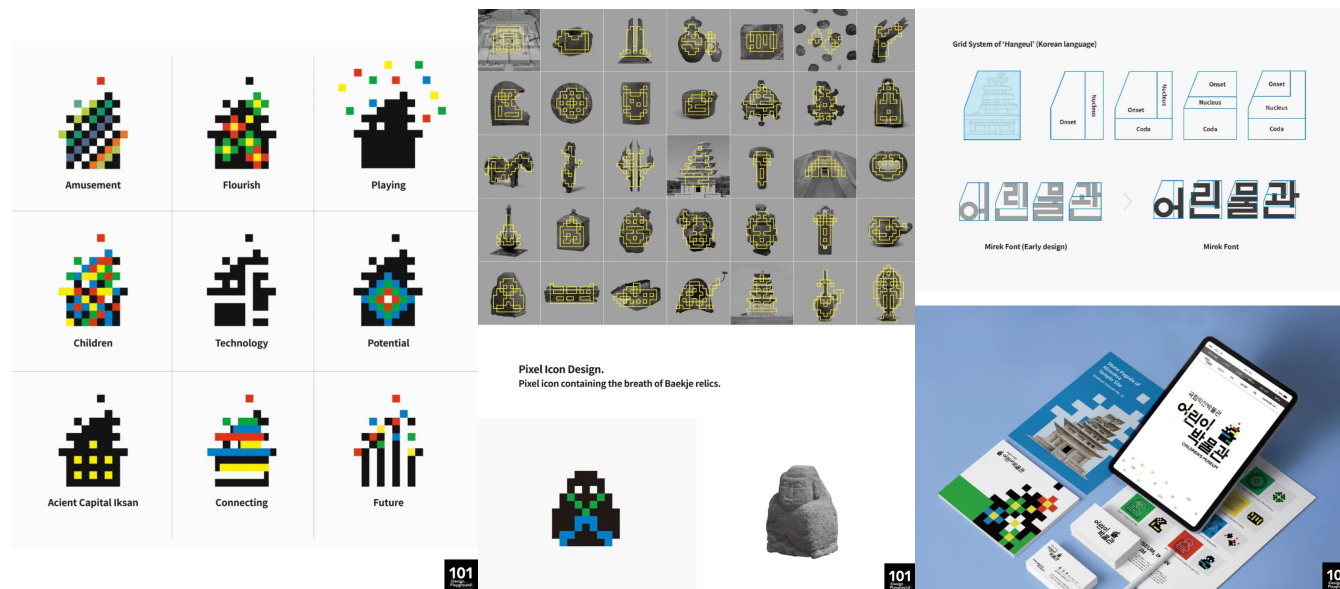


限等比例縮小，logo 高度不得小於15mm。



National Marine Museum

LOGO Design



Museums in South Korea

VI Design

Design Source (I)

textile industry



Industrial heritage



Cultural memory



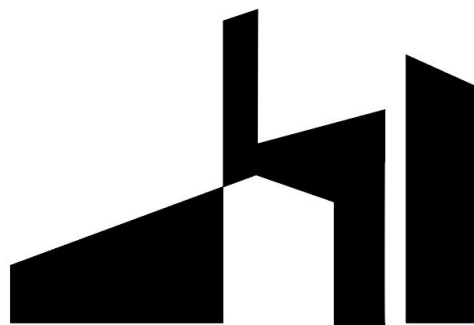
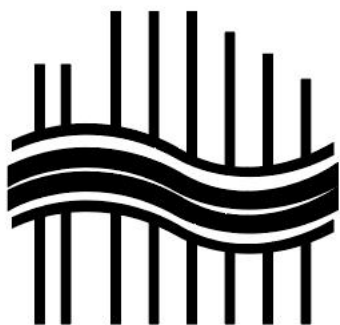
Reconstruction /
Rebirth



Design derivation logic

Extract industry attributes from the "textile industry" → draw a sense of profound history from "industrial heritage" → infuse regional emotional core through "cultural memory" → finally integrate and reconstruct into contemporary brand visual symbols, fully supporting the visual language system for subsequent logo design.

Design attempt



Initial design attempt

The first round of sketch

exploration was carried out based on the four core directions extracted from the design source:

- Attempted to directly integrate textile warp and weft lines with the Chinese character structure of "Guangzhou", exploring logo forms combining graphics and text
- Tested different color schemes including industrial blue, natural cotton color and brick red to match the historical temperament of the industrial heritage
- Built the basic graphic framework of the logo preliminarily and verified the recognizability of combined elements

This preliminary exploration defined the overall design direction. Meanwhile, it revealed problems including overly complex graphics and insufficient memorable features, providing an iterative basis for visual refinement and optimization in the next stage.

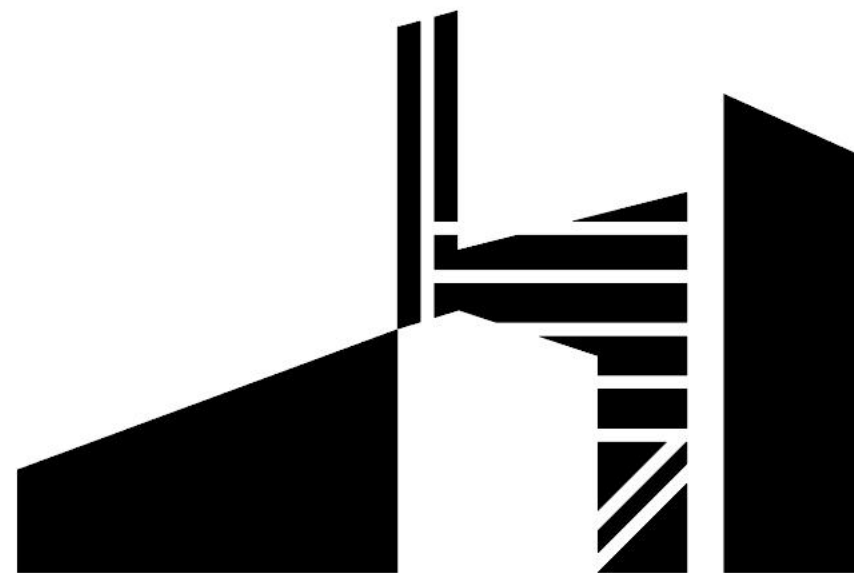
Final sketch

Final Logo Sketch Derivation

Based on element extraction from design references and iterative feedback from initial attempts, this version finalizes the core form of the logo:

- Simplified the complex graphics from the initial attempt, retaining two core recognition elements — woven warp and weft lines and the Chinese character form of "Guangzhou" — to boost memorability.
- Adjusted line proportions and visual focus to balance industrial solidity and the brand's modern feel.
- Established the basic form and proportion specifications of the mark, providing a core basis for the standardized application of the subsequent VI system.

This completes the full derivation process from inspiration to the finalized logo form, and all subsequent extended designs will be developed based on this sketch.



VI System Design • Logo Specifications

Logo Design Concept:

The logo of "Guangzhou Weaving" takes the textile imagery of cotton mills as its core, integrating the regional name "Guangzhou" and the industry attribute of "Weaving":

- Graphic elements: Extract the outlines of spinning threads, looms and cotton bolls to echo industrial memories
- Color system: Adopt industrial dark blue as the main color and warm orange as the auxiliary color to reflect the warmth of history
- Font design: Combine the cultural sense of Song typeface with the modern sense of sans-serif fonts to balance tradition and contemporaneity
- Application principles: The logo maintains proportional safety and consistent recognition in different scenarios

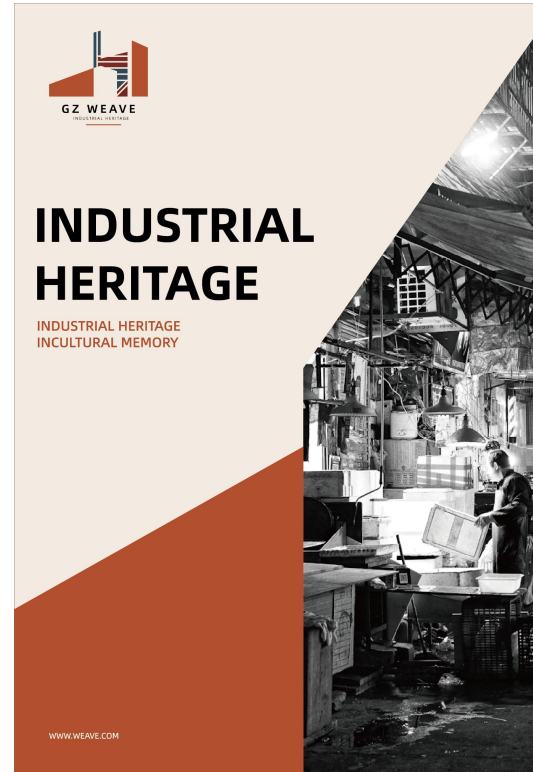


14 • FINAL DESIGN

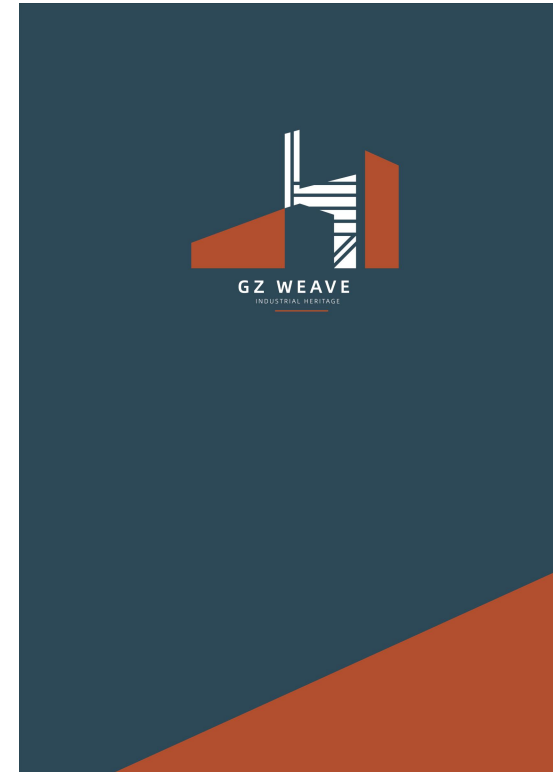
Extended Design 1



Poster template



Album Cover

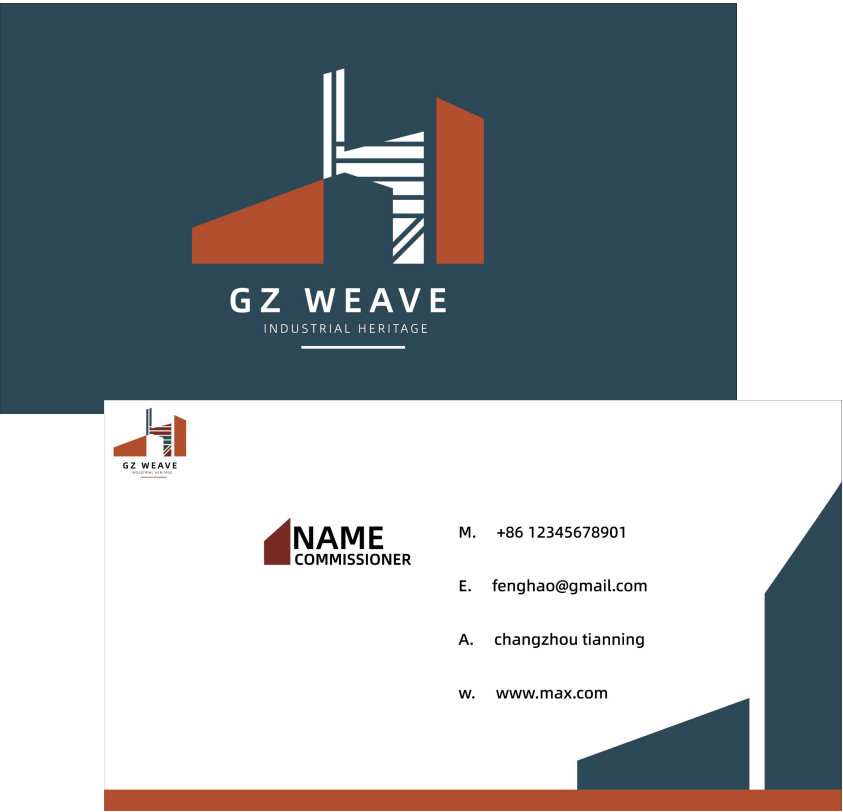


Notebook cover



Invitation

Extended Design II



Business card template



Envelope Design

16 · FINAL DESIGN

初步设计尝试



Cultural and Creative Merchandise 1



Cultural and Creative Merchandise II

critical review

Limitations of the study

1. **Limitations of research scope:** The field survey mainly covers the existing buildings in the factory area and surrounding communities. The oral history collection from retired veteran workers lacks depth, and some historical memories still rely on the collation of public literature.
2. **Limitations of implementation verification:** The current design has completed the visual identity and application system, but has not entered the stage of physical space renovation and long-term operation. The actual communication effect of the brand remains to be verified through implementation.
3. **Limitations of universality:** The design scheme is deeply tied to the local cultural memory characteristics of Huangchuan. When transplanted to other industrial heritage sites, the weight and expression of cultural symbols need to be recalibrated.

Future improvement directions

- Conduct in-depth interviews with veteran workers at the factory site to enrich the multi-dimensional narrative of collective memory
- Propose phased implementation renovation and cultural and creative development plans based on the actual site conditions
- Expand the dimension of digital display and build an online-accessible digital archive of the factory's cultural memory

Conclusion and Outlook

Core Achievements

1. Adopting cultural memory theory as the core methodology, the complete VI visual identity system design for the industrial heritage brand "Guangzhou Weaving" of Huangchuan Cotton Mill was accomplished.
2. Four design principles including authenticity, emotional resonance, systematicness and contemporary adaptability were summarized, offering referable design approaches for the brand revitalization of similar county-level industrial heritage sites in China.
3. Extended application design covering 8 categories including logos, office supplies and promotional materials was finished, realizing the transformation of industrial historical memory into perceptible contemporary brand value.

Future Outlook

In the future, brand design can be further integrated with factory space renewal, local cultural and creative product development, and community public cultural activities, enabling dormant industrial heritage to once again become a living carrier that connects local collective emotions and drives regional cultural renewal.

THANK YOU

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