Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

MINISTRY OF CULTURE OF UKRAINE
KHARKIV STATE ACADEMY OF DESIGN AND ARTS
Faculty of Design and Architecture
Department of Graphic Design

Shi Zhang

PRINCIPLES OF SUSTAINABLE DESIGN OF CULTURAL AND CREATIVE PRODUCTS FOR THE NANTONG MUSEUM

Master's Thesis submitted for the degree of Master
Specialty B2 Design
Educational and Professional Program "Visual Communication Design"

The qualification work contains the results of independent research.
The use of ideas, results, and texts of other authors is properly referenced.

Signed by: Shi Zhang FA242C45B984468... Shi Zhang
(signature)

Scientific Supervisor: Andryi Zvonyk, PhD, Associate Professor,
Consultant: Oleksandr Fil, Senior Lecturer

Kharkiv – 2026

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

CONTENTS

ABSTRACT 4
INTRODUCTION 5
CHAPTER 1. HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ISSUE AND RESEARCH METHODS 9
1.1. Museum products and the continuity of cultural development 9
1.2. Semiotics and the interpretation of cultural resources 10
1.3. Branding, character narratives and consumer value 12
1.4. Research methods and analytical procedure 14
Conclusions to Chapter 1 15
CHAPTER 2. ANALYSIS OF DESIGN THEORY AND PRACTICE 17
2.1. Cultural resources and the existing product sample 17
2.2. Limitations affecting continued development 21
2.3. Sustainable design principles and the working hypothesis 24
Conclusions to Chapter 2 28
CHAPTER 3. DESIGN PROPOSAL FOR THE NANTONG MUSEUM 29
3.1. Cultural sign extraction 29
3.2. Brand identity design 34
3.3. Character-based IP design 39
Conclusions to Chapter 3 44
3.4. Everyday-life integration 45
CONCLUSIONS 46
REFERENCES 48
APPENDIX A. DESIGN PRESENTATION 51
A.1. Visual identity manual 51
A.2. IP character design 56

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

ABSTRACT

Shi Zhang. Principles of Sustainable Design of Cultural and Creative Products for the Nantong Museum. — Manuscript.

Master's Thesis submitted for the degree of Master, specialty B2 Design, Educational and Professional Program "Visual Communication Design." — Kharkiv State Academy of Design and Arts. Kharkiv, 2026.

This thesis investigates sustainable design principles for the Nantong Museum's cultural and creative products. Sustainability is defined through continued cultural content development, accumulated brand value and engagement with everyday life. Semiotics connects cultural sources, visual forms and audience interpretation; branding, narrative and consumer-value research inform the design framework.

The research combines literature review, analysis of sixteen existing product records and practice-based design. It identifies concentrated product categories, renewal dependent on visual substitution, and limited conversational content. Three coordinated principles respond to these issues: brand development, character-based intellectual property development and everyday-life integration.

The proposal connects Zhang Jian, wisteria, museum cats and selected collections through an educational theme. An architectural letterform logo and wisteria-derived graphics establish the visual identity. A fictional classroom organises a teacher character and five cats into a shared story world. The work demonstrates how stable identification and character relationships can support changing content. The proposal connects cultural recognition, continuing storytelling and everyday applications through a coordinated design framework.

Keywords: Nantong Museum; sustainable design; cultural and creative products; semiotics; visual identity; character-based IP.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

INTRODUCTION

Relevance of the research

Museum cultural and creative products translate collections, histories and institutional identities into objects that people can encounter outside an exhibition. Their value extends beyond souvenir sales: they can maintain contact with cultural resources through use, display and conversation. Chen Lingyun approaches museum product development through the relationship between cultural resources, product development and marketing [1]. This wider understanding is important because an attractive first product does not necessarily provide a basis for subsequent development. A design may communicate a recognisable object while offering little scope for new content or continued engagement.

The Nantong Museum provides a relevant setting for this problem. Established by Zhang Jian in 1905, it combines collections, historic buildings and landscaped grounds. Visitors encounter cultural meaning through artefacts, architecture, plants and experiences of the site. Existing products draw on these varied resources, but many use closely related carriers, particularly refrigerator magnets and bookmarks. A change in the depicted building or vessel can produce another item without substantially changing what consumers do with it or why they might choose it. The challenge is therefore to connect cultural expression with a continuing process of design, communication and use.

This thesis treats sustainable development as a question of continuity within museum product design. It considers how an initial design system can support further creation, how cultural content can remain meaningful in everyday situations, and how recognition and experience can contribute to later consumer choices. Yang Zhi connects cultural and creative design with social innovation, everyday life and collaboration, extending the discussion beyond individual commodities [2]. Building on this orientation, the present study examines the design conditions for continuity.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Three linked concerns guide the research. First, cultural elements need to become understandable signs rather than remain isolated decorative references. Second, a collection of products needs a shared identity through which recognition can accumulate. Third, cultural content needs opportunities for continued interpretation and application. Brand development, character-based intellectual property development and everyday-life integration are investigated as complementary responses. Here, intellectual property, abbreviated as IP, refers to a designed character system and story world capable of supporting repeated creative development.

Purpose and objectives of the research

The purpose is to formulate and demonstrate sustainable design principles for the cultural and creative products of the Nantong Museum, connecting cultural interpretation, consistent identification, continuing content development and everyday use.

The objectives are to review relevant research and clarify the conceptual framework; examine the cultural resources and existing product sample; identify limitations affecting variety, content renewal and communication; formulate coordinated principles for brand, character and everyday product development; translate selected cultural signs into an illustrated design proposal; and define practical requirements and an evaluation approach for subsequent development.

Object and subject of the research

The object of the research is the development and cultural communication of museum cultural and creative products, considered through the Nantong Museum. The subject is the set of design principles and visual-narrative methods through which the museum’s cultural resources can support a coherent brand, an expandable character system and future everyday applications. This distinction separates the broader field being examined from the specific design relationships investigated by the thesis.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

The principal intended audiences are university students and young working adults. They provide a relevant context for considering learning, work, personal interests and media use. Reading, recording, clothing and domestic activities provide the everyday situations through which their needs are considered.

Chronological and territorial framework

The historical background begins with the museum's establishment in 1905 and the educational activities associated with Zhang Jian. The design analysis concerns the contemporary products and project materials assembled for this thesis, completed in 2026. Historical information establishes the cultural context for the contemporary design analysis.

The territorial framework centres on the Nantong Museum and its relationship with Nantong, Jiangsu Province, China. Selected studies of other museums and broader international research supply comparative and theoretical perspectives. They help identify design relationships relevant to the Nantong case.

Research methods and practical significance

The research uses literature analysis, examination of product records and field-observation materials, comparative case analysis, semiotic interpretation and practice-based design development. Sixteen product records form the descriptive sample. Their cultural sources, carriers, visible design characteristics and possible contexts of use are compared. Sketches, visual identity pages and character illustrations document the transition from selected resources to a design system.

The practical significance lies in providing an organised basis for continued development. The visual identity establishes reusable rules; the character world supplies relationships through which different cultural themes can be explored; and the everyday-life principle identifies how future applications can connect cultural content with use. Further evaluation will consider cultural recognition, visual appeal, practical experience and communication.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Structure and scope of the thesis

The thesis consists of an introduction, three chapters, conclusions, twenty references and a design presentation appendix. Chapter 1 reviews the literature and explains the research methods. Chapter 2 analyses existing products and derives the design principles. Chapter 3 presents cultural sign extraction, brand identity and character design as a continuous illustrated process. The product inventory is presented alongside the investigation in Chapter 2. Appendix A presents the complete visual identity manual and final IP illustrations.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

CHAPTER 1. HISTORIOGRAPHY OF THE ISSUE AND RESEARCH METHODS

1.1. Museum products and the continuity of cultural development

Research on museum products involves relationships between cultural interpretation, public service and market participation. These relationships matter because museum merchandise carries an institutional association even when it is purchased for ordinary use. Chen Lingyun places product development within a wider system that includes cultural value, development processes and marketing [1]. This approach suggests that a product should be examined both as an individual design and as part of an institution's continuing activities. The present thesis consequently asks how initial design decisions create resources for subsequent work, rather than evaluating isolated novelty alone.

Yang Zhi's research on cultural and creative design and social innovation provides a second perspective. It considers the connections between design, ways of living, service experience and collaboration [2]. Its relevance here lies in moving attention from a single transaction towards continuing relationships between people and cultural resources. A museum product may begin as a reminder of a visit, but it may also enter study, work and home life. The current research narrows this broad perspective to the contribution of visual and product design.

The museum's educational role also provides a substantive foundation. Huang Yang and Zhao Luo discuss Zhang Jian's museum-building ideas in relation to education, including the connection between school teaching and wider public learning [3]. For the Nantong case, this relationship enables education to function as a cultural organising theme rather than a generic decorative label. It links the founder, collections and natural environment through activities of observing, asking and discovering. The thesis uses this documented educational orientation to develop a fictional narrative setting.

Studies of specific museum practices show how cultural material can become a continuing design resource. Yang Panpan examines the interpretation of artefact

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

signs and their transformation into product design [4]. The approach is relevant to the distinction between copying an appearance and identifying characteristics that can support a new expression. Chen Yuan's study of the British Museum's "Anderson Cat" series connects Peircean interpretation with brand and online community communication [5]. The present project draws on that relationship between design and communication. Its own cat characters originate in the museum grounds and educational concept.

These studies establish several useful directions, but they do not remove the need for a site-specific proposal. The combination of Zhang Jian, historic architecture, wisteria, natural exhibits and contemporary encounters with cats gives the Nantong Museum a particular set of resources. The unresolved design question is how these resources can work together without becoming a crowded collage. This thesis addresses that question by assigning different roles to cultural sources: some establish place and identity, some become narrative participants, and others provide changing subjects of observation. Continued development is therefore considered through relationships between resources, not simply through an increasing number of motifs.

1.2. Semiotics and the interpretation of cultural resources

Semiotics provides a way to explain why displaying a cultural image does not automatically communicate its significance. Zhao Yiheng treats meaning and interpretation as central questions of semiotic inquiry [6]. Applied to museum products, this means that a recognisable silhouette, a familiar colour or a founder's portrait is only part of the communication process. The designer also needs to consider what the form refers to and which connections a viewer can make. A product may be attractive because it resembles a flower even when the viewer does not recognise the particular collection object from which it was derived.

The thesis primarily uses Peirce's relation between sign, object and interpretant [7]. A designed form functions as a sign; the cultural resource to which it refers is its object; and the meaning produced through interpretation is considered

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

through the interpretant. The interpretant is not simply the person looking at the product. This distinction is useful because a designer can organise visual cues without controlling every subsequent interpretation. An image associated with education by its creator may initially suggest leisure, humour or decoration to its audience. Design must therefore establish connections rather than presume that intended meanings are already shared.

In practical terms, the museum's artefact shapes, architectural outlines, colours and character features are treated as sign vehicles. Their cultural objects include collection pieces, buildings, the founder and educational ideas. Names, short contextual explanations and narrative actions help audiences connect these forms to their sources. The project seeks accessible points of entry without making familiarity the sole selection criterion. Familiar subjects such as cats and flowers can invite attention, while less familiar artefacts contribute specific cultural content. Their combination becomes useful when a clear relationship links them, rather than when one is simply attached to the other.

The distinction between resemblance, contextual connection and convention further assists design decisions. A simplified vessel can retain a recognisable relation to its original shape. Wisteria and the cats acquire a more specific connection to the museum through their presence within its environment. The proposed logo and character names become shared identifiers through consistent use and explanation. These relations may coexist within one design; they are not rigid categories into which every element must be placed once. The important question is whether the composition provides enough connected information for a viewer to move from noticing a form to understanding its cultural reference.

This framework also clarifies the treatment of abstract educational meaning. Education has no single fixed appearance equivalent to the outline of a cup. Generic books or graduation caps may suggest learning, but they do not by themselves identify the museum's particular educational character. The proposal therefore expresses learning through relationships and actions: a teacher guides, learners observe and discuss, and cultural objects become subjects of inquiry. The visible

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

scene offers interpretative cues through behaviour. In this way, semiotics contributes directly to element selection and transformation rather than remaining an isolated theoretical explanation preceding the design work.

1.3. Branding, character narratives and consumer value

Brand research explains why consistent identification matters beyond aesthetic neatness. Keller's account of customer-based brand equity relates brand knowledge to consumer responses to marketing activity [8]. For museum products, this suggests that different items can contribute to a common understanding when they are recognisably associated with the same source. A shared logo, palette and graphic language can make that connection visible. However, accumulated recognition also depends on what people experience through products and communication. The brand principle in this thesis therefore concerns continuity of meaning and experience as well as visual consistency.

Jiang Lu discusses IP management as a direction for museum cultural products and public services [9]. The relevance is not limited to the creation of an appealing mascot. A cultural resource with a stable identity can support different forms of expression and development. In this thesis, character-based IP consists of a shared story setting, recognisable participants and relationships that remain intelligible as situations change. This structure creates a way to revisit existing resources from different perspectives. It also places demands on consistency: each new narrative should remain connected to the cultural basis and established character world.

Narrative research provides a more specific explanation of this process. Wu Wei and Li Lijunxiong discuss the organisation of themes, expression and plot in cultural product design [10]. Their work supports treating objects as parts of events and relationships rather than isolated visual quotations. Escalas examines how narrative processing can connect consumers' experiences with brands [11]. Together, these perspectives suggest that a story may help cultural content become personally meaningful when audiences can relate its situations to their own

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

memories. The classroom concept therefore uses familiar experiences of learning and interaction to introduce museum-specific objects and knowledge.

Jenkins's discussion of convergence culture and transmedia storytelling provides a basis for considering how a story world can develop through different media [12]. This does not mean that every image should be reproduced unchanged on every platform. A scene may introduce a setting, a short sequence may develop a character's behaviour, and an object may support an everyday encounter with that character. The common world connects these experiences. In the present project, this perspective informs the possibility of extending a classroom illustration into future stories, social-media content and product applications as connected forms of creative development.

Consumer value research explains why cultural significance alone is insufficient to establish demand. Sweeney and Soutar identify emotional, social, quality-and-performance, and price-related dimensions of perceived value [13]. These dimensions provide a practical structure for examining museum merchandise. A notebook may be valued for its paper and usability, a character illustration for enjoyment, and a recognisable cultural reference for personal or social expression. The combination matters: emotional appeal does not compensate automatically for an unsuitable product, and functional usefulness does not guarantee that consumers will value its cultural interpretation.

Young audiences are considered through this multidimensional approach. Zhou Chao's study of Generation Z and museum product marketing addresses aesthetic motives, emotional resonance, brand trust and digital communication [14]. Chan, Berger and Van Boven show that choices can combine social identification with a desire for uniqueness [15]. These findings inform the analysis of university students and young working adults without reducing them to a single preference profile. A product may offer a common point of interest while allowing individual choices of character, theme or use. This supports a differentiated series within a recognisable system.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

The relationship between attention and continued engagement requires a further distinction. Berger and Milkman connect online sharing with characteristics of content and the emotions it arouses [16]. Berger and Schwartz distinguish immediate word of mouth from ongoing discussion, examining the roles of interest, environmental cues and visibility [17]. These studies help explain the relationship between content and continuing communication. Initial visual novelty may attract attention; continuing narratives and repeated encounters provide different reasons to return. The project therefore treats shareable content and everyday presence as complementary aspects of development.

Everyday-life integration also has a basis in museum practice and emotional design. Miao Huiling's discussion of the Shanghai Museum connects the development of cultural products with public life [18]. Norman's emotional design framework relates immediate appearance, use and reflective meaning [19]. These perspectives support products in which practical use and cultural association reinforce one another. Hellier and colleagues examine repurchase intention through connected factors including perceived value, satisfaction and brand preference in a service context [20]. This relationship provides a framework for discussing continued consumer engagement.

1.4. Research methods and analytical procedure

The literature review establishes concepts and identifies relationships that can be examined through design. Chinese research supplies museum, cultural resource and local educational perspectives. International literature contributes theories of signs, brand knowledge, perceived value, narrative and communication. Sources are used for the particular claims they support, with citation numbers attached to the relevant statements. The review brings these perspectives together to address continuing museum product development.

The product analysis examines sixteen records assembled through the research materials on existing merchandise. Each record is considered through cultural source, carrier, visible expression and likely use context. Cultural source

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

and product category are treated separately: an architectural bookmark is both an interpretation of a building and an object used in reading. This prevents a list of varied motifs from being mistaken for evidence of varied functions. The visual inventory is presented in Figures 2.1 – 2.4 in Section 2.1.

Case-based comparison is used to identify design relationships rather than to imitate commercial success. The reviewed museum cases show possible connections between cultural interpretation, coherent identity and public communication. Their relevance is assessed against Nantong's resources and the project's scope. The comparison informs methods such as connecting character content with brand communication, while the proposal develops its own cultural sources and narrative setting.

Practice-based design proceeds from resource selection to sketches, visual system development and character illustration. The source, identifying feature, intended meaning and possible application of each element are recorded. Variations are assessed in relation to the proposed principles: whether they retain a common identity, support additional content and relate to plausible use contexts. The resulting work includes a visual identity manual, a shared classroom world and six character designs.

Audience evaluation is proposed as a subsequent step. It would examine recognition of cultural sources, understanding of the story setting, visual preference, intended use and willingness to engage with further content. These criteria relate audience feedback to the cultural, visual and functional aims of the design.

Conclusions to Chapter 1

The reviewed literature supports a connected view of museum product development. Semiotics explains the relation between visible form and interpreted cultural meaning; branding explains the accumulation of recognition; narrative provides a structure for continued content; and perceived value connects cultural expression with consumer experience. The central issue is how these functions can support one another in a site-specific design system.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

The research procedure combines documented cultural resources, analysis of existing products and practice-based exploration. This framework leads to an examination of the Nantong Museum's product sample and to principles that connect identity, content renewal and everyday use.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

CHAPTER 2. ANALYSIS OF DESIGN THEORY AND PRACTICE

2.1. Cultural resources and the existing product sample

The Nantong Museum combines several forms of cultural experience within one setting. Its collections provide historical and natural objects; historic buildings establish a recognisable place; the landscaped grounds provide encounters with plants and animals; and Zhang Jian's educational activities connect these resources through public learning. Buildings discussed in the research include the Central Hall, North Hall, South Hall and Haonan Bieye, Zhang Jian's former residence. These sources differ in scale and meaning, but together they offer more than a collection of isolated motifs for souvenir decoration.

Zhang Jian's connection with the museum is particularly relevant to the selection of a common theme. His activities linked industry, education and public institutions in Nantong. The museum's educational orientation, discussed by Huang and Zhao [3], allows the proposal to connect material collections with inquiry and observation. This is a stronger basis for a coherent design world than the arbitrary combination of recognisable local symbols. It provides a reason for different objects to appear together: they can become subjects encountered by learners in a shared cultural environment.

The existing product sample contains sixteen records. The first six concern collection-based products, including magnets derived from porcelain vessels and a pottery axe. The architectural group includes five bookmark records and one folding light-and-shadow magnet. A further magnet combines architectural and collection imagery. The remaining records concern Zhang Jian's family precepts or quotations, including a notebook and quotation-based products. Figures 2.1 – 2.4 present the product images and their cultural sources. The analysis examines how cultural material is organised within the sample.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Figure 2.1. Existing product sample: records 1 – 4.



1. Dragon-and-phoenix vase magnet with famille-rose decoration on a yellow ground
Cultural source: Collection object



2. Famille-rose magnolia-shaped cup magnet
Cultural source: Collection object



3. Handled, perforated pottery axe magnet
Cultural source: Collection object



4. Blue-and-white yuhuchun vase magnet with bamboo, rock and plantain decoration
Cultural source: Collection object

Figure 2.2. Existing product sample: records 5 – 8.



5. Yue ware celadon flask magnet
Cultural source: Collection object



6. Famille-rose lotus-shaped suction cup: “Autumn Manoeuvres Commemoration” resin magnet
Cultural source: Collection object

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584



7. Nantong Museum architectural bookmark: North Hall
Cultural source: Architecture



8. “China’s First Museum” folding light-and-shadow magnet
Cultural source: Architecture and garden

Figure 2.3. Existing product sample: records 9 – 12.



9. Nantong Museum architectural bookmark: Central Hall
Cultural source: Architecture



10. “China’s First Museum”: Haonan Guli metal bookmark
Cultural source: Architecture and flowers



11. “China’s First Museum”: Central Hall metal bookmark
Cultural source: Architecture and nature



12. “China’s First Museum”: Haonan Bieye metal bookmark
Cultural source: Architecture and nature

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Figure 2.4. Existing product sample: records 13 – 16.



13. Nantong Museum magnet with metal artefact pendants
Cultural source: Architecture and collections



14. Zhang Jian family-precepts notebook
Cultural source: Zhang Jian and quotations



15. Zhang Jian quotation product: “Tian zhi sheng ren ye”
Cultural source: Zhang Jian and quotations



16. Zhang Jian quotation magnet: “One person undertakes the affairs of one county”
Cultural source: Zhang Jian and quotations

The collection-based products retain distinctive outlines, colours and decorative patterns. Examples include a blue-and-white yuhuchun vase with bamboo, rock and plantain decoration, a Yue ware celadon flask and flower-shaped cups. The recognisable shape provides a link to the corresponding collection object. At the same time, the product can initially be encountered as an attractive miniature vessel by someone who does not know its history. The design analysis therefore distinguishes recognition of appearance from understanding of significance. Names, explanatory information and the circumstances in which an object is presented can connect those levels.

Architectural products use a different kind of transformation. The bookmarks do not only reproduce building outlines; they combine architecture with flowers,

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

branches, birds, borders and hanging components. These arrangements adapt spatial resources to the narrow surface and small scale of a bookmark. They demonstrate compositional work and should not be described simply as direct copies. Their development question is how much additional content can be generated once a recognisable building-and-decoration arrangement has been established. Variation in composition can sustain visual diversity, but a series also benefits from differences in cultural theme or experience.

The Zhang Jian products use language as a more explicit carrier of meaning. Quotations and family precepts communicate ideas, while a portrait identifies their source. A notebook places these words in a context of reading and writing, creating an initial connection between cultural content and use. However, the relationship can be developed further if the theme also informs recording, reflection or knowledge organisation. The issue is not whether a quotation is present, but whether the cultural idea participates in the experience of using the product. This distinction informs the later everyday-life principle.

2.2. Limitations affecting continued development

2.2.1. Concentration of product categories and similar uses

The sample shows a concentration on magnets, bookmarks and related stationery or souvenir formats. Although the cultural sources vary, the actions associated with many products remain similar. Magnets are usually displayed; bookmarks accompany reading; notebooks support writing and recording. A wider range of images therefore does not necessarily constitute a wider range of uses. This concentration can limit the number of everyday situations in which people encounter the museum’s cultural content and can narrow the reasons for selecting an additional product.

Similar carriers can be useful for forming a collection. Their comparable dimensions and shared function make relationships between themes easy to perceive. Nevertheless, they may also substitute for one another when a consumer is mainly seeking practical use. Someone who already owns a bookmark may not need

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

another solely because it depicts a different building. Likewise, a new magnet may contribute decorative variety without introducing a different cultural experience. The design problem is to balance the coherence of a series with meaningful differences among its members, rather than to dismiss established souvenir categories.

This issue also explains why repeat purchasing should not be treated as a purely emotional question. A person can appreciate a design and still have no reason to purchase a similar item. Durable souvenirs and collectible objects have a legitimate place in the product system, but they provide different consumption conditions from replenishable stationery or products serving another activity. Broadening use contexts offers one possible route to continued engagement. It does not mean that every cultural resource should be placed on every available carrier; each application requires a relationship between content, function and the intended experience.

2.2.2. Renewal dependent on changes to established forms

Collection reproductions provide clear cultural attribution but also impose formal constraints. Once a vessel’s silhouette, colour and ornament have been translated into a small souvenir, further work on the same object may focus on dimensions, materials, finishes or another carrier. These variations can be appropriate, but they do not automatically extend the cultural content. If an object is treated only as a fixed appearance, its potential connection with use, historical context and knowledge remains underdeveloped. Continued creation then becomes dependent on finding another recognisable object.

Architectural compositions face a related limitation. Replacing a building, flower or border within a familiar arrangement creates another design, but the underlying relationship may remain unchanged. The resulting series can expand in size while offering few new reasons for attention. This identifies a structural limit to development based mainly on replacing visual ingredients. A sustainable design

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

system needs a way to produce changes in topic, action or experience as well as changes in appearance.

The common issue is insufficient organisation of the relationships behind the visible elements. Artefacts can be investigated, used, compared or discussed; buildings can provide settings; and historical ideas can inform decisions or activities. When these relationships become part of a narrative or use situation, existing resources can support more than one expression. The thesis therefore proposes a transition from repeatedly selecting new motifs towards organising cultural content. The aim is to make further design possible within a shared framework, while preserving the recognisable source of each element.

2.2.3. Limited conversational and social value

The products show attention to visual appeal through decorative combinations, recognisable objects and cultural quotations. Their communicative potential, however, can be developed beyond identifying what is depicted. An attractive image invites observation, but a character's action, a humorous situation or a connection with familiar experience may also provide something to explain or discuss. The sample's emphasis on direct presentation leaves scope for content that audiences can use to express an attitude, remember an experience or share a specific cultural discovery.

Research on online content suggests that sharing is related to interest, practical value and emotional response [16]. For the museum, this does not imply that a product should simply pursue sensational effects. It suggests that design should consider what a person might communicate by showing it to someone else. A story about curiosity, rest, discussion or learning can offer a recognisable social situation. Its cultural reference then becomes part of the conversation rather than remaining an unexplained label attached to an appealing object.

This relationship is particularly relevant to the combination of social identification and individuality. Consumers may seek both a connection with an interest group and a way to express personal difference [15]. A coherent character

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

series can provide a shared world while offering different behaviours or associations through which individuals identify with particular characters. The proposal develops these differences through a coherent character series. It seeks to create interpretable differences within a common setting so that the products have potential as forms of personal and social expression.

2.3. Sustainable design principles and the working hypothesis

The working hypothesis is that a coordinated system of stable brand identification, expandable character narratives and meaningful everyday applications can provide stronger conditions for continued cultural product development than a series based mainly on isolated motif substitutions. The design proposal develops this relationship through its visual identity, characters and applications. Its three components address different limitations: brand development accumulates recognition, character-based IP organises changing content, and everyday-life integration expands the relationship between cultural expression and practical activity.

2.3.1. Brand development: accumulating recognition and experience

The brand principle establishes a common cultural position and visual language across different themes, products and development stages. Keller's account of brand knowledge supports the importance of recognisable associations in consumer responses [8]. In the present context, this means that each encounter with a product should be capable of contributing to an understanding of the Nantong Museum's creative identity. A logo is one element of this relationship, but consistent colour, typography, supporting graphics, information and product presentation also help different outputs belong to the same system.

Consistency does not require every product to have an identical appearance. A character illustration, an architectural graphic and a stationery application can retain their own content while sharing recognisable rules. The value of those rules is that new products do not have to begin by establishing an entirely separate identity.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Previous encounters can help audiences recognise the cultural source. At the same time, a coherent system gives designers a basis for development, reducing the need to redefine fundamental relationships for every new item. Brand identity therefore supports both audience recognition and the continuity of design work.

The cultural position must be more specific than a general claim to represent a museum. For this proposal, education, curiosity and the relationship between culture and nature provide that position. The visual system expresses it through the Central Hall reference, wisteria and the later classroom world. These elements form a connection between institutional place and accessible experience. The system's continuing value depends on consistent use and credible products; visual uniformity alone cannot establish trust if the practical experience contradicts the promise conveyed by the identity.

2.3.2. Character-based IP: organising stories and continuing content

The IP principle turns selected cultural resources into stable creative participants with recognisable features and relationships. A collection object contains historical information, but its appearance alone does not communicate an unfolding story. Characters provide actions through which cultural knowledge can enter a situation: they observe, ask questions, compare objects or respond to an event. This approach is consistent with narrative design methods that organise cultural material through theme and plot [10]. It does not replace the collection's meaning with an unrelated fictional image; it creates a route through which audiences can approach that meaning.

For Nantong, the educational theme offers a clear basis for such relationships. A teacher figure associated with Zhang Jian can guide cats through subjects connected with the museum's collections and natural environment. The roles remain stable while the topic changes. A flower, a vessel or an aquatic animal can become the focus of another situation without requiring an entirely new world. This distinction between stable identity and changing content creates scope for updates.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

It is more productive than assuming that continuity depends on introducing a new character whenever another product is needed.

The relationship between IP and brand is reciprocal. The brand identifies the institutional and cultural source of the story world. The characters give that identity behaviours, situations and emotional associations that can be communicated repeatedly. Escalas's research suggests how narratives can connect brands with people's own experiences [11]. In this proposal, memories of classrooms, curiosity and group interaction offer possible points of contact. Recognition gained through a character should lead back to the museum, while the museum's identity gives the character a specific cultural context beyond generic cuteness.

Continued content can also support repeated public encounters. A shared world may be expressed through illustrations, short narratives, social-media posts and later products, drawing on the possibilities of transmedia development [12]. These expressions should contribute to the same world rather than merely duplicate a visual image. Berger and Schwartz's distinction between immediate and ongoing word of mouth is relevant here [17]: a striking launch can create initial interest, but continuing discussion also depends on later reminders and visibility. The proposed IP provides a structure for such content through successive themes and interactions.

2.3.3. Everyday-life integration: connecting meaning with use

The everyday-life principle places cultural content within learning, work, clothing and domestic activities. Museum practice discussed by Miao illustrates the relevance of connecting collection resources with public life [18]. Reproduction souvenirs remain important for display, memory and collecting, but they need not define the whole product range. Stationery, clothing and household objects can create additional points of contact when their creative content is related to their use. The aim is to extend the museum's presence through useful and meaningful experiences, rather than simply to multiply branded surfaces.

Perceived value provides a basis for assessing these applications. Consumers consider functional quality, emotional and social value, and the relationship between

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

cost and benefits [13]. A culturally themed product therefore needs a reason to be chosen over an ordinary alternative. That reason may involve distinctive content, a thoughtful use experience, appropriate quality or a valued connection with the character world. A higher price cannot be justified only by attaching a museum name. The design must make its additional value understandable through the product and the experience it offers.

The relationship with character-based IP is especially important. Familiar characters can add emotional meaning to an everyday object, while use gives the character a recurring place in a person's life. Norman's distinction between appearance, behaviour and reflective meaning supports consideration of these different aspects of experience [19]. A visually appealing cover may invite purchase, but satisfactory handling and meaningful content contribute to continued attachment. The proposed system therefore connects character expression with future everyday applications while retaining product quality as an essential part of the relationship.

Everyday applications also create different conditions for subsequent purchase. A notebook or memo pad may be replenished through normal use; durable clothing or tableware may be selected for another situation or valued over a longer period. Neither case requires artificially shortening product life. Drawing on repurchase research [20], this thesis considers perceived value, experience and brand preference alongside actual need. Future products should offer a meaningful additional use or theme. Continued consumption is thus treated as a possible outcome of worthwhile experiences, not as a demand to buy repeatedly without purpose.

2.3.4. Interaction among the three principles

The principles form a connected process rather than three separate product categories. Brand identity helps recognition and experience accumulate. Character narratives provide new occasions to encounter that identity. Everyday products translate cultural and emotional interest into use. Positive experiences can then

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

reinforce interest in the brand and its characters. Conversely, weak links can interrupt the process: an attractive character with no recognisable museum connection may accumulate attention without supporting the museum's identity, while a strongly branded product with poor practical value may weaken the relationship it seeks to create.

The design task is therefore to coordinate stable and variable elements. Cultural attribution, core visual rules and character relationships should remain sufficiently stable to be recognised. Topics, scenes and suitable applications can change. The proposal in Chapter 3 demonstrates this arrangement through the logo, wisteria graphics and classroom world. The relationship is developed through the concrete decisions and images presented in Chapter 3.

Conclusions to Chapter 2

The sixteen-record sample shows varied cultural sources but a narrower range of carriers and use situations. Collection reproductions, architectural compositions and quotations offer established cultural expression; their main development limitations concern similar functions, dependence on visual substitution and underdeveloped conversational content. These findings identify where a coordinated design system can extend existing development.

The chapter proposes brand development, character-based IP and everyday-life integration as mutually supporting principles. Their combined purpose is to connect recognition, continuing content and meaningful use. The working hypothesis concerns the design conditions these relationships create. The next chapter makes those relationships visible through a project based on the museum's educational character and its associated cultural resources.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

CHAPTER 3. DESIGN PROPOSAL FOR THE NANTONG MUSEUM

3.1. Cultural sign extraction

3.1.1. From cultural resources to recognisable design signs

Cultural sign extraction connects the museum's resources with the design proposal. The project selects wisteria, Zhang Jian, cats living in the grounds, aquatic animals and representative collection objects as concrete visual resources. The educational character of the museum and Nantong's educational culture provide a common theme through which these different elements are connected.

Following Peirce's relation between sign, object and interpretant [7], the extracted outlines, colours, patterns and character images function as sign vehicles. Plants, people, animals and collection objects provide their cultural references, while the audience's recognition and associations contribute to the meanings formed through the design. Extraction therefore addresses three questions: which visible features to retain, which cultural resources they identify, and which connections help viewers understand them.

The selection prioritises features that are easy to recognise, summarise and relate to existing experience. Flower clusters, cats, facial features and flower-shaped vessels provide recognisable forms. Their connections with Haonan Bieye, life in the museum grounds and the museum's founding history give them a specific sense of place. Names, stories and use situations develop these connections, allowing visual recognition to lead towards an understanding of the museum.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Table 3.1. Cultural sign selection and extraction.

Stage	**Design operation**	**Design basis**
Locate the source	Identify the connection with the museum, Zhang Jian or Nantong's river-and-sea culture.	Establish a specific cultural reference and local context.
Extract features	Retain distinguishing outlines, colours, structures or behaviours.	Form memorable features that can be recognised repeatedly.
Translate meaning	Relate formal features to learning, exploration and companionship.	Develop interpretation through characters, scenes and product uses.
Organise the system	Define the roles of common identity, characters and changing themes.	Maintain a shared concept and support further series development.

3.1.2. Selection of concrete cultural signs

Wisteria, Zhang Jian, museum cats and aquatic animals introduce four kinds of reference: place, the founder, contemporary visitor experience and natural knowledge. The extraction retains the features that distinguish each source and translates them into colour, character form and narrative material. Table 3.2 brings the reference images and their design interpretations together.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Table 3.2. Signs extracted from place, people and natural resources.

Cultural source	**Identifiable features**	**Selection and translation**
Wisteria at Haonan Bieye 	Hanging flower clusters, repeated petals, climbing stems and violet colour; simplified into a cluster outline and recurring pattern.	The flower offers an accessible visual form and a place-specific memory. Colour and supporting graphics connect flowering-season experiences with natural observation.
Zhang Jian 	Forehead, eyebrows, eyes, beard and clothing outline, with emphasis on recognisable facial features.	His connection with the museum's founding and local education provides a clear cultural reference. The guide character expresses his educational role through action.
Cats in the museum grounds  	Differences in coat colour and animal behaviour, combined through a common drawing language.	Familiar behaviour creates an approachable narrative entry. The cats' presence in the grounds connects them with place; observing and questioning support learner roles and group interaction.
Aquatic animals 	Forms in the Nantong biological-resource exhibition, with attention to distinguishing animal characteristics.	The animals connect natural forms with Nantong's river-and-sea environment. Names and situations introduce observation, classification and knowledge within future classroom themes.

3.1.3. Extraction and translation of collection features

The selected collection objects combine distinctive forms with accessible visual associations. The Yue ware celadon flask, famille-rose magnolia-shaped cup, lotus-shaped suction cup commemorating the autumn manoeuvres, and Cizhou ware pillow with iron-rust decoration each offer a different point of recognition. The flask's structure, the magnolia petals, the lotus and its long stem, and the pillow's shape and ornament can distinguish characters within a shared series.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Table 3.3. Collection features and directions for design translation.

Collection object	**Selected features**	**Design translation**
Yue ware celadon flask 	Celadon colour, overall vessel structure and distinctive outline.	The vessel becomes a character's associated object or a subject of observation, connecting its recognisable form with knowledge of its use.
Famille-rose magnolia-shaped cup 	Enclosing petals, uneven rim, stem-like base and the contrast between pale petals and blue-green interior.	The floral form supplies a memorable silhouette and decorative structure for character accessories and compositions.
Lotus-shaped suction cup: Autumn Manoeuvres Commemoration 	An open lotus-shaped bowl, pink petals and a long stem.	The stem distinguishes the object from other flower-shaped vessels and provides a clear feature around which character interaction develops.
Cizhou ware pillow with iron-rust decoration 	Rectangular body, upper contour, contrasting ornament and linear details of borders and plant patterns.	The pillow connects the collection with rest. Its shape and patterns support character activities, accessories and repeated graphics.

The transformation follows a sequence of retaining defining features, simplifying secondary details and adding cultural information. Outline and structure establish a recognisable relationship with the original object. Names, character actions and stories then explain its cultural connection. In this way, collection objects provide both visual material and subjects for further creative development.

3.1.4. Translating educational meaning into situations

Educational meaning is expressed through relationships, actions and situations. Huang Yang and Zhao Luo's study connects Zhang Jian's museum-building ideas with school teaching and public education [3]. The project develops

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

this relationship through knowledge, observation and familiar classroom experiences, turning the museum's educational character into a theme that can be understood through its characters and stories.

Three directions organise this theme: encouraging curiosity, learning through observation and growing together. Zhang Jian takes the role of a guide; the cats become learners with different personalities; and aquatic animals, flowers and collection objects become subjects of exploration. The teacher–learner relationship forms the fictional narrative through which historical cultural resources meet contemporary learning experiences.

Education becomes visible when characters ask questions, observe, study or discuss an object. Such actions express learning more specifically than the addition of a general book or graduation-cap symbol. Writing, recording, cooperation and sharing also connect with the study and work experiences of university students and young working adults. Local educational culture thereby becomes a theme that audiences can recognise within ordinary life.

Table 3.4. Educational meanings and their design expression.

Cultural basis	**Extracted meaning**	**Design expression**
The museum's educational purpose	Curiosity; learning from objects and nature.	Questions, observation and explanation bring collections, wisteria and aquatic animals into character activities.
Zhang Jian's work and local educational culture	Respect for learning; practice and growth.	Teacher–learner relationships and cooperation connect with experiences of study and work.
Contemporary learning and daily life	Companionship, curiosity and self-expression.	Different personalities and actions connect growth themes with stationery and everyday products.

The educational theme connects the concrete signs. Wisteria participates in plant observation, aquatic animals introduce knowledge of the river-and-sea environment, and artefacts become objects of discovery and discussion. These relationships give the selected resources a common direction and provide material for continuing design.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

3.1.5. Organising the system for further development

Zhang Jian, wisteria and the collections identify the cultural setting, while cats, animals and flowers provide approachable visual forms. Education organises these resources through characters and actions. Memorable features therefore arise from both distinctive appearances and recurring relationships: audiences can first become familiar with the images and then develop an understanding of their cultural connections.

The brand maintains continuity in its principal colours, graphic language and cultural position. The IP system retains its characters and relationships, while collections, natural knowledge and everyday situations supply changing content. New designs can build on established recognition and introduce further themes. Cultural sign extraction thus supports both the initial proposal and its subsequent development.

Table 3.5. Cultural signs and design applications.

Level	**Core content**	**Applications**
Common identity	Wisteria form and colour; the museum's cultural identity.	Brand colours, supporting graphics, packaging and series identification.
Characters and relationships	Zhang Jian as guide; museum cats as learners.	Character design, teacher–learner interaction, illustrations and everyday narratives.
Changing content	Collections, natural observation and daily experience.	Series stories, knowledge themes, stationery and everyday product content.

3.2. Brand identity design

3.2.1. Logo development: architectural reference, sketch and final form

The brand is named "Nan Yuan Zao Wu" and combines Nantong's place name, the Central Hall's architecture and wisteria within a shared visual identity. The logo begins with NANTONG, the pinyin spelling of Nantong. To achieve the intended graphic composition, the letter G is omitted and NANTON is adopted as the stylised letter sequence. The letters are reorganised through layout, scale and symmetry to suggest the form of the Central Hall.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584



Central Hall



Logo sketch



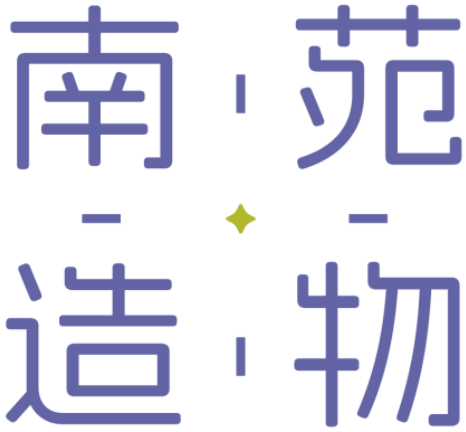
Final logo

Figure 3.1. Architectural reference, concept sketch and final logo.

The mark retains recognisable letter features. Larger strokes at the sides provide outer support, while A, N, T and O form the central arrangement. The O becomes a rounded diamond. Adjustments to stroke weight, spacing and outline combine the place name with the architectural image. MUSEUM and the Chinese brand name accompany the mark, connecting graphic recognition with the identity of the cultural product brand.



Logo construction



Chinese brand-name combination

Figure 3.2. Logo construction and the Chinese combination.

3.2.2. Wisteria colour extraction and application

The palette uses the blue-violet of wisteria flowers at Haonan Bieye as its principal colour and the yellow-green of leaves as its supporting colour. Wisteria offers recognition through both its flower clusters and its seasonal colour. Violet extends across the logo, packaging and layouts, maintaining the same place-based

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

association. Yellow-green appears in the O, the Chinese mark and selected accents, creating a clear hierarchy.



Wisteria flowers and leaves



Standard colour specification

Figure 3.3. Wisteria colour extraction and the brand palette.

Table 3.6. Standard colours and their roles.

Colour	HEX	RGB	Role
Wisteria violet	#7472AC	116 / 114 / 172	Primary mark, layouts and series identity
Leaf yellow-green	#B1B82E	177 / 184 / 46	O, Chinese mark and selected accents



Figure 3.4. Standard colours applied to the primary logo.

The two colours serve identification and emphasis respectively. Maintaining this relationship allows different products to retain a shared visual impression as their materials, dimensions and layouts change. The palette therefore gives later series a consistent starting point while leaving room for variation in the supporting content.

3.2.3. Extraction and transformation of supporting graphics

The supporting graphic develops from the natural form of a wisteria cluster. It retains the hanging outline, broader at the top and tapering below. Petals and stems

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

are first reduced to a silhouette; repeated petal forms are then translated into rounded diamonds. Changes in unit size, offset arrangement and spacing recreate the rhythm of the flower cluster. The rounded forms echo the logo's strokes and its O, connecting the supporting graphic with the primary mark.

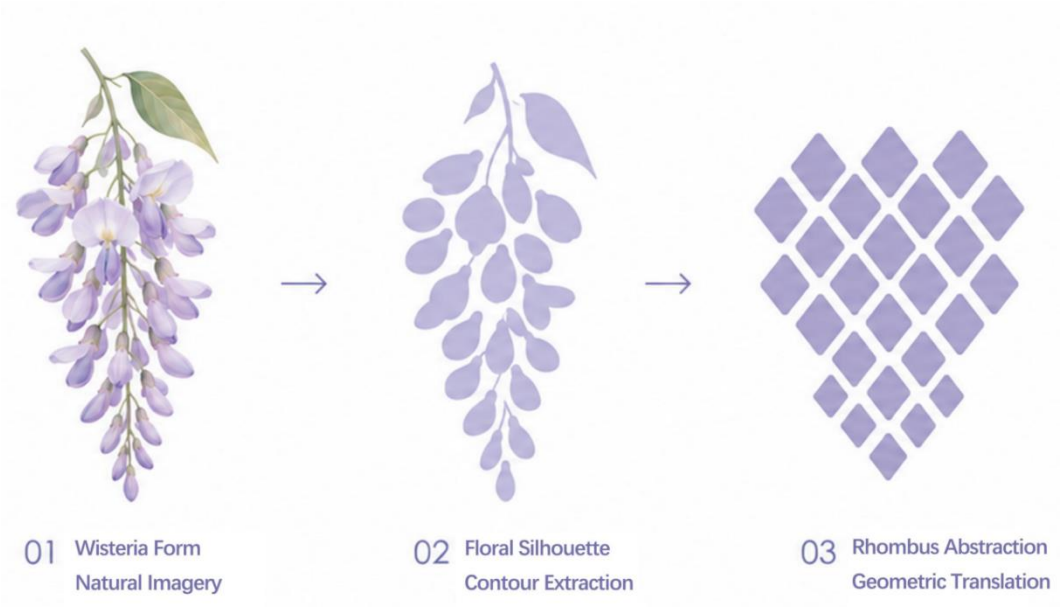
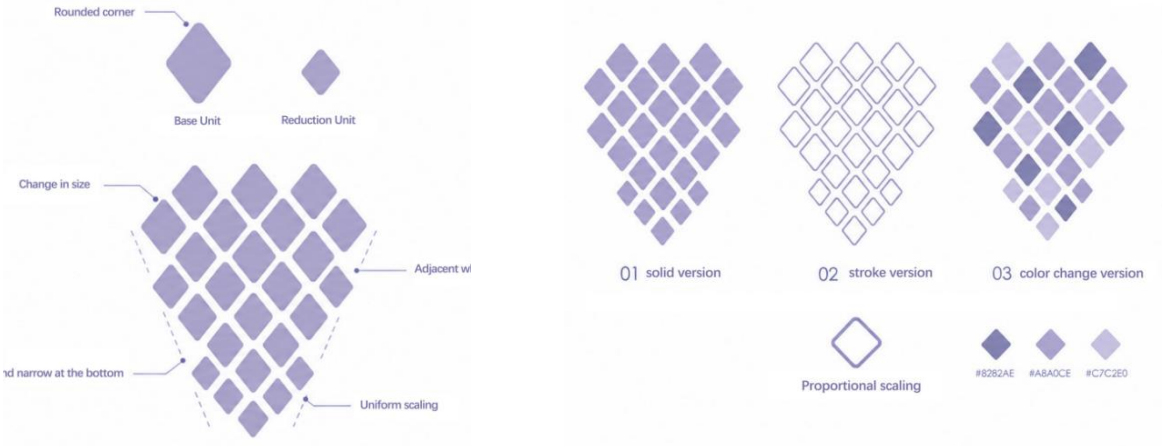


Figure 3.5. Natural wisteria, silhouette extraction and geometric translation.



Unit structure and arrangement Filled, outline and colour variants

Figure 3.6. Construction rules and variations of the supporting graphic.

Applications retain the overall cluster and relationships between units. Filled shapes, outlines, tonal changes and cropping adapt the graphic to different layouts. It can form an independent pattern or work with the logo in packaging, communication and spatial applications. These variations keep the visual language active while drawing on the same construction rules.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

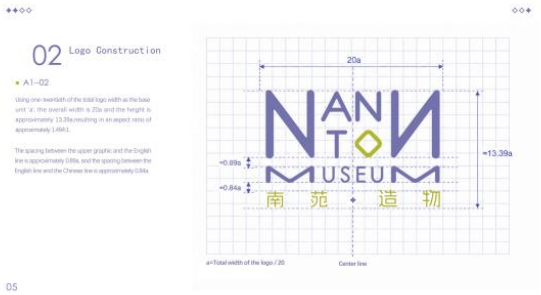
3.2.4. Visual identity manual and applications

The thirty-three-page visual identity manual brings together the logo, standard colours and supporting graphics. It specifies proportions, combinations, background use, typography and applications. The following pages show how these elements continue across the manual cover, basic standards, stationery, bags, wayfinding and the proposed shop environment.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584



Manual cover



Logo proportions and structure



Supporting graphic application



Document-envelope application



Envelope application



Shopping-bag application



Wayfinding design



Museum shop design

Figure 3.7. Selected visual identity manual pages and applications.

3.3. Character-based IP design

3.3.1. Story world and scene development

The IP is set in “a classroom in the museum.” Haonan Bieye becomes a learning space filled with cultural and natural references. Zhang Jian guides the cats

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

as their teacher, while the cats remain lively, curious and different in their habits. Learning, resting, discussion and feeding fish occur within the same setting, giving the scene the varied activity of a familiar class.



Figure 3.8. Classroom scene sketch: spatial layout and character activities.

The group composition uses the teacher, desks, books, wisteria and the cats' poses to introduce the location, relationships and personalities together. Each character has an activity, and the shared environment connects those activities into a story. The scene provides a common background for the individual designs and creates space for later themes involving learning, natural observation and collection exploration.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584



Figure 3.9. The classroom at Haonan Bieye: completed group illustration.

3.3.2. Zhang Jian as the teacher character

The Zhang Jian character takes the sculpture in the museum grounds as its reference. The design extracts the forehead, eyebrows, eyes, beard and long-garment silhouette, then adjusts the head-to-body proportions to create a simplified figure. His role as a teacher translates the educational theme into character behaviour and connects him with the classroom world.



Character sketch



Colour design (inscription: “May you pass every exam!”)



Zhang Jian sculpture

Figure 3.10. Zhang Jian: sculptural reference and teacher character development.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

3.3.3. Cat characters and collection objects

The cats are developed as a blind-box character series, combining animal behaviour with the forms of cultural objects. A common drawing language maintains the relationship among the designs, while different artefacts, accessories and activities distinguish individual characters. The following comparisons show each design from its sketch to its colour scheme alongside the associated cultural reference.

(1) Magnolia-shaped cup character



Design sketch | Colour design | Cultural reference

Figure 3.11. Magnolia-shaped cup character: sketch and colour design.

(2) Celadon flask character



Design sketch | Colour design | Cultural reference

Figure 3.12. Celadon flask character: sketch and colour design.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

(3) Lotus-shaped suction cup character



Design sketch



Colour design



Cultural reference

Figure 3.13. Lotus-shaped suction cup character: sketch and colour design.

(4) Iron-rust-decorated pillow character



Design sketch



Colour design



Cultural reference

Figure 3.14. Iron-rust-decorated pillow character: sketch and colour design.

(5) Blue printed cloth raincoat character



Design sketch



Colour design



Cultural reference (traditional Nantong textile craftsmanship)

Figure 3.15. Blue printed cloth raincoat character: sketch and colour design.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

This "Museum Cat" IP collection is designed primarily for sale as blind boxes, following a model similar to Pop Mart. The current series combines the IP characters with cultural artefacts; future updates could introduce new variations tailored to specific exhibitions, holidays or anniversaries. To support continued sales, the IP needs regular online content that maintains audience engagement and connects its stories with product releases.

The teacher and cats turn the museum's educational character into a story setting with personalities, events and everyday interaction. IP functions as a carrier of stories that connect cultural resources with public feeling. Characters with different habits and established relationships can take part in new situations involving learning, visits, festivals and daily life, providing material for illustrations, comics, short videos and later products.

This structure extends creative development through the stories themselves. Regular IP content gives the museum new occasions to enter public view, while familiar experiences provide topics for discussion and sharing. Recognition of the characters can develop alongside recognition of the brand. The resulting path connects cultural storytelling, continuing attention and emotional engagement, supporting the development and operation of a related product series.

Conclusions to Chapter 3

The project connects cultural sign extraction with a visual identity and a character world. Wisteria supplies the colour and supporting graphics, while the Central Hall and Nantong's name form the logo. Zhang Jian and the cats organise the educational theme through a classroom setting, and collection features distinguish the individual characters. The sequence from source selection through sketches to completed images shows how cultural meaning informs design decisions.

Brand identity holds these outputs together, and the story world provides subjects for their continued development. Further work will extend the system into everyday products and examine their use through prototypes and audience feedback.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

3.4. Everyday-life integration

"Integration into daily life" serves as the third key principle underpinning the sustainable development of museum-branded cultural products. Everyday consumables are gradually depleted through frequent use, thereby creating opportunities for restocking and repeat purchases. Practical utility provides an additional incentive to buy: products satisfy aesthetic preferences while simultaneously meeting the functional needs of study, work, or home life. Consequently, by combining cultural expression with practical utility, the purchasing context extends beyond mere souvenir-buying intended to commemorate a museum visit.

This principle powerfully reinforces brand identity and character-based IP development. Characters and narratives imbue everyday objects with emotional resonance, while consistent branding—including logos, color schemes, and visual language—tightly links diverse products to the museum brand. Frequent use ensures these cultural motifs remain a constant presence in consumers' lives, deepening familiarity and strengthening brand impressions. When visual appeal is matched by satisfying quality and functionality, these everyday items help build trust and encourage consumers to make subsequent purchases from the same brand.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

CONCLUSIONS

1. The research identifies a connected design problem in the Nantong Museum's cultural and creative products. The sample contains diverse cultural references, but many products use similar carriers and modes of expression. Further development can consequently depend on replacing images, adjusting form or adding another object to a familiar composition. These approaches provide legitimate souvenir value, but they offer limited conditions for expanding cultural content and everyday engagement. The thesis responds by examining the relationships that make continued design possible rather than treating a larger number of products as an adequate measure of development.

2. Semiotics provides a practical basis for selecting and translating cultural resources. The analysis distinguishes visible form, cultural reference and audience interpretation. This distinction supports the retention of recognisable features while introducing names, contextual cues and actions that make their meaning more accessible. In the proposal, familiar forms such as cats and flowers provide entry points, while Zhang Jian, architecture and collection objects establish cultural specificity. The educational theme organises these resources through relationships of guidance, observation and discovery instead of presenting them as unrelated motifs.

3. Brand development addresses the accumulation of recognition and experience across products. A common cultural position, logo, palette and graphic language make it possible for different outputs to reinforce the same identity. The NANTON mark and wisteria-derived system demonstrate this principle in a visual proposal and manual. Their contribution to continued development lies in providing reusable rules and a recognisable source for future work. Brand value nevertheless depends on the experiences associated with the identity, so visual consistency must be supported by appropriate quality, communication and use.

4. Character-based IP addresses the continuity of creative content. A teacher figure and five cats establish a shared classroom world in which cultural objects and natural resources can become subjects of action and inquiry. Stable participants and

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

relationships allow new topics to emerge without rebuilding the whole system. This provides a path from isolated visual references to continuing stories. The reciprocal relationship with branding is central: the brand gives the characters a museum-specific identity, while narrative content creates repeated opportunities to encounter and interpret that identity.

5. Everyday-life integration addresses the limited contexts in which cultural products may be used or selected again. It connects cultural and emotional meaning with practical activities rather than assuming that cultural association alone justifies purchase. Stationery and other daily objects can support repeated contact when their content, usability and quality work together. This principle does not require unnecessary replacement of durable products. It seeks appropriate opportunities for continued use, replenishment or another meaningful application.

6. The overall contribution is a coordinated framework connecting cultural interpretation with continuing product development. The relationship among recognition, continuing narrative and everyday experience offers a basis for sustained cultural product development. Subsequent work should complete suitable product prototypes, examine audience interpretation and use, and test a sequence of related content in practice. These steps will develop the relationship between cultural interpretation, use and continuing engagement with the museum.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

REFERENCES

[1] CHEN L Y. A study of museum cultural and creative product development[M]. Shanghai: Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences Press, 2019. (in Chinese).

[2] YANG Z. Research on mechanisms for the sustainable development of cultural and creative design integrating social innovation[D]. Hangzhou: China Academy of Art, 2022. (in Chinese).

[3] HUANG Y, ZHAO L. Implications of Zhang Jian's museum-building ideas for university museums[J]. Dongnan Culture, 2018(4): 90-95. (in Chinese).

[4] YANG P P. Research on the interpretation of artefact signs and design methods for cultural and creative products[J]. Chinese Museum, 2017(3): 45-49. (in Chinese).

[5] CHEN Y. Museum cultural and creative product development and marketing from a semiotic perspective: A case study of the British Museum's Anderson Cat series[J]. Science Education and Museums, 2025, 11(3): 126-133. (in Chinese).

[6] ZHAO Y H. Semiotics: Principles and inferences[M]. Revised ed. Nanjing: Nanjing University Press, 2016. (in Chinese).

[7] PEIRCE C S. The essential Peirce: Selected philosophical writings, volume 2 (1893–1913)[M]. Peirce Edition Project, ed. Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1998.

[8] KELLER K L. Conceptualizing, measuring, and managing customer-based brand equity[J]. Journal of Marketing, 1993, 57(1): 1-22.

[9] JIANG L. IP management: Exploring a new approach to museum public cultural products and services[J]. Chinese Museum, 2017(1): 79-88. (in Chinese).

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

[10] WU W, LI L J X. Narrative design methods and practice in the design of Huxiang red cultural and creative products[J]. Zhuangshi, 2021(9): 42-45. (in Chinese).

[11] ESCALAS J E. Narrative processing: Building consumer connections to brands[J]. Journal of Consumer Psychology, 2004, 14(1-2): 168-180.

[12] JENKINS H. Convergence culture: Where old and new media collide[M]. New York: New York University Press, 2006.

[13] SWEENEY J C, SOUTAR G N. Consumer perceived value: The development of a multiple item scale[J]. Journal of Retailing, 2001, 77(2): 203-220.

[14] ZHOU C. Digital marketing strategies for museum cultural and creative products in a digital society based on Generation Z consumer motivations: A case study of Anhui Museum[J]. Dongnan Culture, 2024(3): 184-190. (in Chinese).

[15] CHAN C, BERGER J, VAN BOVEN L. Identifiable but not identical: Combining social identity and uniqueness motives in choice[J]. Journal of Consumer Research, 2012, 39(3): 561-573.

[16] BERGER J, MILKMAN K L. What makes online content viral?[J]. Journal of Marketing Research, 2012, 49(2): 192-205.

[17] BERGER J, SCHWARTZ E M. What drives immediate and ongoing word of mouth?[J]. Journal of Marketing Research, 2011, 48(5): 869-880.

[18] MIAO H L. A study of museum cultural and creative product development in practice: A case study of Shanghai Museum[J]. Chinese Museum, 2019(2): 99-103. (in Chinese).

[19] NORMAN D A. Emotional design: Why we love (or hate) everyday things[M]. New York: Basic Books, 2004.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

[20] HELLIER P K, GEURSEN G M, CARR R A, et al. Customer repurchase intention: A general structural equation model[J]. European Journal of Marketing, 2003, 37(11/12): 1762-1800.

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

APPENDIX A. DESIGN PRESENTATION

A.1. Visual identity manual

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

NANTONG MUSEUM
南 苑 · 造 物

Nantong Museum Cultural and Creative Brand VI Manual

南·苑
造·物

ABOUT THIS MANUAL

Purpose of Preparation

This manual serves to standardize the visual expression of the "Nanyuan·Zaowu" cultural and creative brand, unify the usage of the logo, colors, typography, and auxiliary graphics, and maintain consistency in the brand image.

Scope of Application

Suitable for the design and production of brand promotional materials, office supplies, creative merchandise, packaging, and spatial displays.

Instructions for Use

Application designs should be based on the specifications and source files provided in this manual, with appropriate adjustments made to suit the specific medium and production process, while maintaining consistency in the logo's proportions, standard color scheme, and graphic characteristics.

Version V1.0

CONTENTS
目录

Introduction
Cover 01
Manual Overview 02
Table of Contents 03

A. Basic Visual System
Brand Logo 04
Brand Colors 13
Brand Font 14
Auxiliary Graphics 17

B.Brand Application System
Office & Identity 22
Packaging System 27
Wayfinding System 29
Spatial & Event Displays 31
Back Cover 33

南·苑
造·物

01 Logo Design and Rationale

A1–01

Rooted in the cultural heritage of the Nantong Museum, "Nanyuan·Zaowu" integrates the museum's cultural imagery into daily life through creative merchandise and visual design, conveying a brand identity that is both minimalist and approachable.

The form is derived from the silhouette of the Central Hall at the Nantong Museum—a shape also featured in the museum's logo. Visual inspiration is drawn from the museum's wisteria flowers; the blue-violet hues echo the blossoms, while the yellow-green tones are inspired by the leaves.

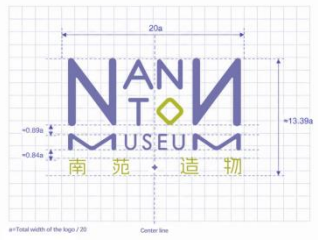
04

02 Logo Construction

A1–02

Using one-twentieth of the total logo width as the base unit 'a', the overall width is 20a and the height is approximately 13.39a, resulting in an aspect ratio of approximately 1.494:1.

The spacing between the upper graphic and the English line is approximately 0.89a, and the spacing between the English line and the Chinese line is approximately 0.84a.

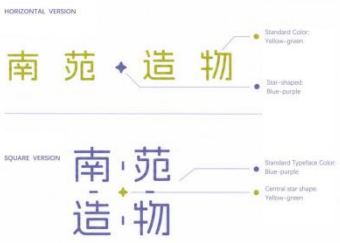


05

03 Chinese logotype

A1–03

The standard logotype is available in two versions: horizontal and square. The horizontal version is suitable for horizontal layouts and combinations with the full logo, while the square version is designed for compact spaces or scenarios that emphasize Chinese character recognition.



06

04 Logo Versions & Lockups

A1–04

The complete composite logo—comprising the English graphic element, the word "MUSEUM," and the Chinese logotype—is the preferred version for external brand communication; it is suitable for primary identification applications such as covers, posters, and the front panels of packaging.



07

05 Monochrome Reversed Logo

A1–05

When color printing options are limited, or when utilizing single-color processes such as screen printing, hot stamping, or engraving, the logo's monochrome artwork should be used. The entire logo is rendered in a single solid color, without retaining the two-color distinction.

The reversed-out version is intended for use on solid backgrounds in blue-violet, black, or other dark colors. The logo is rendered in white, and a clear contrast in lightness must be maintained between the background and the logo.



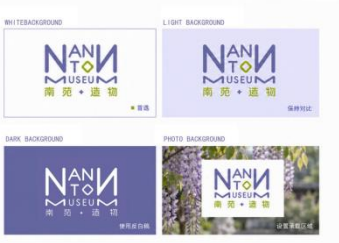
08

06 Logo Background Usage

A1–06

A white background is the preferred setting for the two-color logo;as it fully showcases the brand identity relationshipbetween the blue-violet and yellow-green elements.

A two-color logo may be used on light backgrounds, provided the background maintains low saturation and sufficient brightness to ensure the logo remains distinguishable from the background color. A reversed-out (white) logo should be used on dark backgrounds.



09

07 Incorrect Logo Usage

A1–07

The logo must maintain its integral composite structure, proportions, and standard color scheme to ensure the accuracy and consistency of brand identity.

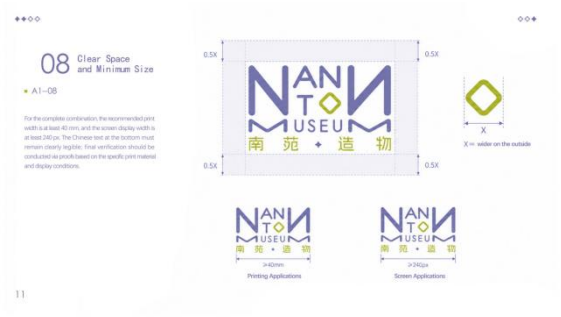
When applied, the element must not be stretched, outlined, rotated, or blurred; nor may the standard colors or graphic structure be altered without authorization.

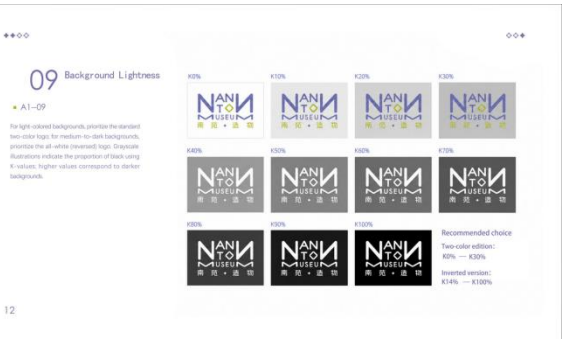
Select a clear, simple background and leave sufficient space for identification,ensuring that patterns and text do not interfere with one another.



10

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584



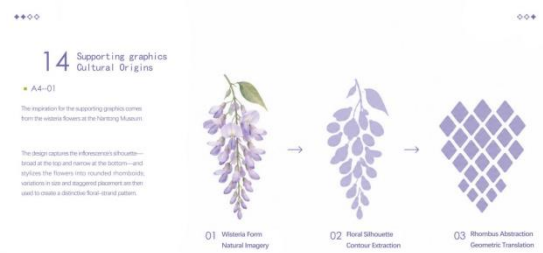


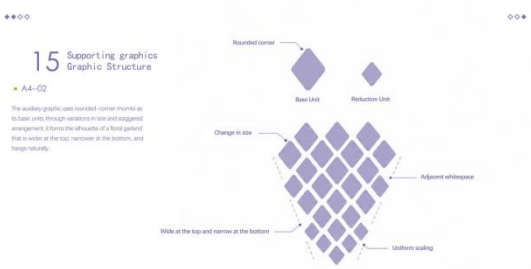












Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

16 Graphic Composition

- A4–04

The supplementary graphics come in solid, outlined, and color-variant versions. All three forms share the same floral garland outline, with the specific version selected based on layout information and visual hierarchy.

01 solid version

02 stroke version

03 color change version

Proportional scaling

#EDE1AE #ABA0CE #C7C2E0

19

17 Graphic Composition

- A4–04

Graphic elements are typically enlarged and positioned at the corners of the layout, with about half of the floral motif visible to create a natural visual extension. These graphics should remain subtle, serving to complement the primary information.

01 Logo-centric cropped corners

02 Logo-centric cropped corners

20

18 Brand Applications

- B1–01

A unified visual identity is established using a palette of blue-purple and yellow-green, extending the logo and wisteria-inspired graphic elements to packaging, paper products, and everyday lifestyle merchandise.

21

19 Business Card

- B1–02

The business card is composed of a blue-purple display side and a white information side. The purple side features a directional arrow and a QR code to create a clean, streamlined brand entry point.

22

20 File folder

- B1–03

The document folder is made of 120 g/m² natural white uncoated paper, measuring 210 × 297 mm; the document envelope is made of 250 g/m² recycled paper, with a finished size of 229 × 324 mm, designed to hold A4 paper laid flat.

23

21 Folders Document Envelopes

- B1–04

The folder is made of 0.5mm-thick, translucent, frosted PP sheet material,measuring 230 × 310mm when closed, and features a white pressure-dipto secure A4 documents; the document sleeve is made of 0.12mm-thickfrosted PP film, measuring 220 × 310mm. The overall designis pale purple, created through die-cutting,creasing, and selective heat-sealing.

24

22 Employee ID Card

- B1–05

The ID badge is made of 0.8mm thick PVC, with finished dimensions of 70×100mm, rounded corners, and a hole at the top for attaching a lanyard. It comes with a 20mm -wide purple polyester strap.

工作证
WORK CARD

刘西
LIU XI

南·苑
造·物

25

23 Envelope

- B1–06

The envelope is made of 250 gsm matte specialty paper and measures 229 × 324 mm, allowing for the flat storage of A4 letter paper and documents.

26

24 Large Carry Bag

- B1–07

Specifications: 400 × 300 × 120 mm (width × height × side width)250 g/m² recycled kraft paper, featuring 25 mm-wide webbing handles.

Process: White ink screen printing, die-cutting, creasing, and folding.Gluing and reinforcement at the handle attachment points.

27

25 Small Gift Bag

- B1–08

Specifications: 220 × 250 × 90 mm (Width × Height × Gusset)250 gsm white cardstock, with white round cord handles.

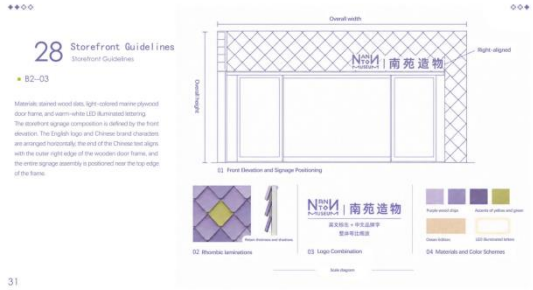
Production process: Offset printing creates a light purple background with graphics and text in varying shades; the surface is finished with matte lamination, followed by die-cutting, creasing, and gluing. The bag opening features a reinforced folded edge.

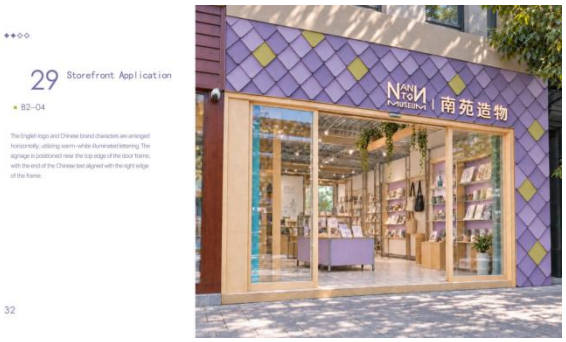
28

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584









南苑造物

Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

A.2. IP character design

IP story world: the classroom at Haonan Bieye, a historic building in the museum grounds. The cat characters are inspired by stray cats living at the Nantong Museum.



Blind-box character designs. In order: Heimi (Black Rice), Yanmai (Oats), Buding (Pudding), Aoliao (Oreo) and Yangtao (Starfruit).



Docusign Envelope ID: 2EA197FC-CF42-8742-8382-43B48709F584

Zhang Jian character design. Zhang Jian was a prominent modern Chinese industrialist and educator and the founder of the Nantong Museum. In the IP story world, he serves as a teacher who guides the cats in learning and exploration.

