THE DEVELOPMENT OF TRADITIONAL GUAN KILN POTTERY TOWARDS CREATIVE CULTURAL PRODUCT FOR CONTEMPORARY CHINESE LIFESTYLES

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Received: March 7, 2025; **Revised:** December 11, 2025; **Accepted:** December 11, 2025

Abstract

The purpose of this paper through study the artistic characteristics and aesthetics of Guan kiln pottery to study contemporary Chinese lifestyles and daily-use products, and to integrate the methods and strategies adopted by Thai and Western home product entrepreneurs and designers when promoting products to contemporary target groups. The aim is to design cultural and creative products for home decoration that align with contemporary Chinese lifestyles. To study the artistic characteristics and aesthetics of Guan kiln pottery, literature research, interviews, and field surveys were used. To study contemporary Chinese lifestyles and daily-use products, literature research and interviews were employed. To design cultural and creative products for home decoration that fit contemporary Chinese lifestyles, a creative research method was applied for experimentation, and the results of the experiments were used for product development. **Results:** This study ultimately analyzes the artistic characteristics and aesthetics of Guan kiln pottery, the user demands for contemporary Chinese home products and the marketing strategies of Thai and Western home product brands, Finally, developed a series of home cultural and creative products through design practice, to support the conclusions drawn from the first three aspects.

Keywords: Guan Kiln pottery; Creative cultural product; Magpie; Contemporary Chinese lifestyle

Introduction

Annals of Qichun County (1997) discusses the cultural value of traditional Guan kiln pottery is reflected in its long history, which embodies the essence of thousands of years of Chinese pottery-making craftsmanship. It vividly and completely reproduces the ancient pottery-making process and represents Chu pottery culture. Guan kiln is the only kiln site in the Hubei region that has continuously produced pottery from ancient times to the present. Guan kiln pottery constantly innovates in design, from clay formulation to pottery shape, from glazing to firing, all meticulously planned and configured; The handcrafted pottery skills of Guanyao Town mainly consist of eight major techniques, known as the "Eight Techniques of Guan kiln," namely circular clay bar overlaying technique, wheel-throwing technique, jumping cutter technique, Scraping (engrave) technique, finger panting technique, stacking technique, calligraphy and painting technique, and ash glaze technique. The artistic characteristics of traditional Guan kiln pottery are reflected in its “simple and robust shapes, mostly with rounded bellies and outward bulging” (Zhang, 2019). “Suitable for the daily life needs of ordinary people, possessing a strong local flavor and regional characteristics” as demonstrated in the study (Kang, 2020); The carvings are simple and vivid, applying a layer of slip on the surface of the clay body, using techniques such as drawing (painting), carving, and scraping to contrast with the base color beneath the slip, highlighting the outlines and images of the patterns; The themes are close to life, mainly focusing on flowers, birds, fish, insects, etc. This is because Guan kiln is adjacent to the Yangtze River and has numerous lakes and river networks within its jurisdiction. Potters are very familiar with materials such as water, fish, lotus, birds, flowers and plants, and are full of affection for them; The glaze colors are lustrous and vibrant, using natural plant ash glaze with yellow as the main color, which is a unique feature of Guan kiln, and the glaze material is purely natural without adding harmful chemical components. It combines both artistic and practical functions.

The home life of contemporary Chinese people has undergone tremendous changes, reflected in alterations to room layouts and family demographics. Consequently, there have been shifts in the demand for product functionality, objects types, aesthetics, and materials. At the same time, contemporary people have an increased urgency for products that evoke emotions, with higher requirements for product shape, cultural connotations, and spiritual functions. Traditional Guan kiln pottery used to be an essential daily ware in people's life in history, these changes in demand make the traditional Guan kiln pottery no longer meets the needs or lifestyles of contemporary people and no longer adapt to people's lifestyle today, leading to a sharp decline in sales and a crisis in its inheritance. This study aiming to create cultural and creative products suitable for the home decoration of Contemporary Chinese Lifestyles.

Research Objectives

1.To research the artistic characteristics and aesthetics of Guan kiln pottery.

2.To research the lifestyle and daily use products of contemporary Chinese people.

3.To design cultural and creative products for home decoration that fit contemporary Chinese lifestyle.

Literature Reviews

Yu Luo (2021) analyzes the manifestation of traditional craft concepts in ceramic cultural and creative design, as well as its design methods. It identifies three key elements in ceramic cultural and creative design: (1) extraction of elements, (2) expression of stories, and (3) inheritance of culture.

Wang Lizhi (2020) draws on psychology, design theory, and aesthetics to discuss how ceramic cultural and creative products evolve through three stages of human needs — “intrinsic,” “self-conscious,” and “natural.” This study points out that form lies at the heart of ceramic cultural and creative design, and further examines how materials, structure, functionality, and emotional factors shape design outcomes. By focusing on the design’s purpose and core content, the author explores the value of ceramic cultural and creative products,

ultimately formulating a dual-value framework and a theory of form-driven design.

Li Qian (2020) emphasizes how playfulness can bring everyday practicality and artistic taste closer together, thereby enhancing both lifestyle quality and design appeal. By considering how children's literature influences young people's aesthetic preferences, the paper investigates ways to incorporate "playfulness" into ceramic product design. It also details each stage of creating modern daily ceramics, including preliminary research, sources of inspiration, conceptual design, and manufacturing processes.

Research Methodology

The conceptual diagram of the method of this study is as follows:

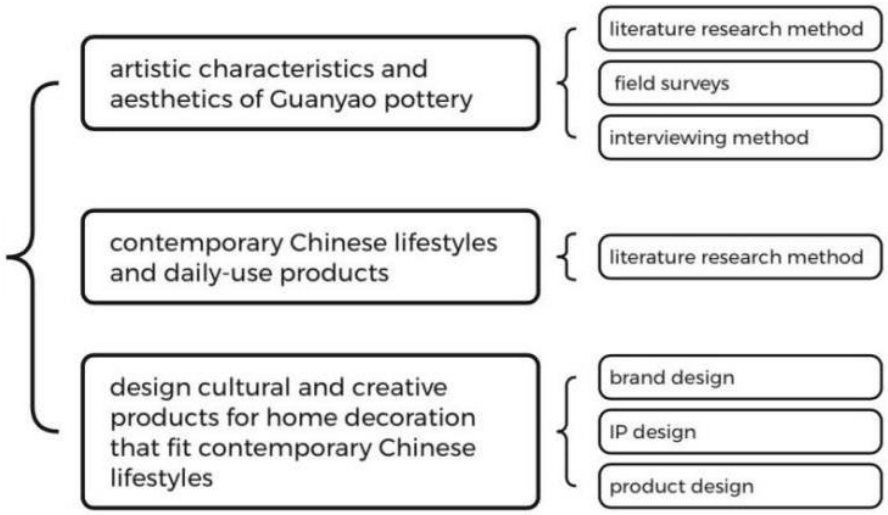


Figure 1: Conceptual diagram of the method
(Source: Constructed by researcher).

Through extensive reading of relevant monographs in libraries and online electronic literature, historical data related to Qichun Guan kiln is collected and categorized. This helps understand the current state of domestic and international research in this field and provides a theoretical basis for field surveys and interviews by learning about the history of Qichun Guan kiln. Through the Field investigations of Guanyao Town, the historical culture of

pottery making in Qichun Guan kiln and the artistic features of its pottery are understood.

Information was gathered through face-to-face interviews between the researcher and the respondent. Interviewed the person in charge of ceramic enterprises and institutions in Guanyao Town. In order to obtain relevant research materials, to understand the history and culture of pottery making in Qichun Guan Kiln, the culture of pottery making, the artistic characteristics, the artistic characteristics of the Guan Kiln pottery and the possibility of the development of the cultural and creative products of Qichun Guan Kiln. Interview with He Liangfa, master of Arts and Crafts in Hubei Province, inheritors of intangible cultural heritage of Hubei Province, chairman of Hubei Mingyao Pottery Art Co., LTD., to collect information about the cultural value of Guan kiln pottery. Interview with He Xiaosheng, the head of the Guanyao Town Culture Station who was born in the Guan kiln Pottery Factory and co-founded Hubei Mingyao Pottery Art Co., Ltd. with his father He Liangfa and brother He Jianping in 2013. Interview with He Xiaosheng to collect information on the development of Guanyao pottery in recent years. Collect domestic and foreign information about the lifestyle of contemporary Chinese people, the relevant materials and theories of principles related to cultural and creative product design is categorized and organized. In-depth research to absorb its cultural values, providing a reasonable and scientific approach for the research, in order to obtain valuable information, experiences, and methods. Through design practice, the learned design methods and summarized theoretical models are tested. In this study, Brand name design, IP design, brand graphic symbol design and lamp product design practices were carried out to test the feasibility of the theoretical model. Practice also revealed new problems that helped refine the model, aiming for broader applicability.

Results

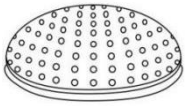
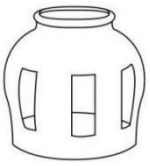
The Artistic Features and Aesthetics of Guan Kiln Pottery are Mainly Reflected in Four Aspects: Form, Pattern, Glaze Color, and Technique

Form: Guan kiln pottery exhibits a simple and robust shape. The handmade pottery uses local lake sediment clay, which is soft and highly malleable, resulting in pottery with a fine, thick body after firing. The forms mimic those of bronze and porcelain artifacts. In terms of practical function, Guan kiln pottery often features a rounded belly with an outward bulge, with both the interior and exterior glazed. Its shape and decoration cater to the daily life needs of people, embodying a strong rural atmosphere and local characteristics. The combination of art and practical function also reflects the pursuit of beauty in daily life by the laboring people of Eastern Hubei.

Guan kiln's daily pottery includes craft pottery for daily use, packaging pottery, garden pottery, architectural pottery, sanitary pottery, etc., as well as products like double-fish wine sets, slanted-spout teapots, peach-shaped tea sets, the Four Treasures of the Study, deformed animal figures, large ceramic murals, and large Buddhist sculptures. Starting from the traditional types of Guan kiln pottery in Qichun County, this study explores the ancient wisdom in object creation. By summarizing over 100 pieces of traditional daily-use Guan kiln pottery, 7 typical forms were selected and vector graphics were created in Adobe Illustrator, resulting in the following table:

Table 1: Typical Forms

No.	Name	Image Sample	Type extraction line draft	Use
11	scratching technique teapot with quadruple handles			Make tea、Tea storage
12	chamber pots			Children pee at midnight

3	food steamer			steaming rice
4	grate			Place in a pot when steaming rice
5	Pickle crock			Pickle vegetables
6	Chicken feed bowl			Feed chicken
7	Oven			A burning charcoal fire is placed inside for heating

Patterns: The pattern organization of Guan kiln pottery generally falls into two types. One is free-form, without a strict structure, based on the characteristics and growth patterns of objects. The patterns freely extend across the decorative parts of the vessel, cleverly arranged to ensure harmony and symmetry. The other type uses a rhythmic framework, such as scattered points, continuous lines and linking, to organize the patterns. This composition method is both orderly and lively. In terms of decorative themes, the focus is mainly on flowers, birds, fish, and insects found in daily life. Since Guanyao Town is located near the Yangtze River with numerous lakes and water networks within its jurisdiction, potters are very familiar with and emotionally connected to themes involving water, fish, lotuses, birds, and plants.

The decorative patterns are mostly determined by the shape of the vessel, Summary, concise, skillful painting, engraving and scraping，this approach not only maintains the intricate structure of the patterns but also gives them an abstract aesthetic appeal. The decorative patterns combine animal, plant, geometric, and textual themes in a random arrangement that is pleasing to the

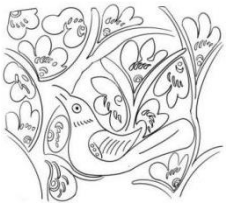
audience. This reflects the rich imagination of the potters and also demonstrates the local people's desire for wealth, prosperity, beauty, and stability.

Table 2: Classification Table of Common Decorative Themes for Guan kiln Pottery.

Type	Content	Image Sample
Plants	Wintersweet	
Animals	Magpie	 
geometrics	woven pattern	
	‘Xi’word	

Among them, the magpie, due to its auspicious and festive symbolism, is the most frequently occurring pattern in Guan kiln pottery. This article organizes and analyzes the different manifestations of magpie motifs found in Guan kiln pottery, as detailed in the table 3 below.

Table 3: Different manifestations of magpie motifs.

No.	Utensils	Pattern extraction	Decorative Techniques
1			scraping technique
2			Engrave technique
3			finger panting technique

Glaze Colors: The glaze colors of Guan kiln pottery are vibrant and lustrous. In terms of glazing, Guan kiln pottery draws from and references the techniques of the northern Cizhou kiln, applying a layer of transparent lead glaze over the decorative slip to achieve various artistic effects through kiln transformation, such as white and black, white and green, white and red, red and yellow, and purple sand with pink white. The colorants used in Guan kiln pottery include not only copper and iron as primary coloring agents but also quartz powder. During firing, the quartz powder reacts chemically with the decorative slip, resulting in a dark reddish-brown main glaze color that contrasts sharply with the white slip, creating the distinctive "Brown Ground with White Patterns" style of Guan kiln pottery. The local plant-based wood ash glaze, when fired with local clay, produces a unique rice yellow (also known as eel yellow) pottery. Although the carved decoration technique of Guan kiln pottery is

similar to that of Cizhou kiln, its glaze color primarily features yellow, distinguishing it from other kilns. Recently, Guan kiln ceramists have utilized locally sourced unique red clay and red sandstone resources to meticulously develop the "Guan kiln Red" product, marking a historic transition from folk pottery to modern craft pottery in the Guan kiln industry. This innovation has filled the gap in Hubei Province for high-end specialty ceramic art products.

Techniques: The handmade pottery skills of Guan kiln in Qichun County are among the first batch of intangible cultural heritages in Hubei Province. One important reason for the excellent quality of Guan kiln pottery is its inheritance of the eight traditional pottery-making techniques passed down through generations. These eight techniques include circular clay bar overlaying technique, wheel-throwing technique, jumping cutter technique, Scraping (engrave) technique, finger panting technique, stacking technique, calligraphy and painting technique, and ash glaze application.

The Lifestyle and Daily Products of Contemporary Chinese People

Due to urbanization, the lifestyle of contemporary Chinese people has changed compared to traditional ways: With changes in family demographics, the structure of Chinese families has gradually shifted from traditional large households to smaller, simpler three-person nuclear families. This shift is reflected in changing housing needs, with a demand for smaller spaces and altered room layouts. Unlike traditional fixed arrangements, modern home environments are adapted based on the individual preferences and practical needs of the residents, allowing for the addition and combination of rooms as necessary.

More and more people are living in urban apartments, and the fast-paced city life has led to changes in product usage functions. Many traditional ceramics were kitchen utensils, but the convenience of household appliances and the pace of modern life have gradually made some traditional items fade from public view. Traditional patterns are often too intricate and no longer align with contemporary aesthetic preferences. The fully decorated layout on traditional objects can cause visual fatigue, and their production requires high craftsmanship, complicated steps, and high costs. With industrialization and

modernization, Cheap and convenient plastic daily necessities have gradually replaced some ceramic daily items. Unlike the frugality valued by ancient people, who would repair or fix damaged items, modern people tend to replace rather than repair, and they are more accustomed to using convenient disposable products.

Design Results

Brand Name Design: After thorough research and design, the brand name has been decided as "Nest Rest" (Chinese: 巢栖, Pinyin: Cháo Qī). This name carries rich connotations. "Nest" represents the concept of a nest and home, symbolizing the warmth and safety of home, serving as a refuge for the soul. "Rest" signifies staying, living, and finding Sustenance. Hope to convey the brand concept through the brand name: 'In life, when faced with various challenges and uncertainties, home will always be your warmest and safest harbor'.

Brand Graphic Symbol Design: The brand graphic symbol is designed by transforming the Chinese characters of the brand name "巢栖". The characters are partially integrated with elements from home furniture such as drawer, desk, and cloth hanger. The shape of "田" in the "巢" resembles a drawer, The shape of "木" in the "巢" resembles a desk, and the shape of "木" in the "栖" resembles a cloth hanger. Additionally, the IP image of the "magpie baby" is abstracted into lines and incorporated into the "西" in the "栖", as if to build a home for magpie baby. This aims to evoke people's beautiful memories and emotional connections with their homes (Figure 2).

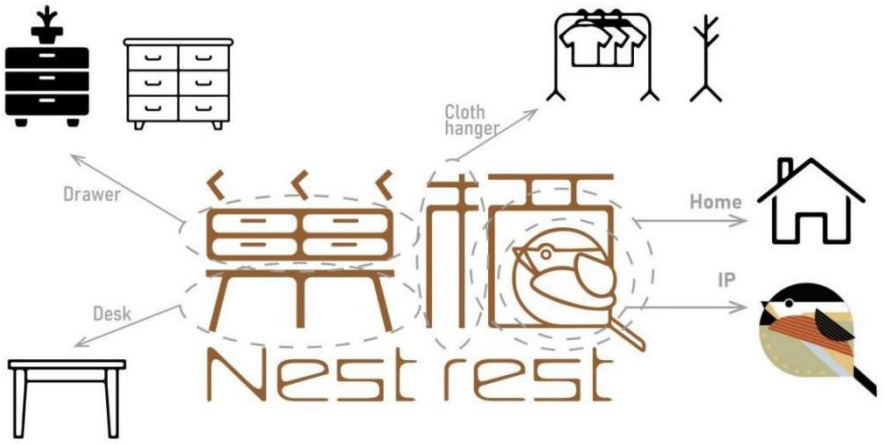


Figure 2: "Nest Rest" Brand Graphic Symbol Mind Map (Source: Constructed by researcher).

IP Design: Based on the physical characteristics of the magpie, features such as the head, wings, and tail along with the color scheme of black, green, and blue were extracted. Considering the image has the style of traditional Chinese arts and crafts, a combination of points, lines, and planes was used, with the plane forming the main body of the image and the points and lines serving as decorative patterns. Magpies typically move in small groups of 3-5, so three magpie characters were designed: Magpie Dad, Magpie Mom, and Magpie Baby (Figure 3).



Figure 3: Character One (Magpie Dad)/Character Two (Magpie Mom)/Character Three (Magpie Baby) (Source: Constructed by researcher).

Product Design

Design 1: (1) Product Name: Ceramic Bird LED Lamp Head with Wooden Base Table Lamp. (2) Dimensions: Total height 178mm, total width 287mm. (3) Materials: Finely carved ceramic bird LED lamp head, walnut wood base, metal induction switch, metal magnetic accessories, wireless charging module. (4) Functions: Wireless charging function. Metal induction switch. (5) Technology: Ceramic fine carving mold process.

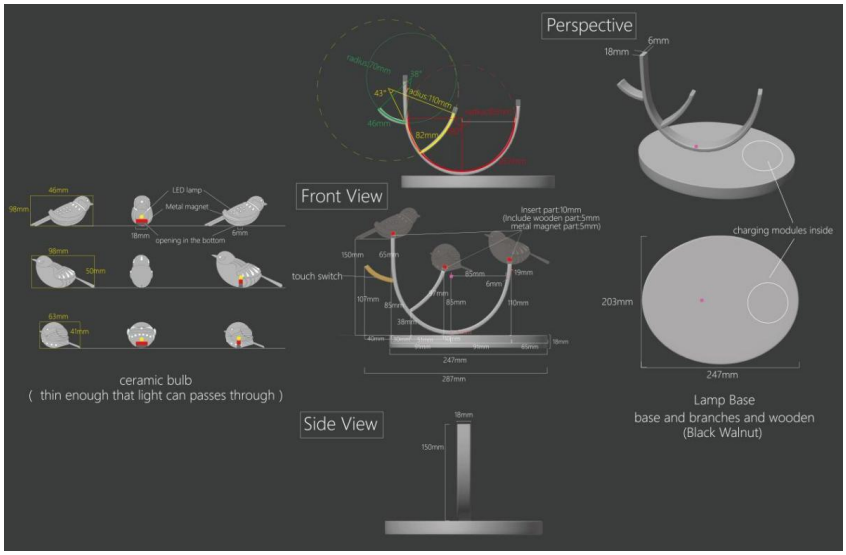


Figure 4: "Ceramic Bird LED Lamp Head with Wooden Base Table Lamp" Design Sketch (Source: Constructed by researcher).

Design 2: (1) Product Name: Ceramic Hollowed-Out Magpie Projection Lamp. (2) Dimensions: Total height 360mm, total width 225mm. (3) Materials: Base and lampshade made of Guan Kiln pottery clay. Brass lamp frame. (4) Functions: The lampshade can accommodate replaceable inserts with hollowed-out magpie patterns (three in total), which create a projected image of the magpie pattern when the light is turned on. The lamp base can store stationery, jewelry, and other daily items. (5) Technology: Hollow carving technique, wheel-throwing technique.

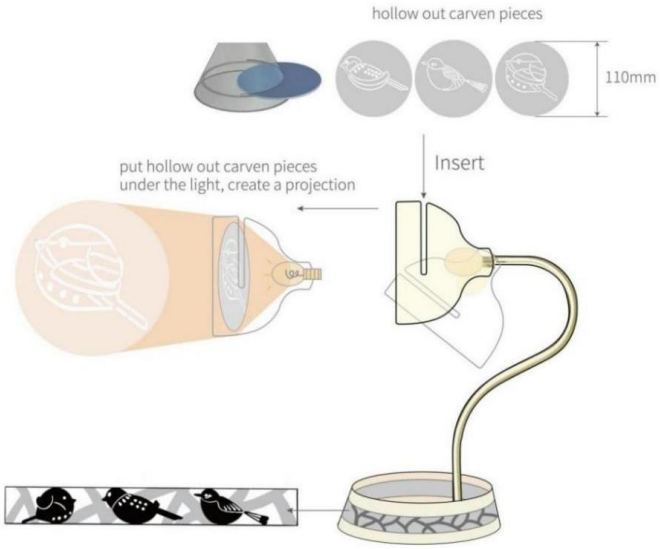


Figure 5: "Ceramic Hollowed-Out Magpie Projection Lamp" Design Sketch (Source: Constructed by researcher).

Design 3: (1) Product Name: Woven Bird's Nest Ceramic Wall Clock (Spring and Autumn Versions). (2) Dimensions: Total height 300mm, total width 200mm. (3) Materials: Guan Kiln pottery clay, clock movement, heat shrink plastic sheet pointers. (4) Functions: Timekeeping, high torque clock movement. (5) Technology: Traditional kiln carving process.

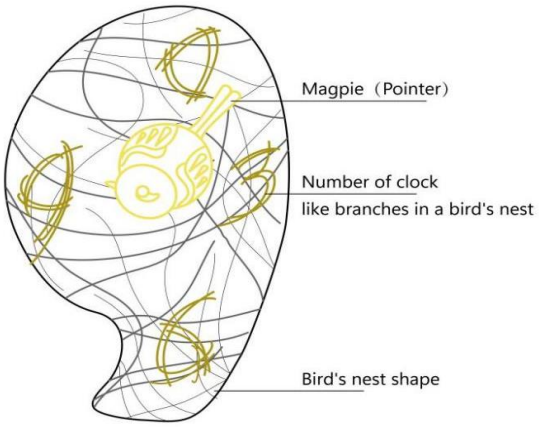


Figure 6: "Woven Bird's Nest Ceramic Wall Clock (Spring and Autumn Versions)" Design Sketch (Source: Constructed by researcher).

Design 4: (1) Product Name: Engraved Ceramic Plate (2) Size: Total height 180mm, total width 180mm. (3) Materials: Guan Kiln pottery clay. (4) Functions: Can be used as a serving plate or decorative plate. (5) Technology: Carving technique.



Figure 7: "Engraved Ceramic Plate" Design Sketch
(Source: Constructed by researcher).

Discussions

The concept of integrating magpie symbolism into ceramic home products reflects the intersection of traditional culture and modern lifestyle aspirations. The magpie, a long-standing symbol of joy and good fortune in Chinese culture, serves as an ideal motif for household items designed to enhance daily life both aesthetically and spiritually. The design approach aligns with contemporary trends that emphasize emotional resonance in product creation, demonstrating how cultural narratives can be seamlessly woven into functional design.

The project also highlights the potential of ceramic materials in sustainable design. Ceramics, known for their durability and eco-friendliness, align with the modern pursuit of a sustainable and harmonious lifestyle. This emphasis on material selection not only enhances product longevity but also resonates with global shifts toward environmentally conscious consumerism. Furthermore, the immersive home experience concept provides an innovative way to present product collections, creating an interactive and emotionally

engaging space where users can connect with the symbolic meaning behind the designs.

From a design methodology perspective, this approach reflects a growing trend of integrating cultural heritage into contemporary design. While many modern home products focus on functionality, this project adds emotional and symbolic depth, reinforcing the role of everyday objects in shaping personal and cultural identity. Future discussions could explore how similar concepts can be applied to other cultural motifs or expanded into different materials and product categories.

New Knowledges

This study introduces an innovative approach to home product design by combining traditional cultural symbolism with contemporary lifestyle aesthetics. The "Magpies Fly into Thousands of Households" concept not only revitalizes the cultural significance of magpies but also offers a fresh perspective on integrating symbolism into daily-use objects. The incorporation of magpie imagery into various home settings—ranging from dining and living areas to bedrooms and even bathrooms—demonstrates a holistic design strategy that extends beyond mere decoration to a fully immersive living experience.

Another key contribution is the development of an immersive home setting as a display method. By designing a two-bedroom, two-living-room experience space, the project moves beyond conventional product showcases and creates an environment where users can interact with the designs in a natural, intuitive way. This approach offers valuable insights into how product presentation can influence user perception and engagement, potentially setting a precedent for future exhibitions in the fields of design and cultural innovation.

Looking forward, this project suggests broader implications for product design, particularly in the integration of symbolic and emotional storytelling into home environments. The fusion of cultural narratives with sustainable materials and immersive spatial experiences can serve as a model for future design explorations, encouraging new ways to enhance daily living through art and tradition.

Conclusions

Guan Kiln ceramic art features have been reimagined and reinterpreted in the design of lighting products. From a decorative standpoint, the magpie motif undergoes semiotic analysis: designers first collect and organize traditional magpie patterns found on Guan Kiln ceramics, distill their essential characteristics, and then develop a fresh magpie image that aligns with modern aesthetic preferences. This new image is repeated throughout the product line; for instance, in the design of a table lamp, the visual focal point of the magpie motif is placed at about two-thirds of the lamp's height from the base, thereby enhancing the overall aesthetic appeal. By employing a three-tier innovation model — "gene decoding, technological empowerment, and scenario reconstruction"—Guan Kiln ceramic cultural and creative products successfully modernize traditional craftsmanship. On one hand, topology optimization balances classical aesthetics with contemporary functional demands in the product's form; on the other, cultural expression is updated by reconstructing a symbolic system grounded in traditional techniques and motifs. This forward-thinking approach, which merges local artisanal wisdom with global design language, not only provides a new paradigm for the living transmission of intangible cultural heritage but also offers lifestyle solutions enriched by Eastern aesthetics. Ultimately, this cross-cultural design strategy illustrates that the contemporary reinvention of traditional handcrafts is, at heart, a creative expression of cultural DNA within a new technological context.

Suggestions

During the design practice process, there was a lack of understanding of the engineering and circuitry techniques required for the lighting product, which led to difficulties in the realization of the design from concept to reality. In future research, we will strengthen our interdisciplinary studies in engineering and electronics.

As the brand is in its initial stage, it lacks financial and technical support, making the idea is limited and difficult to realize. In future brand management, we will expand our brand influence, Through the online marketing promotion platform, strengthen the publicity of the brand, establish a pre-operational thinking, and put into production after a reasonable marketing plan.

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