

2026.

From the Perspective of Traditional Chinese Culture

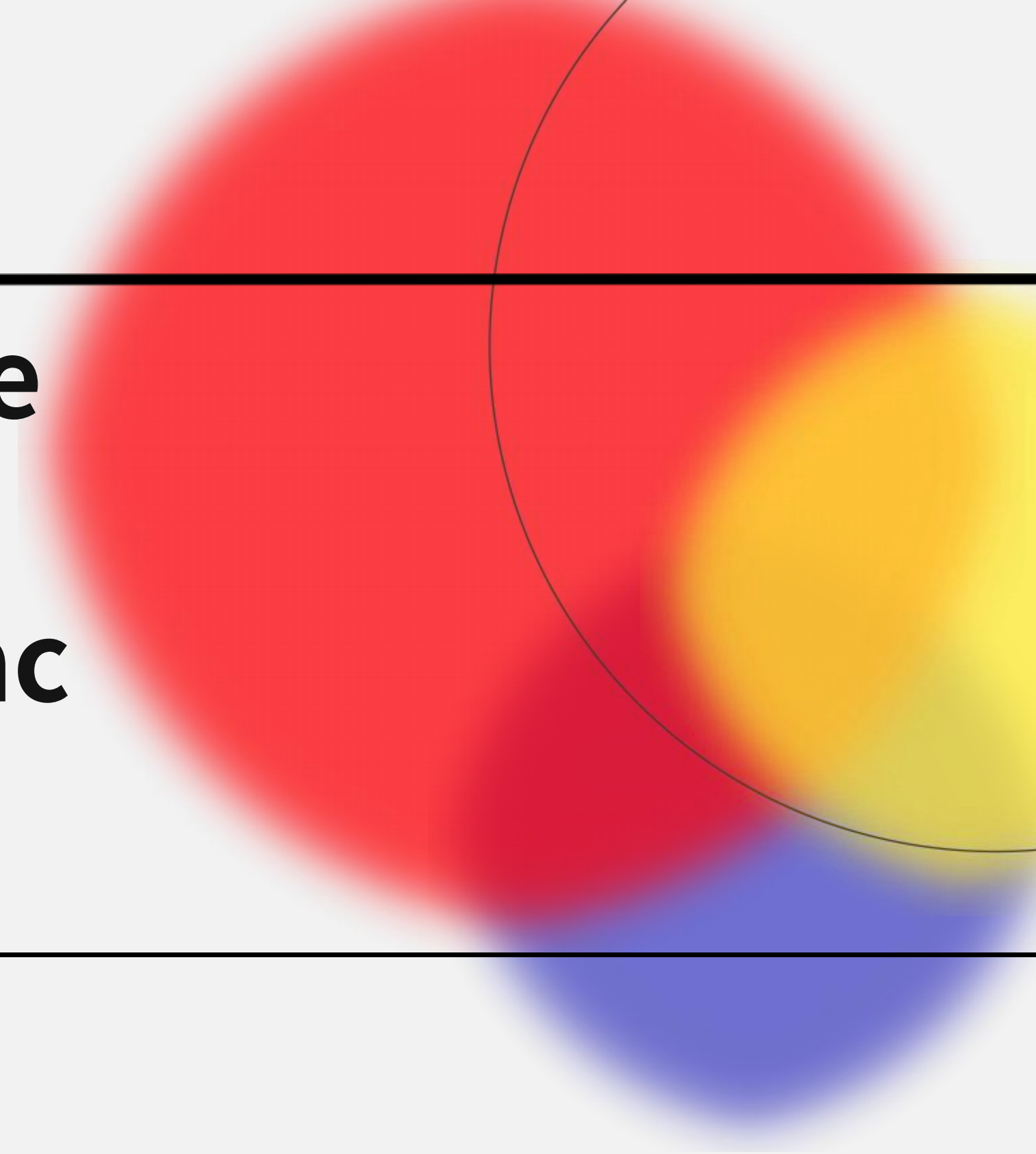
A Poster Design Study on the Chinese Zodiac Character Symbols

Master's Thesis Defense

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Group: DVC-25

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1 . Research Background and Rationale

- 01 **Why this topic?**
The zodiac is a core Chinese cultural gene. Under the national strategy of "creative transformation", design revives zodiac symbols to carry cultural memory and national identity.
- 02 **What to research and create?**
Research the creative transformation of zodiac character symbols in poster design; build a "Form–Meaning–Spirit" translation model; complete twelve themed posters.
- 03 **How does it relate to cultural design?**
Connects traditional arts (bronze ware, brick-relief rubbings, paper-cut, calligraphy) with contemporary graphic design, addressing the disconnect between cultural meaning and visual form.
- 04 **What is the cultural context?**
National policy in 2025 explicitly supports cultural heritage preservation. Yet current zodiac design remains at shallow borrowing and rigid collage, with a gap between cultural resources and design expression.

2 . Thesis Information

Thesis Title:

A Poster Design Study on the Chinese Zodiac Character Symbols from the Perspective of Traditional Chinese Culture

Research Object:

Zodiac character symbols; traditional visual elements such as bronze ware, brick relief, paper-cut, and calligraphy

Research Focus:

Methods for the creative graphic transformation of zodiac symbols in poster design

Scope:

China — from ancient totem worship and the Ganzhi system to contemporary graphic design (up to 2025)

3 . Project Background and Research Objectives

■ Project Background

The twelve zodiac signs form a core symbol system of traditional Chinese culture, carrying the philosophy of harmony between humanity and nature as well as folk memory. Yet in contemporary design practice, zodiac elements are often shallowly borrowed or rigidly collaged, lacking deep excavation of their character origins and cultural meaning.

This project takes the zodiac character symbols as its research object, connecting traditional visual resources such as oracle-bone inscriptions, bronze ware, brick relief, paper-cut and calligraphy, to explore pathways for the creative transformation of traditional cultural symbols in contemporary poster design.

■ Research Objectives

1. Theoretical Review — Systematically review the evolution and cultural meaning of zodiac character symbols, and build a traditional visual resource spectrum.

2. Model Construction — Propose a three-layer "Form–Meaning–Spirit" translation model, establishing a design method from traditional symbols to modern posters.

3. Design Practice — Complete twelve zodiac-themed posters and derivative products, verifying the feasibility and expressiveness of the model.

4. Research Content and Methods

01.



Rubbings of Han Dynasty
Zodiac Portrait Bricks

02.



Rubbing of Han-dynasty brick
relief: Tiger and Pig Fighting

03.



Bronze Mirror with Pan-Chi
Pattern, Spring and
Autumn Period

04.



Zodiac paper-
cut

5. References

[1] **Wang Juan.** A Study on the Chinese Zodiac Symbol System and Its Cultural Meaning.

The zodiac is not merely a timekeeping symbol but a profound cultural structure. Rooted in the Chinese worldview, through the pairing of animals and earthly branches, yin-yang and the five elements, it forms a model for interpreting the world, permeating folk belief and social life.

[3] **Xu Yan.** A Study on the Visual Image Design of the Chinese Zodiac.

Under changing contemporary aesthetics and the impact of foreign cultures, the visual expression of zodiac culture lacks vitality. This study focuses on visual innovation: extracting traditional graphics and colors, combining modern design language, to create visual images fitting contemporary aesthetics, providing a reference for the contemporary dissemination of zodiac culture.

[2] **Xu Jisheng.** Research on the Design and Application of Oracle-Bone Zodiac Graphics.

Reviews the historical background, evolution and cultural meaning of oracle-bone zodiac characters, and conducts creative transformation. Summarizes the "form-expressing-meaning" feature of character construction, and develops cultural-creative products integrating oracle-bone culture into modern life.

[4] **Yang Fan.** Research on the Application of Zodiac Elements in Graphic Design

Under changing contemporary aesthetics and the impact of foreign cultures, the visual expression of zodiac culture lacks vitality. This study focuses on visual innovation: extracting traditional graphics and colors, combining modern design language, to create visual images fitting contemporary aesthetics, providing a reference for the contemporary dissemination of zodiac culture.

6. Design Principles and Technical Route

01. Visual Symbol Design Principles

Screen and classify information of each zodiac sign according to historical value; extract core points and condense content around a unified design theme; combine visual elements that embody its characteristics. Classify by specific factors, condense text, focus on the theme, and design visual elements such as color, layout, imagery and rhythm — grounded in historical and regional characteristics.

02. Technical Route

The process: define objectives → collect zodiac materials → analyze needs and audience → determine design principles, strategies and techniques → process data and execute visual design → produce the poster series and derivative displays.

7. Key Reference Zodiac Design Projects



This zodiac poster series draws on zodiac characters, blending traditional culture with modern geometric design, with display panels and cultural-creative derivatives. Balancing ancient cultural depth with contemporary aesthetics, it reshapes traditional symbols into trendy visuals, innovatively combining zodiac, ancient script and graphic design.

8. OtherZodiac Design Case Projects



Drawing on zodiac characters, this poster series blends traditional culture with modern geometric design, with display panels and cultural-creative derivatives. Balancing ancient cultural depth with contemporary aesthetics, it reshapes traditional symbols into trendy visuals — innovatively combining zodiac, ancient script and graphic design.

9. Initial Sketches and Design Elements



Left — Script Evolution Study: Each zodiac character traces four scripts — oracle-bone, bronze, clerical, and modern regular script. This establishes the historical genealogy underlying the poster design.

Right — Symbol Extraction: Han-dynasty brick-relief rubbings provide the earliest stylized animal forms. They are simplified into clean line symbols — retaining the vitality of the originals while achieving modern graphic clarity. This method of direct extraction from cultural relics becomes the core visual vocabulary of the poster series.

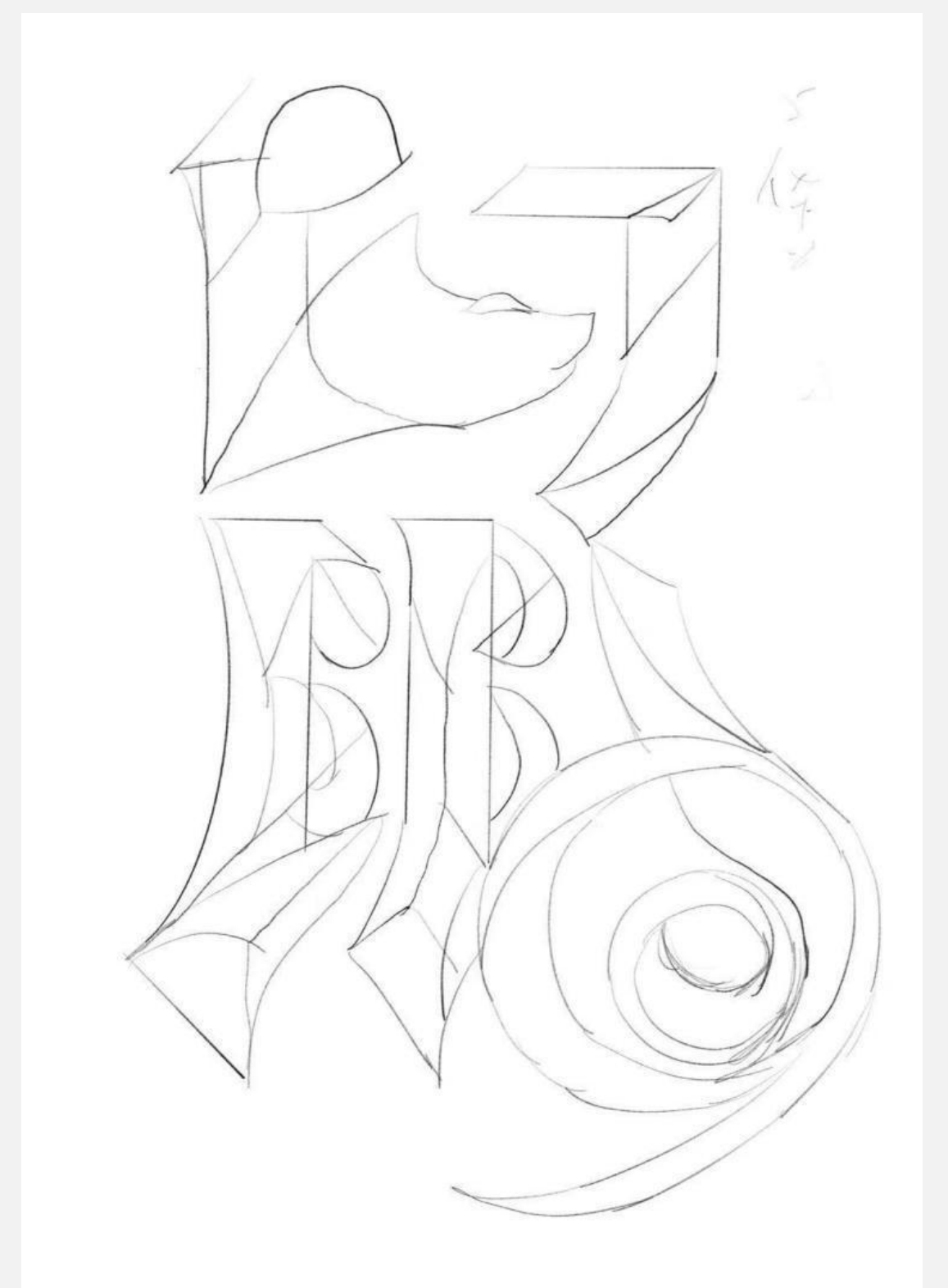
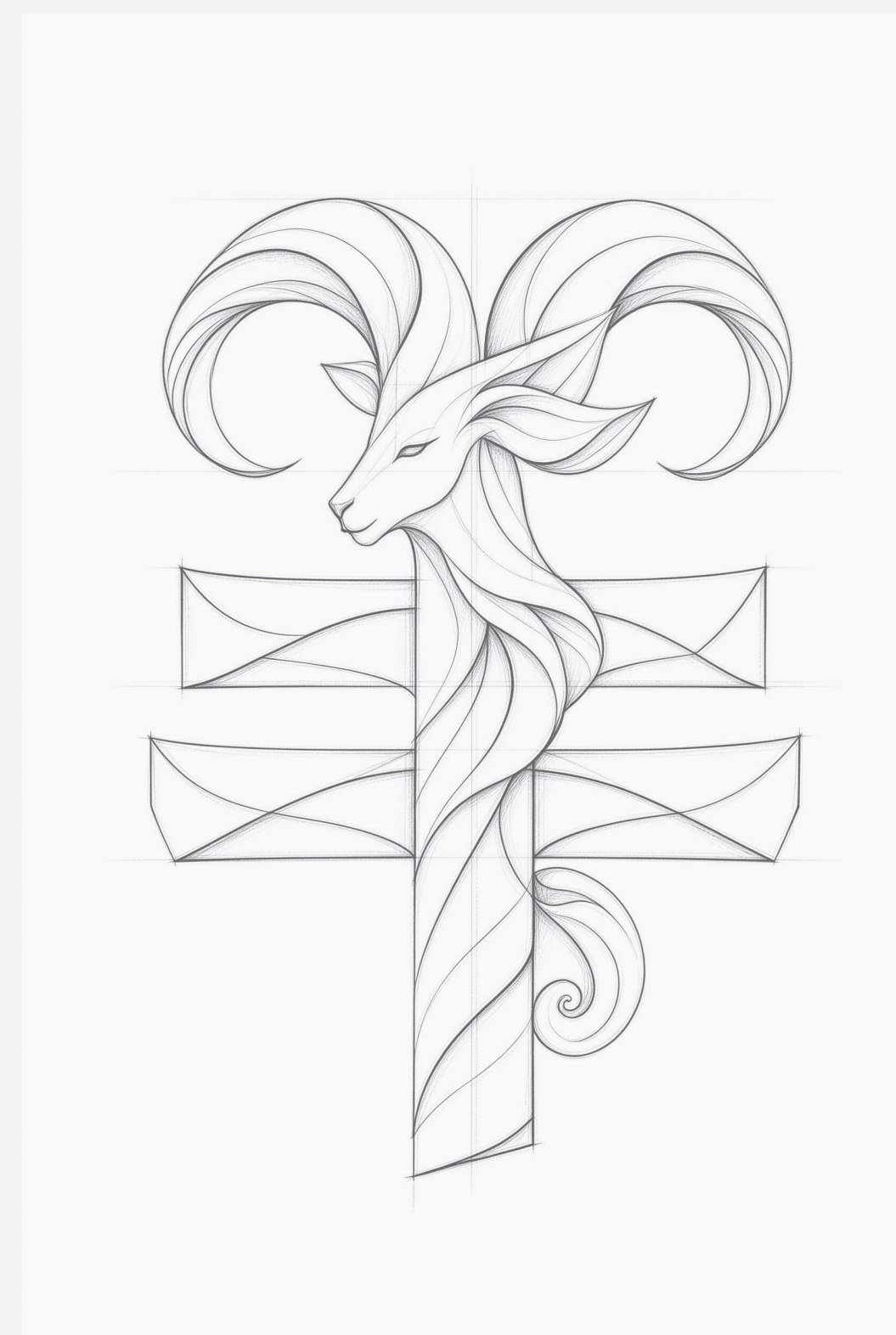
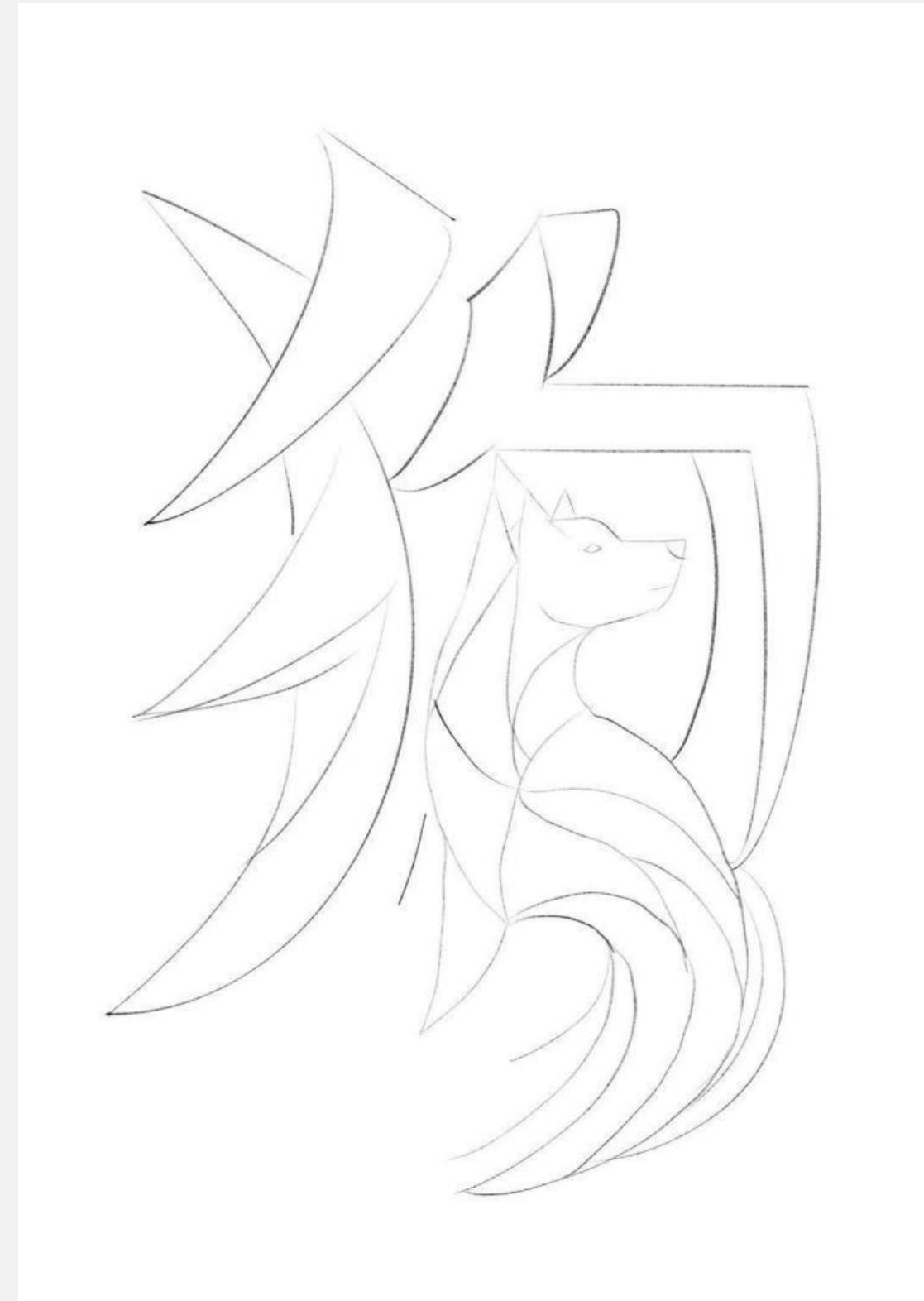
9. Design Elements and Initial Sketches

Color System

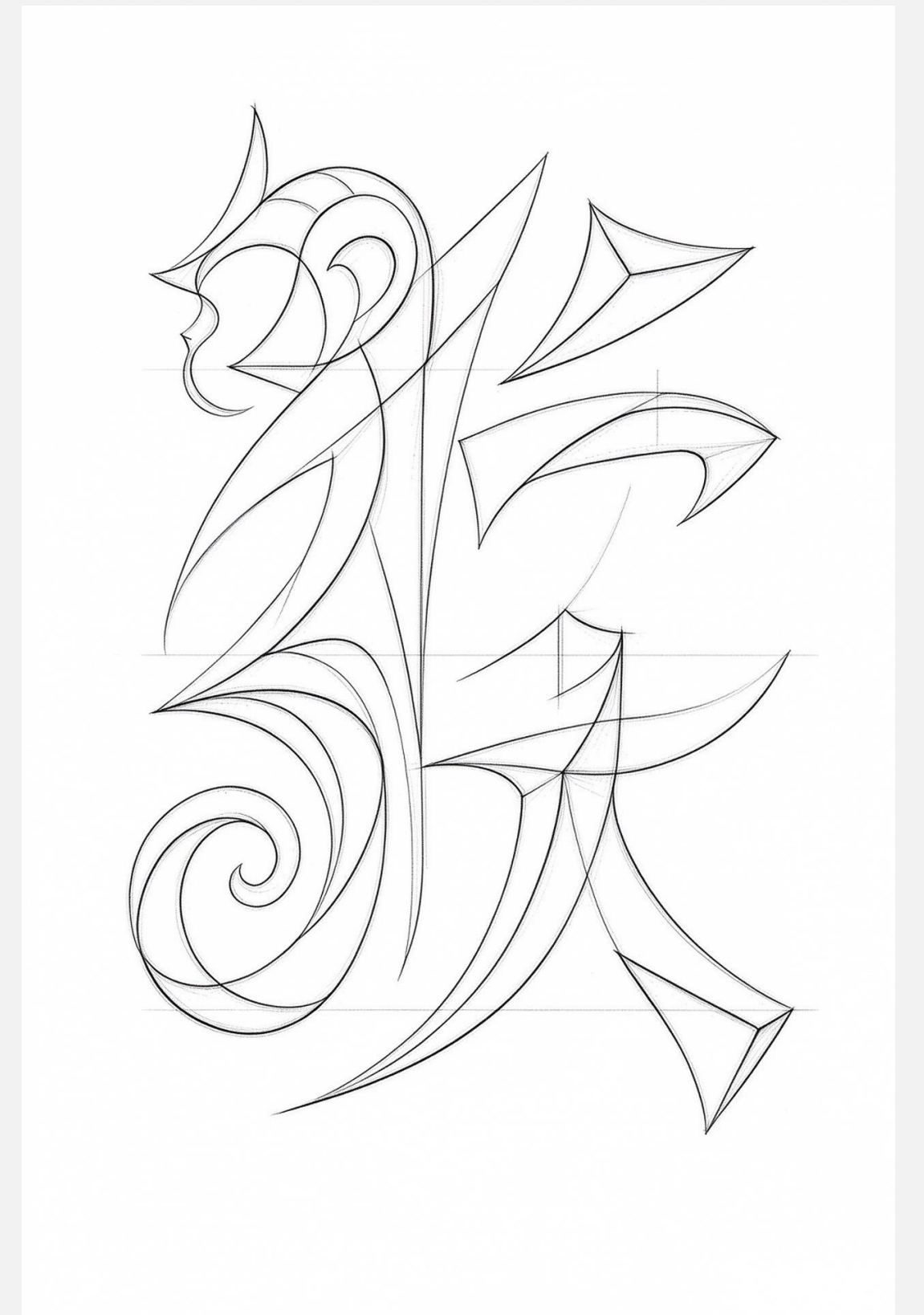
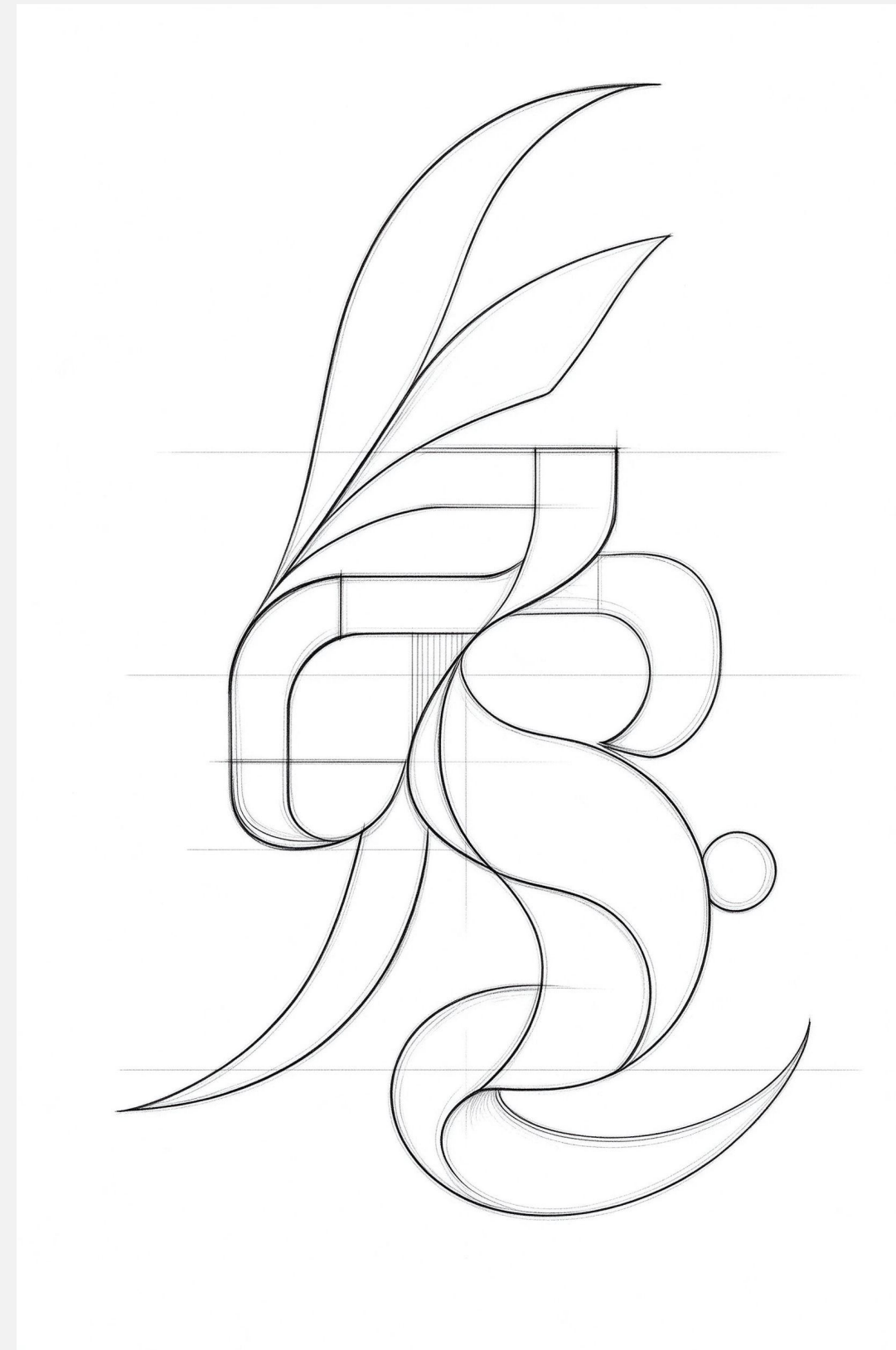


Colors are extracted from traditional Chinese aesthetics: Based on the visual logic of the five elements and five colors — metal-white, wood-cyan, water-black, fire-red, earth-yellow — corresponding to the twelve zodiac signs, traditional symbols are translated into an abstract line-drawing language, with concise lines and vivid momentum, combining Eastern charm with modern design sensibility. This palette establishes a unified visual identity for the twelve posters and derivative products.

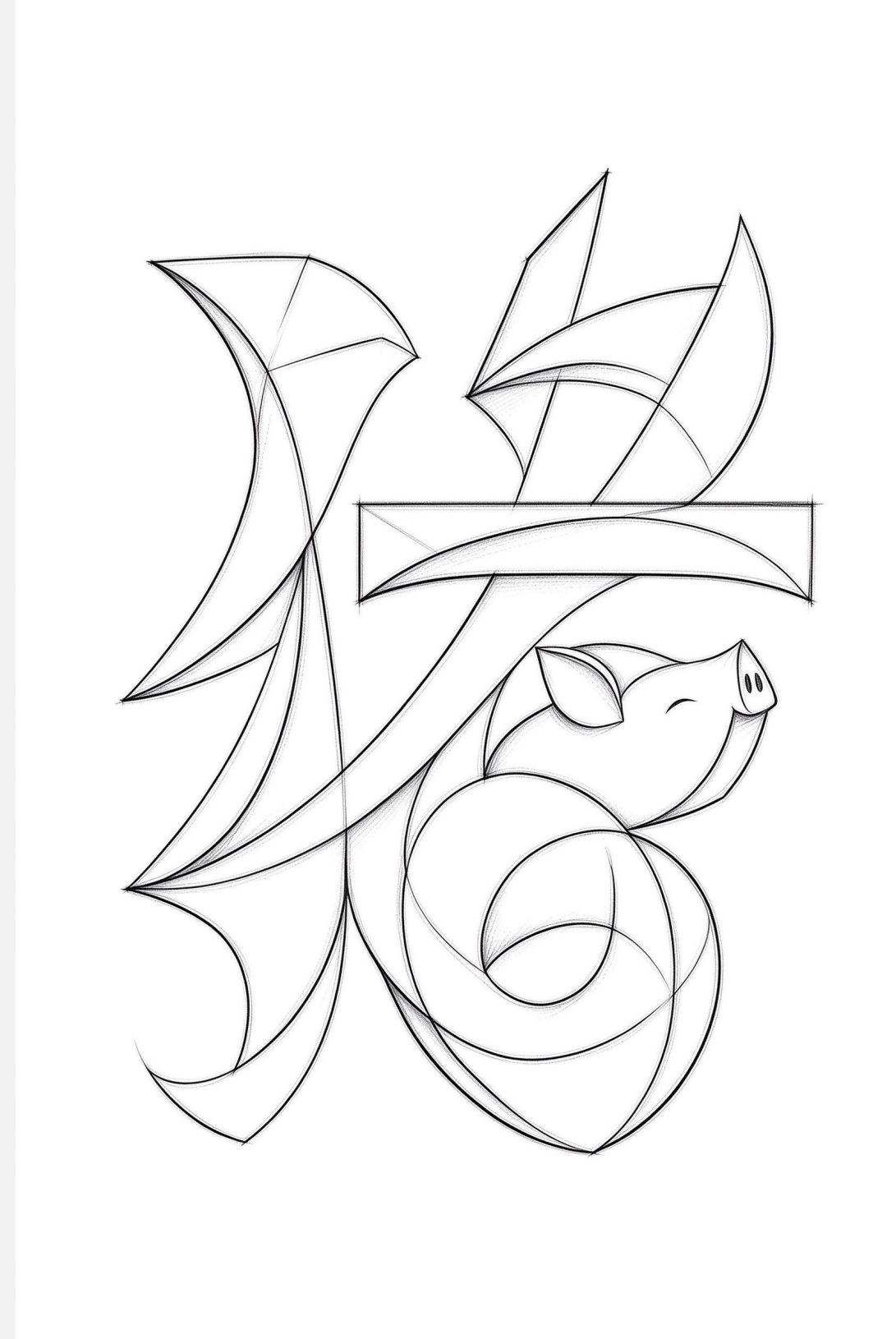
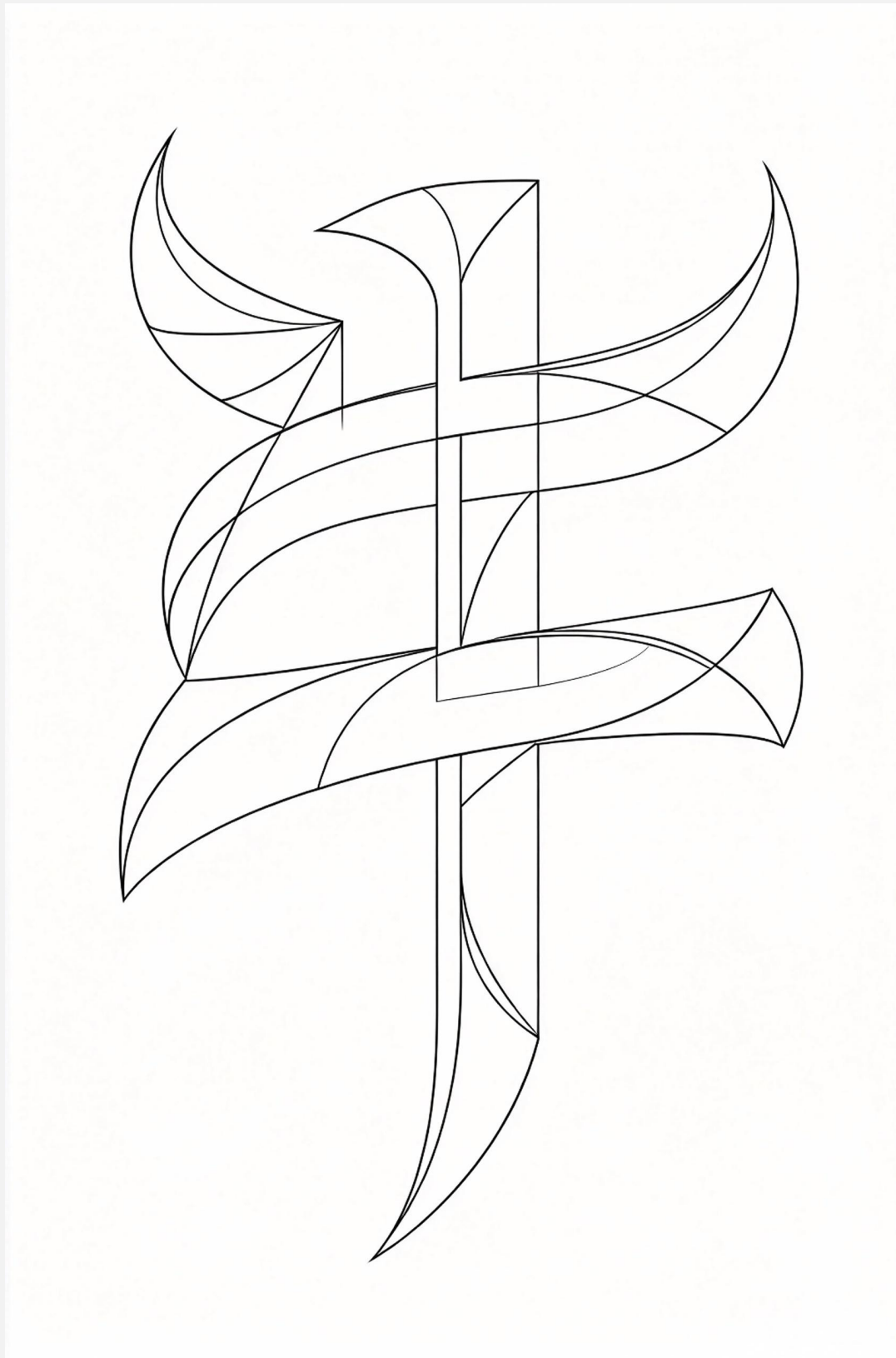
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10. Poster Design Outcomes



10. Poster Design Outcomes



10. Poster Design Outcomes



11. Derivative Product Design Applications



11. Derivative Product Design Applications



Centered on "Character-Beast Symbiosis", it deconstructs and fuses characters with zodiac forms in five-element gradients, presenting traditional zodiac culture through modern vertical posters.

11. Derivative Product Design Applications



The design extends into postcards, scrolls and gift boxes, with a unified visual system running through all scenarios — integrating zodiac cultural symbols into everyday products for multi-dimensional implementation.

12. Conclusion

This research focuses on traditional Chinese zodiac character culture. Through literature review, symbol extraction, case study and design practice, it builds a traditional visual resource spectrum, proposes the design principles of authenticity, systematicness, thematic unity and contemporary readability, and relies on the "Form-Meaning-Spirit" translation framework to complete the zodiac poster series and cultural-creative design.

The research achieves threefold value: culturally, it revives the zodiac ancient-character gene; academically, it provides a practical paradigm for translating traditional symbols; practically, it empowers the zodiac cultural IP and cultural-creative dissemination.

This research still has shortcomings in digital media application, depth of cultural excavation and long-term implementation of outcomes. In the future, it will integrate new media and interactive technologies to truly bring traditional zodiac culture to life in the contemporary era.

Thank You for Watching

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