

The evolution of Chinese cultural products

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Impression Jiangnan Culture Hall located in the Nanxiang Incity Mega in Jiading District, Shanghai's biggest shopping center, is attracting a steady flow of visitors coming for the large variety of the district's cultural and creative products that combine local handicraft artworks, intangible cultural relics and fashion shows.

From bookmarks and ball point pens to backpacks, lip stick and ice cream, Chinese culture and history have been getting into people's daily lives in recent years in the forms of art and fashion.

However, with the rapid development of China's cultural creativity industry, many products in souvenir shops and museums in China look the same, such as canvas bags, postcards and notebooks.

There is an old Chinese saying that "Good wine needs no bush, even if it is in a deep alley," but only the good wine can sell itself.

Different from products manufactured on assembly lines, a good cultural product stands out with its unique design and creativity, which sometimes prompts people to learn about the culture and history behind it.



Coasters with patterns including Fenghuang (Phoenix) car manufactured in 1958 and Jiading's yaoban cloth, blue-and-white cloth, on display at Impression Jiangnan Culture Hall.

A space of light and dream

What is cultural product? In my understanding, it's a romantic integration of traditional aesthetic taste and modern ingenuity, which is constructed through different carriers, including space.

There are a lot of cultural spaces in Shanghai, and they were my favorite destinations when I first arrived in the city.

The Xinhua Cultural Bookstore used to be my "summer resort," which I often visit in summer. I read books and let time slip away like flowing water in the air conditioned-store.

In recent years, Jiading District has been exploring its own cultural labels and continuously stimulating the vitality of local cultural and creative industries. Thanks to this, I don't have to go all the way to other districts for cultural spaces anymore, as they can be easily found in Jiading itself now.

The Wojia Cultural Museum has created a space of light and dream for me. It sincerely reaches out to the public, leading us to recognize and experience Jiading's profound cultural heritage, merging innovation into the inheritance of traditional culture.

The museum's "Art Liufang" branch locates in Zhouqiao scenic spot, while the "Jiangnan Impression" branch suits itself in a busy commercial area. The venues feature distinctive charms of Jiading's ancient town, attracting many culture-loving young visitors, including me.

In these venues, I can read books, treat myself a pot of tea, slow down the time and calm myself down even in a windy or rainy day. I can experience enamel craftsmanship, get to know the traditional Xuxing straw weaving and Malu bamboo stripping skills. I can also try to make sachets with traditionally dyed cloth, create my own hand-made cultural product and enrich my life.

Every visit to the museum becomes an aesthetic journey into Jiading's culture. Apart from the immersive experiences, I can also make friends who share similar interest. If you are worried about crowding, the museum also offers online visit service to smart device users.

As a Jiading District resident, I visit

the cultural museum very often and get amazed by the elegant integration of Jiangnan (regions south of the lower reach of the Yangtze River) culture and modern Shanghai elements. It's a modern and poetic space that well demonstrates Jiading's ancient and eternal humanistic charm.

(Narrator: Dong Hong)

Immerse yourself in the culture

Without a fully immersive experience, there is no real understanding, which holds true with the cultural creativity industry. A good creative idea not only helps people acquire knowledge, but can also neutralize their stereotypes.

I once took my parents and child to Nanxiang Xiaolong Culture Hall for a tour. Originally, I just wanted to find a place where my kid could play and I could have a rest. I was not a big fan of the famed Nanxiang *xiaolongbao*, which appeared in a small size. As a northerner, I prefer big buns made of fermented flower, shredded vegetables and meat, but Nanxiang *xiaolongbao* are the opposite — non-fermented with only meat.

However, after the tour that showcased *xiaolongbao*'s history with old photos, props and wax statues, I felt like shuttling back to more than 100 years ago and hearing the bustling crowds on the street where the steaming hot *xiaolongbao* were just made.

I couldn't wait to order some for my family and tasted them carefully. At that moment, I actually thought they were delicious.

Jiading boasts a wide range of scenic spots, handicrafts and food delicacies, such as Qiuxia Garden, Guyi Garden, vegetable cake and Xihang straw weaving. Without personal experience, one would never know how good and unique they really are.

It's the same thing when it comes to cultural and creative products. Good promotion and publicity on various social media platforms on the one hand. On the other, providing people with on-site experiences enhanced by



Above: Charming creative and cultural products
Right: A purple bookmark reflects wisteria flowers in Jiading's Wisteria Garden.



visual and audio technologies, letting them touch, taste and make things with their own hands or getting dressed up in costumes.

(Narrator: Wang Xiaoman)

Beautiful and useful

"A good cultural product excels in three aspects: aesthetics, function and connotation, all of which are indispensable." I totally agree with this opinion.

In my definition, connotation comes from a traceable history and culture; aesthetics feature trendy fashion elements; and function is realized in the

integration into daily life. The function of a cultural product needs to be explored before reaching more consumers.

Along with being beautiful, cultural products should be useful. Otherwise, they can only be put onto shelves.

The inaugural Jiading District Cultural and Creative Product Design Competition was held last year. According to its regulations, Jiading elements had to be included in the design of household goods and office supplies, as well as kitchen and bathroom items. Practicality was also a major requirement.

(Narrator: Xiaoyudi)