

# Visual Transformation Methodologies of Intangible Cultural Heritage Symbols in Cultural & Creative Product Design

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**Abstract:** ICH symbols are the core carriers of ICH, embodying ethnic aesthetics, traditional craftsmanship, and humanistic spirit. Transforming them effectively into visual language for Cultural & Creative products is a key pathway for the revitalization of ICH as well as the quality improvement and upgrading of the Cultural & Creative industry. Current cultural product designs frequently exhibit disjointed symbol appropriation, fragmented cultural contexts, homogenized visual expressions, and contextual dissonance, hindering synergistic enhancement of cultural dissemination and market resonance. This paper anchors in the integration logic of ICH transmission and modern design, defines the core connotations and visual characteristics of ICH symbols, analyzes the current practical challenges in visual transformation, and systematically explores the visual transformation methodologies of ICH symbols in Cultural & Creative product design from four dimensions: symbol extraction, tectonic reconfiguration, poetic reinterpretation, and contextual resonance. Concurrently, grounded in design ethics and market demands, it proposes optimization strategies, aiming to enable ICH to achieve contemporary expressions through visual transformation, promote ICH transmission shift from static protection to dynamic innovation, and catalyze cultural depth and market vitality in cultural & creative products.

**Keywords:** Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Symbols; Cultural & Creative Product Design; Visual Transformation; Cultural Transmission; Contemporary Design

**DOI:**10.12417/3029-2344.25.12.030

## 1. Introduction

ICH embodies the collective memory and cultural roots of a nation, serving as an important component of fine traditional Chinese culture. Under the backdrop of vigorous development of cultural confidence and Cultural & Creative industry, ICH elements have become an important source of inspiration for the design of Cultural & Creative products. However, most designs remain merely confined to superficial symbol appropriation, failing to deeply explore the internal correlations between the cultural DNA and the visual language, resulting in Cultural & Creative products lacking soul and identification, impeding true transmission of ICH spirit. Visual transformation is the core process through which ICH symbols enter the market and get close to the masses. It is not merely simple replication of elements, but rather the deep interpretation of cultural connotations, the reconfiguration and innovation of visual language, and the organic integration of product carriers. Exploring scientific and systematic visual transformation methodologies can resolve homogenization in traditional cultural creative designs, enabling traditional cultural heritage to regain vitality in contemporary design and achieving the bidirectional empowerment of cultural transmission and design innovation.

## 2. The Intrinsic Correlations Between ICH Symbols and Cultural & Creative Product Design

### 2.1 The Core Connotations and Visual Modalities of ICH Symbols

ICH symbols cover multiple sectors such as folk fine arts, traditional craftsmanship, folk rituals, and opera costumes. They are a visual expression system developed through long-term historical accumulation, featuring both concrete modalities and spiritual core. From a visual perspective, ICH symbols encompass explicit elements such as shapes, colors, patterns, and texture. Each visual modality embodies specific cultural meanings, aesthetic preferences, and ancestral wisdom, manifesting traditional creation concepts while implying national sentiment and value pursuit [1]. Such symbols function not as isolated visual units, but as structurally entangled with ICH techniques and cultural ecosystems, bearing distinct geo-cultural signatures and temporal imprints that manifest the identifiability of ethnic

heritage.

## **2.2 The Dual Value of Visual Transformation in ICH Transmission and Cultural & Creative Product Design**

Visual transformation is an important breakthrough for the revitalization of ICH. It can break through the niche limitations of ICH, transforming the abstruse and incomprehensible traditional symbols into visual languages that are easily accepted and the masses are happy to use. This enables ICH to leave the museum and the workshops of inheritors, and integrate into daily consumption and living contexts, achieving living heritage transmission. For Cultural & Creative product design, the high-quality transformation of ICH symbols can endow the products with unique cultural depth and emotional value, escape from the dilemma of homogenization competition, enhance the added value and market competitiveness of the products, and make Cultural & Creative products not only have real-world utility, but also become mobile carriers for cultural dissemination, achieving the organic unity of commercial value and cultural value [2].

## **2.3 The Core Principles for Visual Transformation of Cultural & Creative Products**

The visual transformation of ICH symbols must uphold three core principles. The first is the principle of cultural authenticity, which means respecting the original connotations and spiritual core of ICH, and strictly avoiding arbitrary alteration or distortion of cultural meanings, thus safeguarding the bottom line of ICH transmission. The second is the principle of design innovation. It requires to break away from simple copy of traditional symbols and instead reconfigure them integrating contemporary aesthetics and design languages to adapt to the visual preferences of modern audience. The third is the principle of functional adaptability. The visual transformation should align with the usage scenarios, material and craftsmanship, and functionality of the Cultural & Creative products, achieving high degree of alignment between cultural expressions and product attributes, and avoiding a separation between forms and functions.

## **3. Current Dilemmas in Visual Transformation of ICH Symbols in Cultural & Creative Product Design**

### **3.1 Superficial Symbol Appropriation, Lacking Cultural Connotations**

Currently, most of the traditional ICH cultural & creative designs remain superficial. Designers fail to deeply understand the cultural meanings, historical background and spiritual essence behind the ICH symbols. They merely copy and paste the explicit elements such as traditional patterns, shapes and colors onto the surface of the products, ignoring the intrinsic correlations between the symbols and culture, as well as between the symbols and the products. This kind of transformation methodologies, although seemingly integrating with elements of ICH, actually dissects the cultural context, resulting in that products have only a traditional appearance yet lack a cultural soul, making the audience struggle to perceive the humanistic value behind the ICH, and failing to achieve deep-level cultural dissemination [3].

### **3.2 Serious Homogenization, Lacking Innovative Expressions**

In the Cultural & Creative market, the application of ICH elements exhibits a high degree of homogenization. The transformation modalities are monotonous for similar ICH symbols, the shapes and color combinations follow the same pattern, and they mostly focus on a few common patterns and shapes. There is a lack of exploration and innovation for niche and distinctive ICH symbols. Designers often adopt fixed transformation models, without conducting personalized design based on product categories and audience needs. As a result, varying ICH Cultural & Creative products have similar appearances and extremely low identifiability, struggling to attract contemporary consumers and failing to highlight the unique charm of different ICH projects.

### **3.3 Aesthetic Dissonance with Contemporary Sensibilities, Lacking Audience Resonance**

Some traditional ICH cultural & creative designs overly stick to traditional modalities, neglecting the aesthetic preferences and visual demands of contemporary audience. Their visual languages are outdated and rigid, the shapes

are overly complex and redundant, and the color combinations do not conform to the modern minimalist, fresh and personalized aesthetic trends. Meanwhile, during the transformation process, the preferences of different audience groups are not taken into account. The designs for the young group fail to integrate the visual language of fashion, and the designs for practical scenarios fail to simplify the visual elements, resulting in the difficulty for ICH cultural & creative products to integrate into modern life, and the low acceptance and market recognition among the audience [4].

### ***3.4 Structural Dissociation between Symbols and Product Matrix, with Compromised Functional Integrity***

High-quality visual transformation requires the organic integration of cultural symbols and product carriers. However, some designs have obvious fragmentation issues. The visual symbols are completely disconnected from the functionality, materials, and craftsmanship of the products. Sometimes, designers stack the ICH elements only because they want to add them to their designs, ignoring the real-world utility of the products. Such designs often focus on visual performance while neglecting the user experience, resulting in insufficient viewing value and real-world utility of Cultural & Creative products. They fail to meet the daily usage needs of consumers and equally hinder the dissemination of ICH. This goes against the original intention of Cultural & Creative product design.

## **4. The Visual Transformation Methodologies of ICH Symbols in Cultural & Creative Product Design**

### ***4.1 Deeper Extraction***

Deeper extraction is the fundamental step in the visual transformation of ICH, and equally the core approach to avoiding element stacking and achieving concise expressions. Its core lies in conducting a comprehensive and deeper interpretation of ICH, eliminating the complex and redundant superficial decorative elements, stripping away the insignificant and fragmented details, accurately capturing the most representative core visual symbols that possess the most profound cultural meanings, and that can manifest the projects' characteristics best, and sublimating them from complexity to simplicity, and from outward appearance to inner essence. Designers must first buckle down and conduct in-depth research on the historical background, transmission context, technique characteristics and spiritual essence of the ICH projects to clarify the primary and secondary relationships of various visual elements, define the boundaries between the core symbols and auxiliary decorations, focus on the most identifiable and vivid shapes, patterns or color systems, and retain the most essential form features and cultural genes of the symbols. The extracted visual languages that have eliminated the complexity and redundancy of traditional ICH symbols can better adapt to the modern cultural & creative products' aesthetic trends for minimalist. They cannot only quickly capture the audience's gaze but also prevent the core of ICH from being obscured by chaotic elements, achieving the precision transmission of cultural DNA [5].

### ***4.2 Tectonic Reconfiguration***

Tectonic reconfiguration is a key method for achieving innovative expressions of ICH symbols. It is particularly suitable for the transformation of traditional ICH symbols with complex shapes, regular structures, and dense patterns. It can effectively break through the rigid limitations of traditional forms and endow ICH elements with modern sense. This method prioritizes respecting the original connotations of ICH, and never arbitrarily dissects the cultural meanings. Firstly, it breaks down the original traditional layout, proportion and structure of the ICH symbols, disassembles them into several independent visual units, and then, and leverages modern design principles such as point-line-plane composition, density contrast, rhythm to reconfigure the modular elements through strategic permutation, disjunctive recombination, and calibrated deformation to construct emergent visual hierarchies and morphological frameworks. Tectonic reconfiguration is not meaningless disassembly and reassembly. All design actions are centered around cultural connotations and product functionality. By adjusting the size, position, density and direction of elements, it makes traditional symbols acquire a modern visual rhythm. This not only fully retains the core genes of ICH but also breaks free from the constraints of traditional modalities, creating a new visual effect

that integrates time-honored aesthetic resonance and modern aesthetics.

### **4.3 Poetic Reinterpretation**

Poetic reinterpretation is a high-level method for the visual transformation of ICH. It goes beyond the superficial imitation of concrete symbols, focusing on the spiritual poetics and emotional connotations of ICH, and converting the abstract cultural poetics into concrete visual languages. The core of some ICH is not a single visual symbol, but rather a climate, a spirit, and a life philosophy. The transformation of such ICH should grasp their intrinsic verve, and transmit the emotions and poetics behind the ICH through color climate creation, the imagery expressions of shapes, and texture quality foiling. Poetic reinterpretation places greater emphasis on spiritual resemblance rather than form resemblance. It enables cultural & creative products to break through the limitations of concrete elements, possess a deeper cultural depth and emotional tension, evoke emotional resonance among the audience, and achieve deeper dissemination of ICH.

### **4.4 Contextual Resonance**

The core of contextual resonance is to make ICH visual symbols align with contemporary aesthetic trends and market demands, achieving modern expressions of traditional elements. Designers need to integrate the current design trends, optimize and adjust the colors, shapes and texture of the ICH symbols, streamline the complex shapes, optimize the color ratios, integrate minimalist, personalized and youthful visual elements, while accounting for the compatibility of varying cultural & creative products. For different products such as daily necessities, Cultural & Creative ornaments, and digital peripherals, designers must adjust the size, position and expression modalities of the visual symbols. Furthermore, designers must integrate modern techniques and material characteristics to enable the visual language of ICH to match modern manufacturing techniques, guaranteeing the implementation of design schemes. This enables ICH cultural & creative products to retain their time-honored aesthetic resonance while meeting the usage habits and aesthetic preferences of contemporary audience.

## **5. Optimization and Safeguard Strategies for Visual Transformation of ICH Symbols**

### **5.1 Cultivating Cultural DNA While Upholding the Bottom Line of Transmission**

To achieve high-quality visual transformation of ICH symbols, the first and foremost prerequisite is to cultivate cultural DNA. Designers must abandon the impetuous design mindset, conduct in-depth research on the historical context and spiritual essence of ICH, and cultivate awe of ICH. During the transformation process, it is necessary to always uphold the cultural authenticity, not to arbitrarily alter the cultural meanings, not to distort the core value of the ICH symbols, and to ensure that each visual expression has a corresponding cultural basis. Let the visual transformation become a carrier for ICH transmission, rather than a mere commercial design method.

### **5.2 Synergizing Innovation and Utility to Equilibrate Cultural Value with Market Viability**

High-quality ICH Cultural & Creative products need to synergize cultural transmission and commercial value. The visual transformation should not only pursue design innovation but also take into account the real-world utility of the products. Designers need to deeply binding cultural symbols with the product functionality, ensuring that the visual expressions serve for products' usage scenarios, and avoiding the problem of emphasizing shapes over functionality. Concurrently, grounded in market demands and audience targeting, targeted visual design is carried out. For the young consumer group, emphasis is placed on individuality and trends, and for practical scenarios, minimalist and convenience should be highlighted, achieving the synergy of cultural value, practical value and commercial value, enabling ICH cultural & creative products to truly enter the daily living contexts of the masses.

### **5.3 Unlocking Distinctive Resources to Circumvent Design Homogenization**

To address the homogenization dilemma of ICH cultural & creative products, it is necessary to unlock regional characteristics and niche ICH resources, expand the range of visual transformation materials, and circumvent the excessive use of a few common ICH symbols. Designers are encouraged to integrate the distinctive ICH of different

regions to create differentiated visual languages, and customize exclusive visual transformation plans for each product according to its positioning and category to highlight the uniqueness of the ICH projects and the identifiability of the products, ensuring that each piece of ICH cultural & creative products possesses an irreplicable cultural charm.

## 6. Conclusion

The visual transformation of ICH symbols serves as the core bridge for the revitalization of ICH as well as the innovative development of the Cultural & Creative industry. It is not merely a simple copy and paste of elements, but rather the deep integration of cultural interpretation, artistic reconfiguration, and contemporary expressions. Current superficial and homogenized problems in cultural & creative design stems from the lack of systematic and scientific visual transformation methodologies. Only by upholding cultural authenticity and delving into the essence of ICH, and through diverse methodologies such as deeper extraction, tectonic reconfiguration, poetic reinterpretation, and contextual resonance, can traditional ICH symbols be adapted to modern aesthetics and market demands. In the practice of Cultural & Creative product design, designers must always strike a balance between cultural transmission and design innovation, as well as artistic expressions and practical functionality. They should enable ICH to regain its vitality through visual transformation, and make cultural & creative products an important carrier for transmitting national culture and demonstrating cultural confidence to promote the living heritage transmission and long-term development of ICH in contemporary society.

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