OLD WAVE

Symbols for the Post-80s generation in China

This exegesis is submitted to Auckland University of Technology in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Art and Design

Jingwei (Lovee) Yi

October 2013

Attestation of Authorship

 "I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the qualification of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning, except where due acknowledgment is made."

Jingwei Yi

October 2013

Acknowledgements

There are some people who made this research journey easier and more intellectually satisfying words of encouragement and by painting to sources that have helped me expand my ideas and theories.

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Abstract

This project aims to explore the possibility of employing vintage symbols from the 80s China to inform contemporary Chinese design practice. Born in the eighties, and so belonging to what is commonly called the Post-80s generation[1] , my childhood memories of China's vintage symbols form the primary resources of this research project.

The research addresses these two questions: What is the ideology of the Post-80s? How can one explore the visual identity of this group through referencing the ideology of the Post-80s?

Through researching the characteristics of this generation, and referencing vintage objects which are unforgettable to the Post-80s, I intend to revive some of them for contemporary Chinese graphic design application. The research works towards a new visual approach by reshaping the Chinese aesthetic of these vintage symbols to form a new visual representation of the Post-80s.

The project starts by investigating the ideology of the Post-80s that allows me to establish my own view of the visual and cultural characteristics of vintage symbols of the 80s. This paves the way to unfold the potential of sketching or drawing with ball pens of blue and red colours that were a common drawing tool in my childhood. I also evaluate the structure of the Tangram game to connect with my childhood drawing and to shape the visual language as the design research. The creative output of the practice-based research is presented in a booklet publication that synthesises the design application of the blue and red visual language. The content of the booklet is based upon my research into the characteristics of the Post-80s that are influenced by the globalised Western thoughts to represent the contemporary values and visual identity of the Post-80s. At the same time, I strive to develop further my own identity as a graphic designer.

Keywords:

Ideology of the Post-80s generation

Childhood memory of the Post-80s

Chinese vintage symbols

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[1] The term Post-80s will be used throughout the exegesis to represent Post-80s generation in China.

Introduction

In the past two decades, graphic design in China has rapidly absorbed the wave of globalisation. According to Siuyi Wong: "The country now finds itself at a crossroads, with outside ideologies and forces of 'Americanization' and 'Westernization' competing against its cultural heritage and communist economic system to form a national design identity for contemporary China" (Wong, 2011). Yet contemporary design elements in China are still rooted in the traditional elements of totems such as dragons, clouds etc. The challenge that confronts Chinese designers is how to create a "new" visual identity of China in a global context "if they don't wish to be stereotyped by images from the ancient past" (Wong, 2011).

This research was initially inspired by the resurgence of the 1980's Chinese brands *Warrior [回力]* and *Feiyue [飞跃]* in the current consumer market. The "vintage cool" (Li, 2008) to consume national (or domestic) goods has become recently very popular amongst the Post-80s generation. Brought up in the relatively confined space of the school during their childhood, Post-80s still retain the loneliness of being the only child in the family that refuses to grow up. I will further discuss this phenomenon in Chapter 1. Resurgence of domestic products exemplifies the pronounced trend of Chinese popular culture which is led by the Post-80s. Now in their thirties, this generation have recently become dominant in the contemporary Chinese art and design creative field.

My research strives to unfold the creative potential and to identify a visual language for Post-80s' designers through systematic application of Chinese vintage symbols. As one of the Post-80s, I am also looking for a self-identity, and as a graphic designer, for a design style of my own.

This exegesis is therefore structured into three main chapters:
The first chapter establishes the critical framework in order to inform the research involved in this project. It offers a brief overview of the project, the ideology of Post-80s, and the concept of Chinese vintage symbols.

The second chapter considers design strategy and practical applications, in which the Tangram and my childhood drawings are employed as a visual inquiry. This chapter also offers an appraisal of the Post-80s' visual language in my practice. It narrates the Chinese vintage symbols through contemporary graphic designs, thus elucidating the potentiality of the Post-80s' visual language.

The third chapter offers an analysis of my practice in the final publication. The design output that I have produced attempts to offer an integrated visual commentary on the issue of presenting Post-80s generation.

CHAPTER 1

Consideration of Related Theory and Knowledge

Now in their thirties, Post-80s designers are becoming increasingly mature and have become the backbone of today society; they have brought about unprecedented changes in China. On the other hand, the community imposes a lot of expectations on them as well. This specific generation shows a new Chinese identity to the world. In this chapter, I investigate how the visual ideas of the childhood memory of the Post-80s are revived, and their application to contemporary Chinese graphic design.

1.1 Defining Post-80s Generation

In 1979, the one-child policy[2] took effect in China (Settles, 2013, p.2). People named the children who were born from 1980 to 1989 the Post-80s generation; it is often referred to by the locals as the *balinghou [八零后]*, or the *me generation* (Guan, 2009). In the West, this group is also called *Chinese Generation Y*[3] (Stanat, 2005). Even though I agree that every generation is historically unprecedented, the conditions of this group are particularly unique. Unlike their parents, who lived through the turbulent political movements of the Cultural Revolution, the Post-80s experienced the transition from a period of material deprivation to one of rapid economic development. They had a simple childhood without the influence of high-tech gadgets and materialism. Their youth coincided with the new era of China's information technology. They now have easy access to new knowledge globally and they are allowed to express their individuality. This generation grew up in a fast-moving consumer society with both a stable political milieu and exceptional economic growth. They also experienced educational reforms. The Post-80s are the first generation of children to undergo a complete 9-year compulsory education[4] (Zhang, 2010, p. 22). The extension of this period of schooling provided new opportunities along with unrivalled social pressure, and moreover a change in the course of life. All these factors have strongly influenced this generation, making many Post-80s much more open-minded owing to influence from foreign inputs that their seniors missed out on in their growing up. The one-child policy has also altered the family structure in the wake of China's opening and reform policies. Hou (2009) defines the 4-2-1 family format[5] that leads to the "4-2-1 problem" in which the two parents, together with the four-

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[2] The one child policy officially translates as "family planning policy" and is the population control policy of the People's Republic of China. It restricts urban couples to only one child, while allowing additional children in several cases, including twins, rural couples, ethnic minorities, and couples who are both the only children themselves. This policy was introduced in 1978 and initially applied from 1979. It was created by the Chinese government to alleviate social, economic, and environmental problems in China (Wikipedia.com).

[3] The term Generation Y was made familiar in the West by Michael Stanat in his book 'China's Generation Y'.

[4] According to the China Education and Research Network (2006), the education system in China is structured into 3 phases: primary, junior secondary and senior secondary and it takes 12 years to complete. Primary education lasts either 5 or 6 years. At junior secondary stage, it is basically a 3 years schooling with a tiny part of the 4th year. The 9-year schooling in primary and junior secondary schools pertains to compulsory education. General senior secondary education lasts 3 years.

[5] Under the one child policy, the main structure of a family in China is composed of 1 child, 2 parents and 4 grandparents. It is commonly called 4-2-1.

grand-parents, over-indulge their only child and meanwhile create many expectations for the only child and want to give them the best life (p. 80). She also points out that many of the Post-80s generation feel very worried and stressed about caring for their parents and grandparents in the old age (Hou, 2009, p. 81).

Comparing the Post-80s with the Post-90s, I believe that the two generations have many ideological similarities. The Post-90s are influenced by Post-80s; nevertheless, "one thing for certain is that the Post-90s have no memory of China's tumultuous past, instead only experiencing it as a country with rapid economic growth underscored by rampant consumerism and globalization" (Farrar, 2010). Even though most of them experienced the compulsory education like the Post-80s, the pressure from studying has been alleviated by new educational reform. According to the discussions on the Chinese social BBS[6] , the Post-90s grew up in the era of over-abundant information and they easily get lost in pursuing their future. By contrast, the Post-80s have experienced a simpler lifestyle during their childhood than the Post-90s. Comparing the Post-90s and Post-80s waved me appreciate the resurgence of nostalgia for the eighties in current China, which reveals the importance of vintage symbols of the eighties.

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[6] BBS-"bulletin board system", is a computer system running software that allows users to connect and log into the system using a terminal program. Once logged in, a user can perform functions such as uploading and downloading software and data, reading news and bulletins, and exchanging messages with other users, either through email, public message boards, and sometimes via direct chatting (Definition of BBS, Wikipedia.com). According to Gang Lu (2008), the most popular form of networking of China may just be the traditional Internet forum system, or BBS.

1.1.1 The ideology of the Post-80s generation

Both foreign and Chinese media give attention to the Post-80s; they mostly recall their spoiled and self-centered characteristics (Chen, 2009; Guan, 2009). However, in Suzanne McGee's article (Gee, 2007), P.T. Black (Black, 2007) a partner at Jigsaw International, a marketing venture, says "They are a very different group than their predecessors; they are very optimistic and positive." The Post-80s generation has a tendency to voice their opinions vocally and they don't hesitate to speak up. According to a report from Xinhua.net (Li, 2008), Chinese overseas Post-80s students staged protests in European cities to protest against the "Tibetan Independence" in the run up to the Olympic games in Beijing 2008. These protests were connected to their strong patriotism, which has also become a hallmark of this generation. At the same time, the Post-80s generation is seen as lacking historical memory; a group property that could lead the generation to nihilism[7] (Liao, 2008). Consequently, as Lin points out; the character of this generation is mixed with numerous contradictory elements (Lin, 2008, p. 18).

The Paradox

There are many characteristics and subcultures associated with the Post-80s. The traditional filial piety of Confucianism is still inculcated in Chinese families (Hwang, 1999). The notion of filial piety requires that all children should respect, obey and serve their parents (Liu, 2008, p. 412). The parental expectations were spread between several siblings in the past, but the one-child policy has exacerbated the family pressure on the Post-80s generation (Palmer, 2013). The parents over-indulge the child and expect the child to abide to the filial piety of Confucianism. Jiangyun Feng (2013) sternly points out how the Post-80s cannot survive by themselves, leading to social issues. Many Post-80s rely on their parents' care and are unwilling to live an independent life. The network catchword *Elderly-Devouring Young Adults* *[啃老族]* (Mei, 2006) summarises the group's dependency. Moreover, the one-child upbringing background leads to their unwillingness to communicate with others. Many live the closed-door lifestyle of *indoorsy [宅]*, also called *Otaku culture* in

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[7] In the Dictionary of Existentialism nihilism has been defined as the situation where everything is permitted; since there are no absolutes, presumed necessary truths are not necessary, and there are no goals or values that have intrinsic worth.

Japan (Hu, 2012). The word *indoorsy* was born with the widespread use of digital networks in China because young people are addicted to surfing the internet and prefer staying at home. (Sun and Ni, 2012). The phenomenon of *Zhai [indoorsy]* is also observed in the young people of Post-80s generation who stay away from the pressures of society; they would rather hide at home to release the tensions (Sun and Ni, 2012). On the other hand, it is also evident that many Posts-80s feel a heavy burden from families and school (Zhang, 2008). The burden could lead to a rebellious attitude to the traditional Confucianism codes or not being able to cope with such pressure and failing to develop self-discipline. Most Post-80s are disobedient and want to stay away from the family. These accumulated effects, along with the craving to experience a Western life, have prompted a nation-wide fever to study and visit abroad. Ironically, even though many Post-80s are yearning to become independent, most of them are still financially dependent on their parents. The network catchwords *Dwelling narrowness [蜗居]* and *Ant tribe [蚁族]* both reflect the paradoxes.

Furthermore, unlike the more traditional and conservative Post-70s generation, Post-80s embrace Western individuality. Han Han [韩寒] who is probably China's most famous Post-80s writer nowadays, is an example. He was a high school dropout, a rally driver, and certainly is now the most famous blogger. China's most notorious anti-Establishment figure, artist and activist Ai Weiwei describes Han as "brave, clear-minded, dynamic and humorous"(Osnos, 2011). Han often focuses on issues of the Post-80s generation in his novels. In Time Magazine, Elegant (2009, p.1) suggests that Han shrewdly mines a seam of youthful resentment and anomie through his stories of anguished characters in his first best seller *Triple Gate.*

Expanding from the West

McGee (2007) describes the Post-80s as "Born after China opened to the west and experiments in capitalism began, the biggest Me Generation ever known has few memories of political strife or turmoil. In their experience, each successive year has brought more prosperity, more personal and professional options and an ever-wider array of consumer choices". Post-80s are bombarded with strong influences from both western and traditional Chinese culture at every turn, both new and old, hip and ancient, blending new ideas and traditional culture into the fabric of daily life, thought and output (Li and Zhang, 2009). These characteristics particularly are underpinned in Post-80s artists' creations. The Post-80s artist Lin Zhipeng aspires to visually present the daily life style of Chinese young people through the perspective of sexuality. In his creative image (Fig. 1), he records two people with Tatoos, which implies the rebellious character; the nude bodies implicitly connote the sexuality.
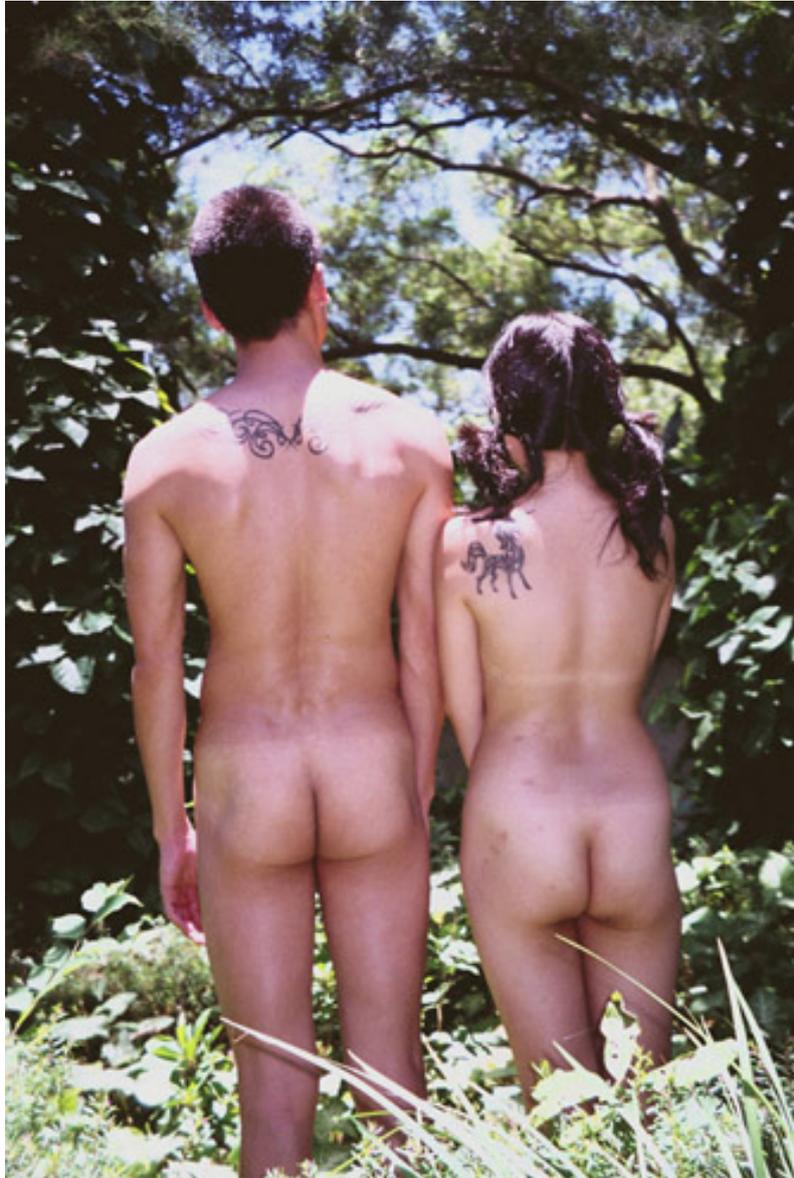
Figure 1: Lin, Z. (n.d). *The photography of Zhipeng Lin* [Photograph]. Retrieved August 23, 2013, from: http://www.linzhipeng223.com/demo/wp-content/gallery/portfolio06/93.jpg

A self-identity

Researching the ideology of the Post-80s is a way to explore my own identity, which is crucial for a designer. The public generally talks about Post-80s through collective characteristics. In my self-study, I aspire to find my own identity in design, to define myself and also to relate to the generation I belong to. According to Denise Sabet's research about self-identification, one's life course is a continual process of self-identification (2011). The life course can be thought of as a sequence of culturally defined stages or roles in life that individuals enact during their lifetime (Giele and Elder, 1998). Many of the characteristics identified, whether positive or negative, are related to maturity, which is linked to the life course (Sabet, 2011). I am concerned that most Post-80s are struggling to become irresponsible or immature - "they are still in the process of 'growing up'" (Sabet, 2011). Considering my own life course, I was living in a comfortable and secure environment amongst my family and friends; I believe I am a typically immature Post-80s, in that "Balinghou [Post-80s] refuse to grow up. They keep the habit of the kids" (Sabet, 2011). When I came to New Zealand, in order to face the impact of cultural difference and the challenge of living by myself, I had to "grow up" and to be independent, but at the same time, I still cannot be independent from my parents even though I moved away from my hometown and have got a job. By undertaking the self-study, I have realised that I am always trying to impose ideas on other people that are based on my values and beliefs, which are affected by my upbringing in the 80s. This might justify why I strive to convey something about my own identity and personality, which are important in informing my design identity through this research.

The methodological approach

The research is grounded within the hermeneutical notion of the lived experience where my personal past experience in my childhood shapes the direction of the research. As a graphic designer, research, data interpretation, analysis and critique are conducted within the phenomenological ethos of the Post-80s to justify the creative practice. "Literally, phenomenology is the study of 'phenomena': appearances of things, or things as they appear in our experience, or the ways we experience things, thus the meanings things have in our experience. Phenomenology studies conscious experience as experienced from the subjective or first person point of view" (Woodruff, 2011). Heidegger's concept of *dasein* (Being in The World) suggests that the essence of being is critical to the understanding of phenomena (Craig, 2006). Being a Post-80s has authorised me to be willing to critique the phenomenon of Post-80s todays China from my own standpoint.

The personal past experience in which each of us lives influences and shapes our feelings, attitudes, responses to our experiences and interactions with others. And subsequently they transform and inform the creative contents, design processes, and the materials and techniques used. In my design processes, I am engaged in a mental state of being in my past experience which the retro elements resonate with. For example, the aesthetic identification in some of my work is inspired by retro domestic cartoons which used to exist in my childhood; and the striped Briton top was so common in my childhood that the colour impact of blue and white stripes continues to evoke in me a cordial feeling which has established a potential visual impression in my mind. Thus childhood experience brings into being the beliefs and values of the Post-80s, which in turn shape their contemporary ethos.

1.1.2 Project Location

Memory of the Post-80s

A Chinese curator Qing Zhang (2010) says that "Post-80s's childhood is fleeting as a dream, and youth disappears like morning dew, only adulthood is especially long". When the Post-80s enter into their early adulthood, they still retain the loneliness of being an only child. In the relatively closed space of the school, a physically mature 18-year-old is still not a true adult. A delayed direct encounter with the society has led to the prolongation of adolescence, creating a widespread sentiment of "not wanting to grow up" (Zhang, 2010). Chinese tradition does not affect the Post-80s, but the childhood memory is unforgettable. Eva Song (2010) gives a discerning view of the nostalgia of the Post-80s generation:

> "We, used to being the happiest generation, are suffering from enormous pressure socially and financially. Such lovely items [Haihunshan海魂衫] help us to recall the carefree life without the need to find a decent job, buy an apartment, raise a child or support [our] parents."

In 2010, a nostalgic drama called *Li Lei and Han Meimei [李雷和韩梅梅]* set off a wave in China. Familiar to the Post-80s, Li Lei and Han Meimei were characters in an English book for junior high school. In the poster (Fig, 2), Li and Han are wearing the *striped Briton top [海魂衫]*, which brings back nostalgic memories for the Post-80s (Yu, 2010). In addition, school uniforms and sportswear along with *Warrior* or *Huili [回力]* sport shoes have also created a craze among Chinese Post-80s consumers (Yu, 2010). A search for "the memory of Post-80s" at Taobao.com, a China's largest e-commerce site, you can find more than 12,063 related listings of items such as clothing, toys, decorations and tableware. This phenomenon demonstrates that the nostalgic trend is a strong drawcard for China's Post-80s consumers.

According to Martinez (2013), when people suffer from certain psychological ailments such as loneliness, social isolation, self-doubt, negative moods, and feeling that life is meaningless, nostalgia can act as a coping mechanism; the ailments can cause the mind to shift through its cache of memories, summoning up those with a particular narrative signature (Martinez, 2013). Domestic products still sustain the essence of originality and purity in Post-80s' memory, thought they have faded away in the modern Chinese manufacturing industry. The urban overcrowding, unprecedented pollution, and a barrage of food-safety scandals make the youngsters miss their childhood (Martinez, 2013). When many oversea brands were introduced in China, the term "Made in China" became synonymous with the Chinese manufacturing industry and has developed derogatory connotations (Li, 2011). The creative spirit of the nostagic design of the 1980s has influenced many Post-80s designers, precipitating them to rethink the new value of contemporary Chinese graphic design.

Figure 2: *The poster of nostalgic drama Li Lei and Han Meimei* [Design]. (2010). Retrieved August 28, 2013, from: http://www.chinadaily.com.cn/bizchina/2010-12/06/content_116577 95.htm

Chinese vintage symbols of the 80s

The resurgence of Chinese goods has become a trend that is recognised by many domestic and foreign fashion brands. The acquiring of the Chinese shoe brand of the 80s – *Feiyue [飞跃]* by a French company and its global launching is a typical example. The French re-designed *Feiyue* shoe collection sustains its original design and the logo design retains the classic element of "blue and red" on the body of the shoe (Fig, 3).

Post-80s designers rejoice in the resurgence of Chinese goods when the past memory becomes present in today's daily life. Amongst many Western consumer brands and products that have already dominated the Chinese market, some 'old' Chinese products are paving the return of the Chinese mainstream consumer market. They are rebranded and redesigned (both the product and its visual elements) to target the younger generation. Another Chinese shoe brand *Warrior [回力]* was relaunched with the underpinned memory of the eighties (Fig. 4). The reborn Warrior (Fig. 5), with the Chinese name *[回力]* that literally means rebound, evokes the resonance of consumers' childhood memory. The designer has successfully revived the value of a Chinese vintage symbol from the 1980s.

Figure 3: *Feiyue shoe in French*. (2013). Retrieved July 3, 2013, from: http://www.feiyue-shoes.com/blog_en/index.cfm/2013/6/18/ORIGINE-1920-Collection

Figure 4: *Original Warrior shoe brand.* (1935). Retrieved August 10, 2013, from: http://guohuo.h.baike.com/article-29331.html and http://iyeslogo.com/huili.html

Figure 5: *Warrior shoe brand new by AMg Labs* [Design]. (2008). Retrieved July 10, 2013, from http://cul.sohu.com/20090317/n262840061.shtml

Chinese vintage symbols in contemporary graphic design

The word "vintage" is translated as retro - *Fugu [复古]* in China, representing the revival of a nostalgic element. "Vintage" emerged as the new "cool" [酷] among youth in the past couple of years as a popular trend; the retro elements of "Vintage cool" (Li, 2008) are often re-produced in a fun or rebellious way. Dorophy Tang is a contemporary Chinese designer and illustrator who employs vintage symbols in her work. She interweaves Chinese vintage elements from pottery known as "Qing Hua Ci" [青花瓷] with the design and branding of Lomography's Diana + model (Fig. 6).

Figure 6: Tang, D. (2008). *The design and branding of Lomography's Diana + model* [Design]. Retrieved from http://www.lomography.com/magazine/news/2009/09/25/the-qing-hua-diana-f-plus-by-dorophy-tang

The poster design of the movie "So Young" (2008) also resonated recently with the Chinese Post-80s (Fig. 7). Many visual elements in the poster recall Post-80s' memories; for example, the congested room, the thermo bottle and the tape recorder. The iconic scene of the American movie "Titanic" on the TV plays a central role in echoing our aspirations towards Western popular culture.

Figure 7: *The Poster of movie" So Young"* [Design]. (2008). Retrieved August 10, 2013, from http://zj.qq.com/a/20121212/000114.htm

In this research, I consider that Chinese vintage symbols are the classical elements that were popular and common in the past daily life in China, such as specific patterns, colours, shapes or styles. However, in my project I specifically work with those from my childhood memory of the eighties. Chinese vintage symbols are representations that visualise the memory of Post-80s. I attempt to test them in many different ways to explore their potential in a contemporary design context and to present them in a book that synthesises my creative investigation.

1.2 Old Wave - A new trend development

The influence of nostalgia in China's consumer market is increasing; the collective memory of China's emerging "nostalgic consumer" (Chen, 2011) is a major driving force in China's ongoing retro brand renaissance, with more home-grown Chinese brands now incorporating nostalgia into their marketing campaigns (Chen, 2011).

The new chic of "Chinese cool" has been acknowledged and employed by many brands, and these brands have realised the importance of the "collective memories" (Scuman and Scott, 2013) of the young generation. For example the state-owned bicycle company – *Forever [永久]*, led by 24-year-old CEO Wang Shan, has created an "Old school" brand and product range to attract the modern inner-city commuter. In my research, I implement an idea called "Old Wave" [退浪潮] to address the nostalgic phenomenon. In Chinese, it means bringing popular stuff from the past into modern trends. I am not the first one to espouse the idea of Old Wave, Chinese fashion designer and photographer Zhu Li also notes the trend in his design work. His "Folopo" [福禄铺] store, with its simple and retro style, is making a departure from the current fashion trend. His design and photography reveal his clinging on to the nostalgia of the past (Fig. 8).

In my work Old Wave, the concept of the sign design (Fig. 9) was inspired by my childhood memory of a Chinese cartoon. In the eighties, the legend fairytale *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King [哪吒闹海]* (Fig. 10) was presented in hand-drawn, animated cartoons, and the colours were manifested in accordance with the Chinese traditional aesthetics commonly known to us kids. In order to echo the theme of Old Wave, the design work embodies the primary elements of the original cartoon such as ocean waves and a ribbon in vivid colour.

According to Jerry Clode (2011), growing nostalgia shared by China's Post-80s generation provides the opportunity for brands to leverage retro marketing to strongly engage with newly affluent consumers (2011). For brands that are looking for an identity, nostalgia provides a great conversation point for the increasingly self-confident (Clode, 2011).

Figure 8: Zhu, L. (2011*) The design work from "Folopo"* [Photograph]. Retrieved August 25, 2013, from http://edge.neocha.com/chinese-creatives/individual-brand-old-wave-from-zhu-li/attachment/oldwaveneocha-com003/

Figure 9: Yi,J. (2013). *The sign of Old wave.* Private Collections

Figure 10: *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King.* (1979). Retrieved August 10, 2013, from http://info.broadcast.hc360.com/2009/04/091443127491. shtml
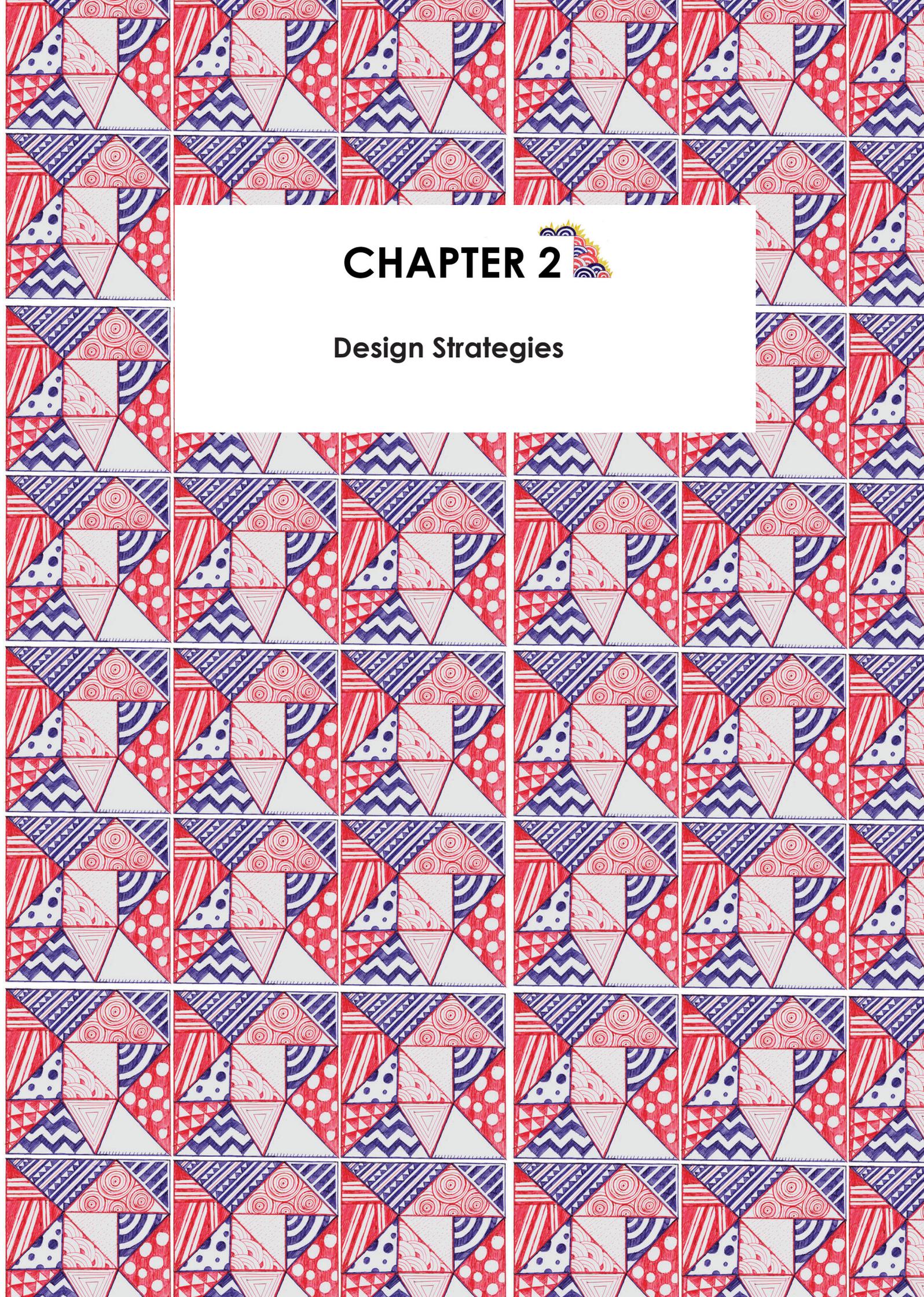
CHAPTER 2

Design Strategies

2.1 Unfolding the creative processes

This chapter discusses three major phases in the design approach, namely: creating visual components from Chinese vintage symbols, connecting visual components with my childhood memory, and transforming the symbols into visual components. Deconstruction and reflection are the two strategic processes that inform the design development.

2.1.1 Expanding from the Tangram

To build the essential visual components from Chinese goods, I deployed the graphic form of Tangram as the key design element. I also borrowed the playing methods of the Tangram game as the design approach to building the visual components. According to Jerry Slocum's research (Slocum, 2003), the Tangram was originally invented in China even though the date is unrecorded in history; the earliest known Chinese book is dated 1813 but the puzzle was very old by then. Tangrams swept from China to London, becoming popular in England in the early 19th century; its popularity rapidly spread to other European countries (Slocum, 2003, p. 49). The Tangram is a two-dimensional rearrangement puzzle and is formed by cutting a square into seven pieces (Fig. 11). The pieces are rearranged to form thousands of different figures of people in motion, animals, letters of the alphabet, geometric shapes and the universe (Slocum, 2003, p. 44). Chinese people responded to the aesthetic quality of Tangram and applied it to other design contexts as early as in the 19th and early 20th centuries. For example, as showin in Figure 12, sets of condiment or "sweetmeat" dishes were made in the shapes of the seven-tangram pieces.

In China, the game was used to evaluate a person's intelligence; the puzzle can be solved through different methods, and thus could be used to assess a person's flexibility and creative thinking (Shi, 2004, p. 325). In my opinion, the figurative form of Tangram describes the typical Chinese education system of the eighties. The Tangram game seems to motivate people's creativity and flexibility through joining the puzzle, but it also has control over the players via specific rules. Along with the apparent freedom of the then new education system there were constraints on the creative ability of students. The compulsory educational system impressed Post-80s and gave them opportunities to experience science, technologies, literature and arts through many subjects. However, examination was still the most important mechanism in the Chinese educational system. In the 9-years compulsory education, the students had to take strict examinations every time they wanted to evaluate their ability and levels (Hunter, 1988, p. 77). Even though the students had freedom to choose what they were interested in, they still needed to go through all kind of exams that embodied the values of study.

Consequently, the Tangram has become my primary Chinese vintage symbol of reference; it used to be a puzzle toy and gave us a lot of delights during the material deprivation of childhood. Nowadays, many young designers aspire to apply the tangram as nostalgic elements in design creations. In addition, design inspired by Tangram corresponds to the multicultural characteristic of the Post-80s because it is familiar to both the Chinese and the West. The Italian designer Daniele Lago used the Tangram concept to design furniture, which is like a puzzle itself, and can be arranged to form various designs (Fig. 13). From my design standpoint, the aesthetic quality of the Tangram is rhythmically flexible and yet harmonious in its geometrical forms.
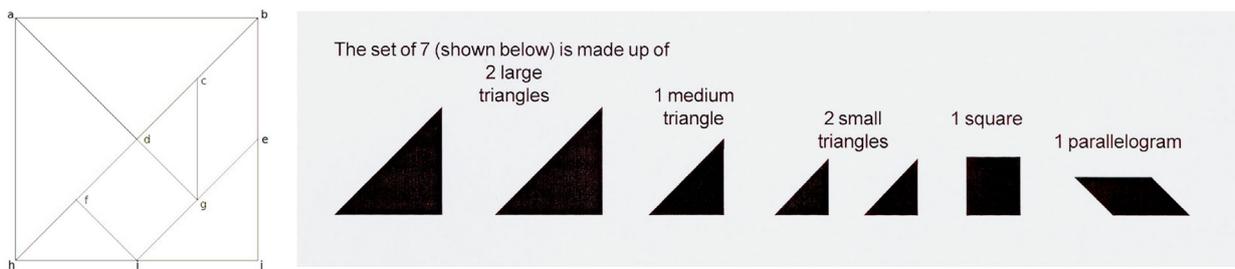
Figure 11: *The 7 pieces of Tangram*. (n.d). Retrieved August 25, 2013, from http://www.cleavebooks.co.uk/trol/trolxk.pdf

Figure.12, *Tangram condiment dishes*. (Qing dynasty, 19th C). Retrieved August 25, 2013, from http://chinesepuzzles.org/tangram/

Figure 13: Lago, D. (2002). *Tangram concept furniture* [Design]. Retrieved from http://www.lago.it/tangram.html

2.1.2 Constructing visual components

Concurrently, to expand the underpinning aesthetic concept and form of the visual components, I retrieved my childhood drawings to study the aesthetic perceptions and the characteristics of the Post-80s.

Childhood hand-drawings with the blue and red ball-pen

In my childhood memory, it was common that we scrawled and sketched[8] during class and when doing our homework. This is one of the many methods we used to survive the pressure and weariness of schoolwork. I used to scrawl to kill time during the class, as doodlings never attracted people's attentions though they were banned in class, as doodling was regarded as a rebellious behavior. Fig. 14 illustrates my childhood scrawls, which used to appear on the notebooks for my homework.

Most of my childhood scrawls were drawn with blue and red ballpoint pens [圆珠笔]. The ball pen was invented in the West, but was introduced in China through Hong Kong (Wu and Li, 2008). The ball pen is much easier to maneuver than the fountain pen; therefore it became popular in our childhood. As children, having a ballpoint pen was worth showing off. The red and blue pens were very common and that explains why my childhood scrawl is represented by these two ink colours. Yet the two colours are a paradoxical pair, as in our school reports, our pass grade was in blue while fails were in red. Blue and red therefore represent our ambivalence towards study. Furthermore, most of my childhood drawings were composed of irregular triangles, and they together shape series of patterns that are meaningless. In short, these childhood drawings could be a reflection of my personal characteristics.

In my research, I draw upon blue and red scrawls for the following reasons. Firstly, the elements provoke the nostalgic resonance in their most organic visual form. This is one of the underpinning aesthetic concepts I considered when developing the visual impact of the Post-80s. Secondly, the forms of my scrawls carry a similar design structure and aesthetic to those of the Tangram. Thirdly, the contrast of blue and red colours represents the paradoxical characteristic of the Post-80s.

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[8] In the following text, I will use the term scrawl to represent scrawl, sketch and doodling.
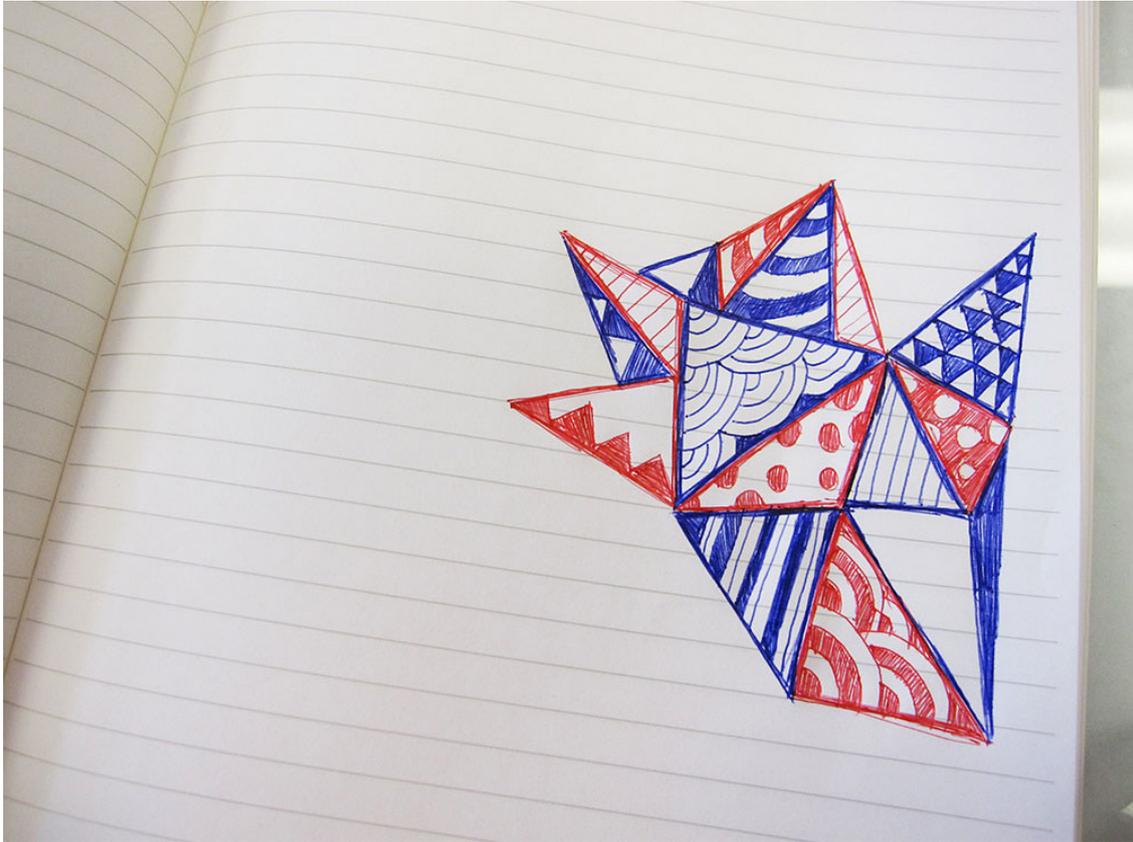
Figure 14: Yi, J. (2013). *The copy from my childhood scrawl.* Private Collections

2.1.3 Puzzle of the scrawl

Based on the inspiration of my childhood scrawls, my initial works mostly dealt with the issue of representing the childhood nostalgic sense. I designed different images by using blue and red ballpoint pen (Fig.15 and 16), taking my adult mind to my childhood drawing style. By creating the irregular puzzles, I found out that the complexity of the composition was able to hold the viewer's attention. They have to be patient as it takes time to decipher a composition. The combination of the puzzles creates a three-dimensional illusion. The other experiment of the puzzles is restricted by the circle shape (Fig. 16). In fig. 16, I merged the circle with triangles to reference the Taoist' philosophy. In Taoism, *Baguatu [八卦图]* (Fig. 18) is constructed by the octagonal trigram template and represents the fundamental principles of reality. The *Taiji [太极]* symbol of Baguatu forms a perfect circle and stands for the oneness of conflicting forces inside everything. The *Taiji* are perceived to be the origins of the world (Gu, 2003, p.197). In this experiment (Fig. 16), shape 1 (see also Fig. 17) is inspired by the philosophical concept of the *Taiji* symbol; shape 2 implies the ocean and ocean wave; shape 3 and 4 represent the city and a starry sky. Even though these shapes are still abstract, they inspired me to develop their potential further.
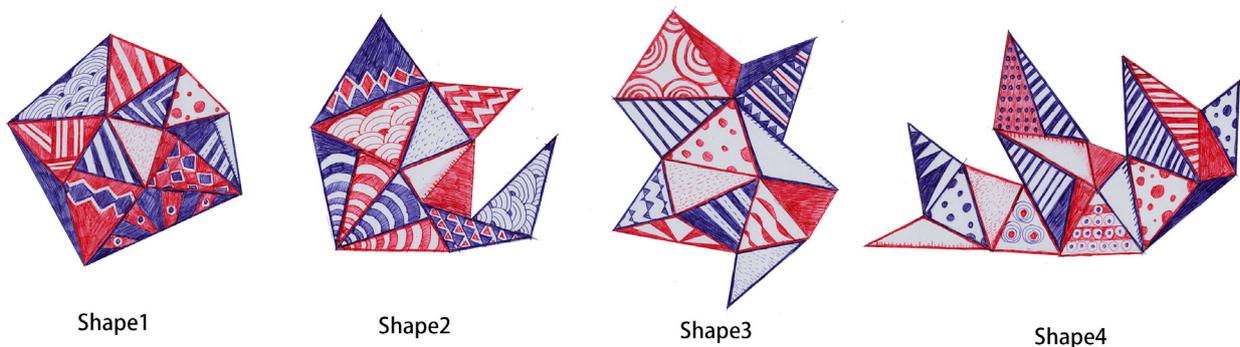
Shape1   Shape2   Shape3   Shape4

Figure 15: Yi, J. (2013). *Drawing with red and blue ballpoint pen.* Private Collections


Shape1   Shape2   Shape3   Shape4
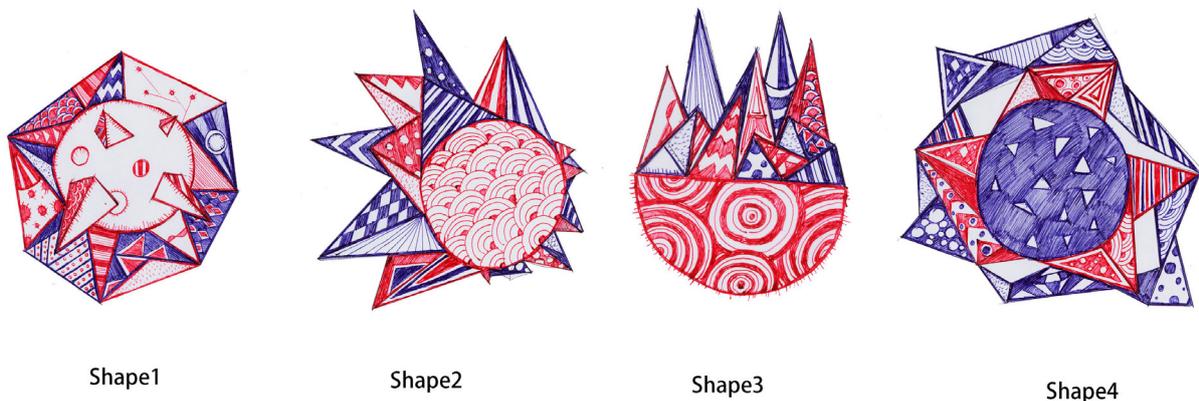
Figure 16: Yi, J. (2013). *Drawing with red and blue ballpoint pen.* Private Collections
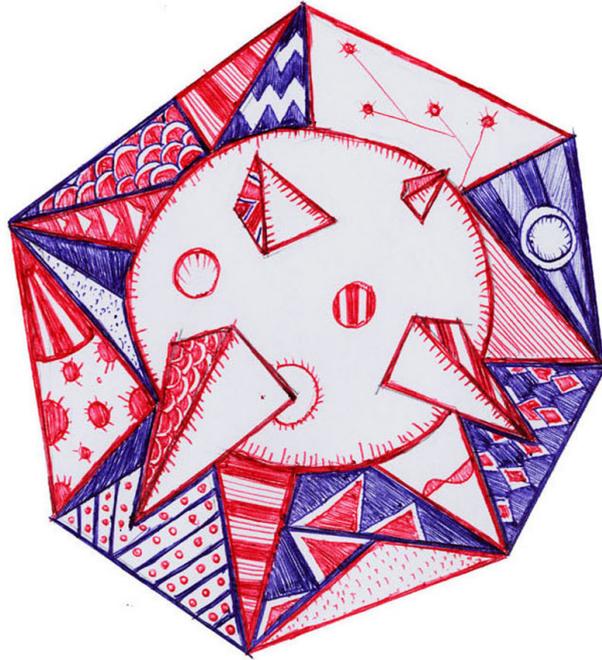
Figure 17: Yi, J. (2013). *Drawing with red and blue ballpoint pen.* Private Collections

Figure 18: *Baguatu.* (n.d). Retrieved August 19, 2013, from: http://www.toplineonline. net/china_culture_more.asp?id=564

Deconstruction and recombination

I then experimented with deconstructing the puzzle to separate the triangles and investigate the individual patterns (Fig. 19 and 20). They can be interpreted as representing the subconscious aspects of my childhood memory. I believe that the sense of pattern is established through recognising the mundane parts of my childhood daily life. For instance, the patterns in fig. 19 probably resemble the pattern of my childhood clothing. Likewise, the patterns in fig. 20 could trace back to the cartoon I used to watch when I was little. Figure 21 is an experiment that recombines these irregular fragments. They are made to visualise the modern trend of Old Wave [退浪潮] in English and Chinese, which suggests the bringing back the popular parts of the past to today's daily life. I did this by scrawling the typeface of my childhood in red and blue. It efficiently provokes Post-80s' nostalgia. Potential emerges through the design and its aesthetics. However, at this stage, the deconstruction and recombination processes applied to these irregular design fragments had yet to cohere into a systematic visual language that could be applied as a foundation for the future experiments.
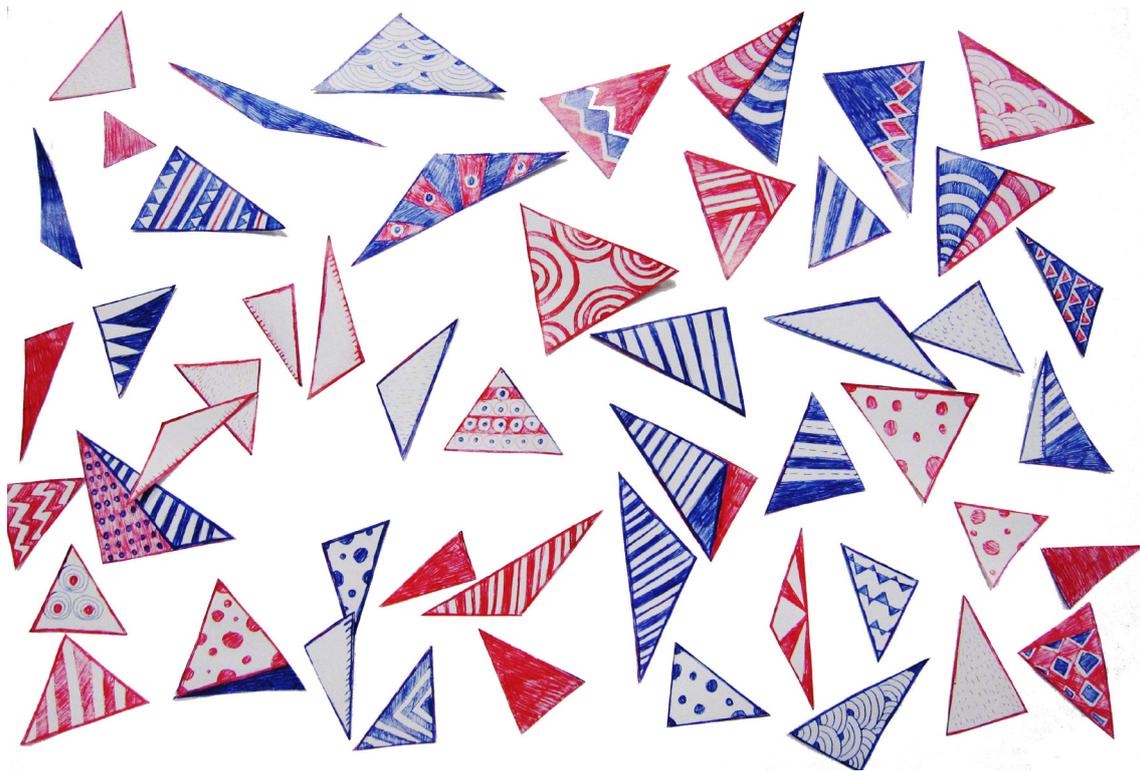

Figure 19: Yi, J. (2013). *Drawing with red and blue ballpoint pen.* Private Collections
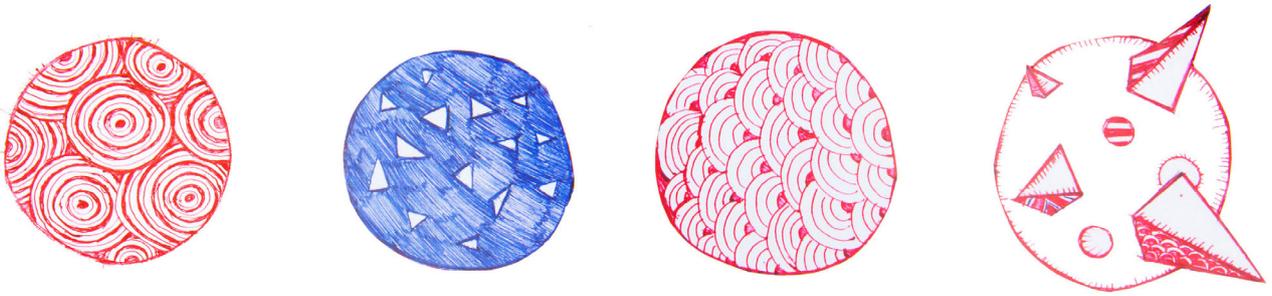
Figure 20: Yi, J. (2013). *Drawing with red and blue ballpoint pen.* Private Collections
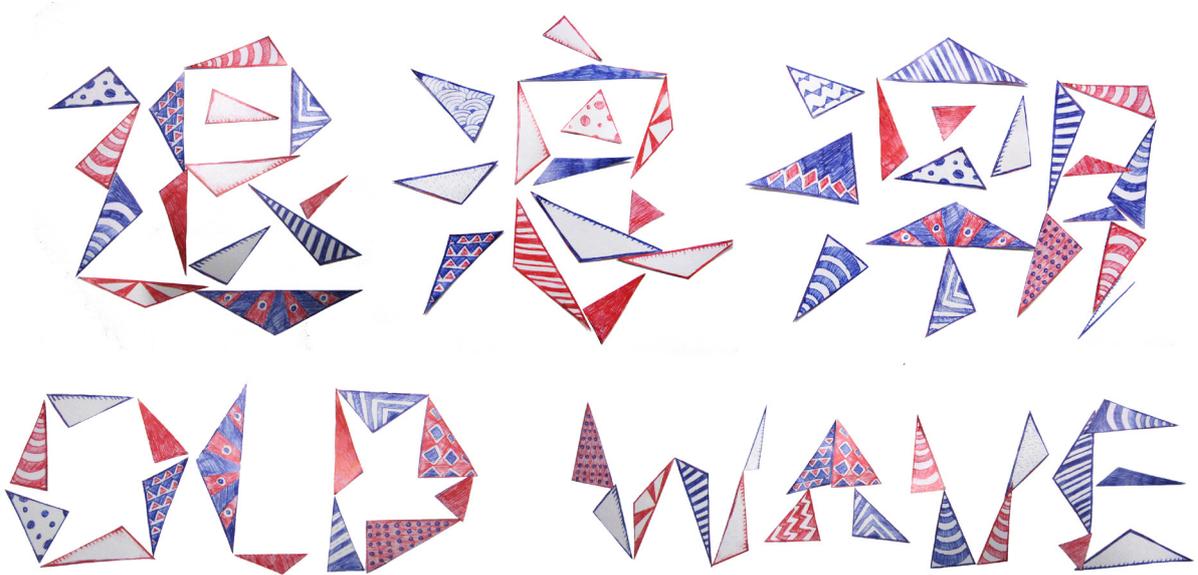

Figure 21: Yi, J. (2013). *The painting of red and blue ballpoint pen*. Private Collections

2.1.4 Connecting the visual components and the Post-80s generation

Subsequently, I reconsidered these initial experiments and decided I had not yet fully developed the value of the puzzles, and the potential application of these shapes. I revisited my research on Tangrams to further explore the underlying aesthetic ideas, looking for possibilities to develop a systematic visual language. I restricted the puzzles within a limited space by conforming to the Tangram format, allowing the design to become more controllable and dynamic (Fig. 22 and 23). This experiment tested two formats, one is the traditional Tangram format and the other is my own format. In the first format (Fig. 22), my scrawls conform to the 7-piece geometrical elements of the Tangram as I applied the playing method of Tangram as the design approach. Then I re-structured the regular seven pieces to my own order and expanded to develop 13 pieces of triangle shapes (Fig. 23). By redesigning the formal Tangram format, I created new rules that correspond to the paradoxical ethos of the Post-80s- something which is represented through the playful form and contrasting colours. The playful format helped create a variety of shapes with diverse connotations. The contrasting colours embody the conflicts inherent in the Post-80s' characteristics that strengthen the impression on viewers.
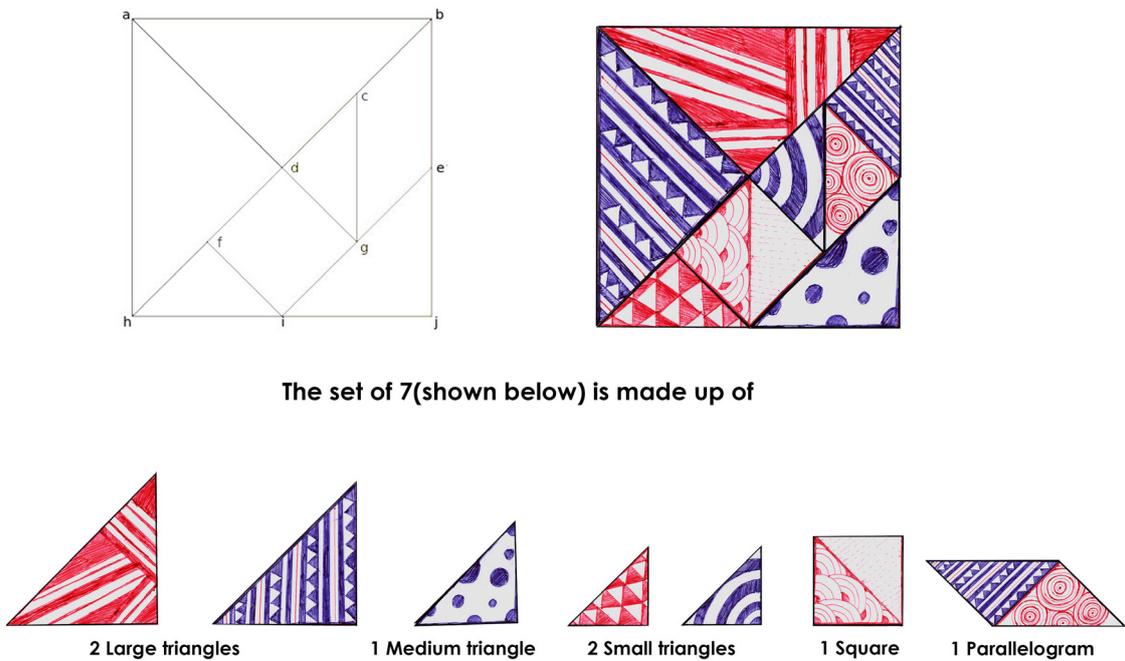
The set of 7(shown below) is made up of

| 2 Large triangles | 1 Medium triangle | 2 Small triangles | 1 Square | 1 Parallelogram |

Figure 22: Yi, J. (2013). *Development of the Tangram through the blue and red component.* Private Collections

4 large triangles

**6 small triangles**

3 irregular triangles
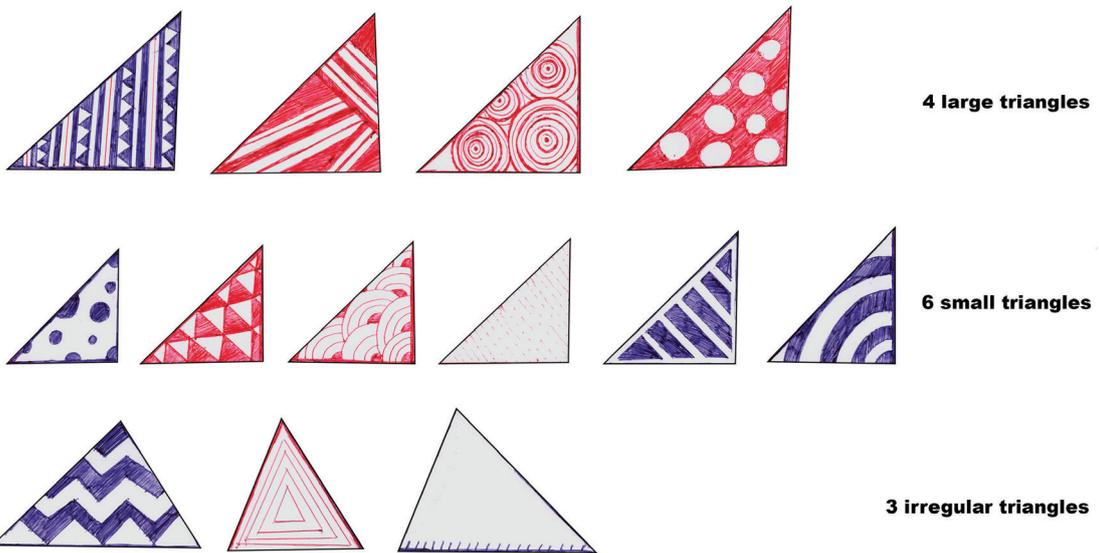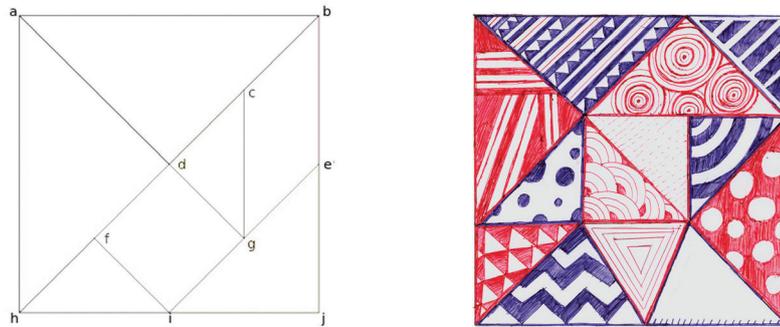
Figure 23: Yi, J. (2013). *Development of the 13 pieces Tangram.* Private Collections

Systematic typeface design

English and Chinese bilingual typeface design is an important component in my experiments; it highlights the possibilities and obstacles of applying the blue and red visual language to contemporary graphic design.

English language, symbolic of the western context, is an indispensable part of the Post-80s life. As a designer, I aspire to design a Post-80s English typeface. My new Tangram format allows me to explore a systematic approach to typeface design. In fig. 24, I use the blue and red visual components to build the English alphabet components. I deployed the puzzle to design the 26 letters through joining the different pieces of red and blue triangles together.

In fig. 25, I used the blue and red visual language to design the basic strokes of the Chinese typeface. Chinese characters are extensive in number, but they conform to eight basic strokes, which are dot, horizontal, vertical, left-falling, right-falling, turning, hook, and rising [点，横，竖，撇，捺，折，钩，提] (Fig. 26). It is commonly called the eight methods of character design in the Chinese language system. Therefore I can apply the design of these eight strokes to any Chinese characters.
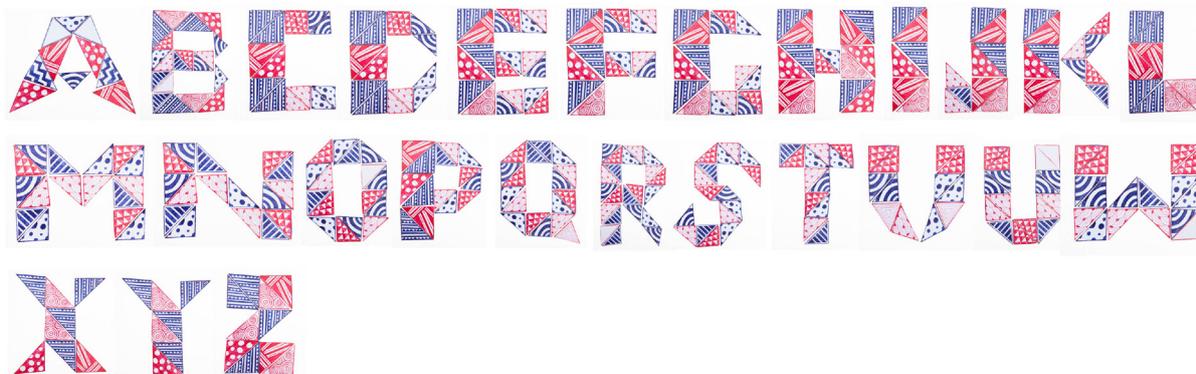
Figure 24: Yi, J. (2013). *English typeface design.* Private Collections
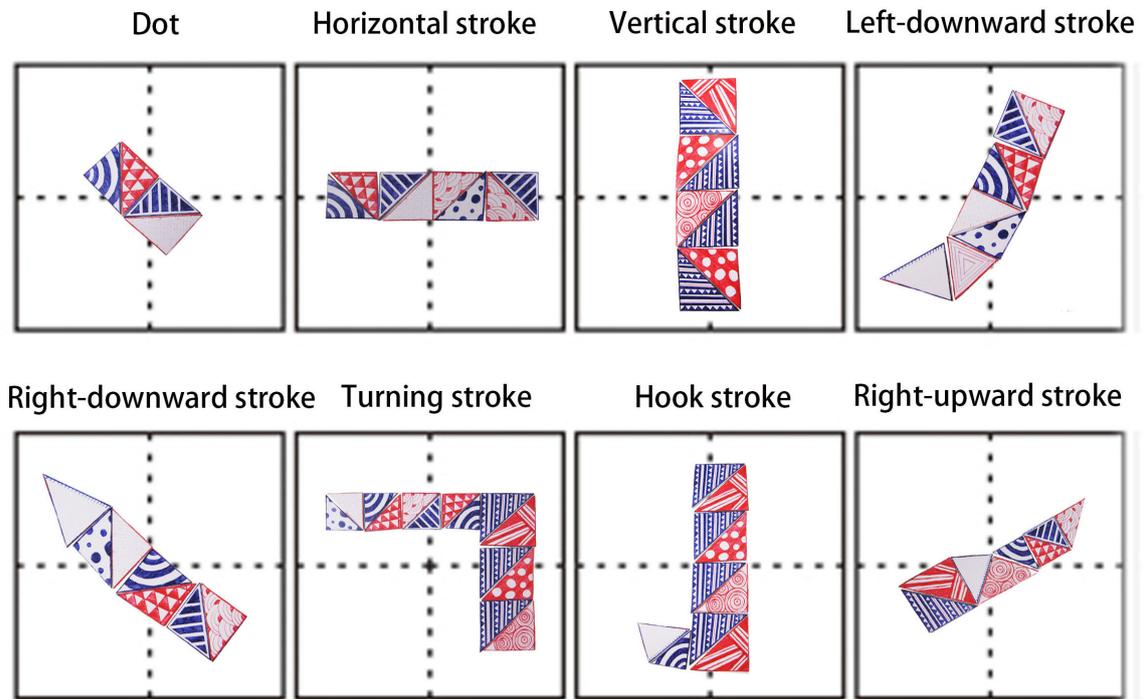
Dot	Horizontal stroke	Vertical stroke	Left-downward stroke

| Right-downward stroke	Turning stroke	Hook stroke	Right-upward stroke

Figure 25: Yi, J. (2013). *Design of the eight basic strokes of the Chinese typeface*. Private Collections

Figure. 26: *The traditional eight strokes together.* (n.d). Retrieved August 13, 2013, from http://artquill.blogspot.co.nz/2013/07/chinese-calligraphy-1-art-essay-marie.html
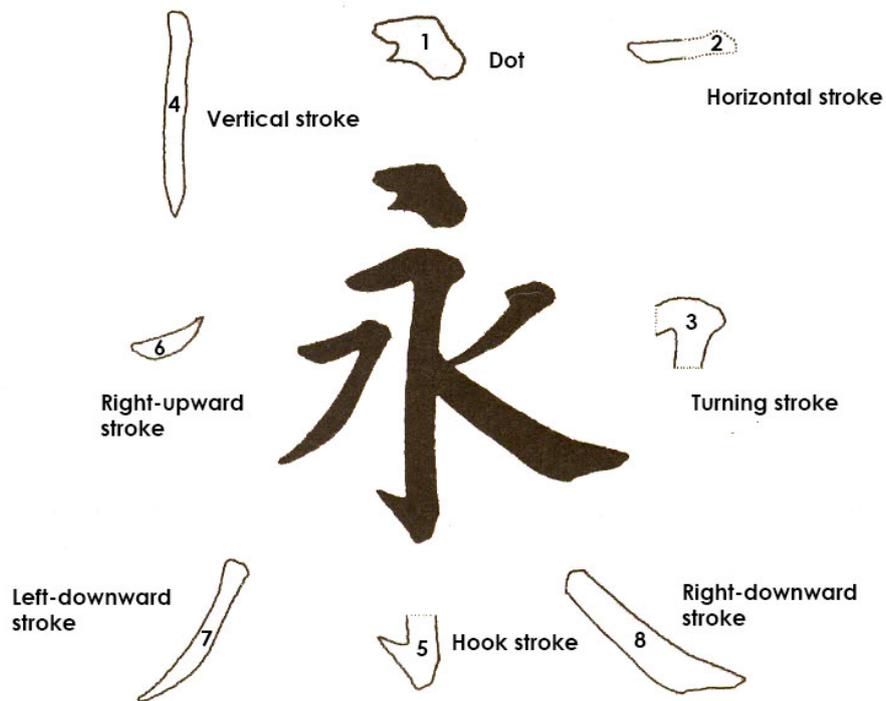
2.2 Justification of the visual contents

In this section I will discuss the outcomes of my experiments to justify the visual content in relation to the Post-80s. My practical work began with extensive experiments on expressions of the characteristics of the Post-80s. Initially, I conducted research into the Chinese vintage symbols that represent the period. Figure 9, 10 and 27 are archetypal examples of how I extracted the key design elements from Chinese vintage symbols. Both design works carry visual and conceptual content related to Post-80s childhood memory. By modeling this design, I experimented with colour, visual components, style and forms that are based on Chinese vintage symbols. Figure 9 and 10 are examples that visualise the concept of Old Wave. The design was inspired by an image of Chinese cartoon of the Post-80s, the legend fairytale *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King [哪吒闹海]*. Furthermore, figure 27 shows the combination of sign design of Old Wave to inform a poster content, which provides directional guidance to viewers. I also have designed a poster for the branding of Old Wave (Fig. 9) by borrowing the visual significations of the label of the Chinese alcohol brand *Red Star Erguotou [红星二锅头]* (Fig. 28), which has been a familiar and popular brand for several generations. The textual content is another component that portrays a nostalgic memory of the rebellious youth of the Post-80s. For example, I extracted the verse "Our youth is like a domestic cartoon" [我们的青春像一部国产动画片] by Peng Lei, who is a typical Post-80s vocalist in Beijing-based band "New Pants", to become a slogan to connote the rebellious nature of the Post-80s. The meaning of the slogan only makes sense to the Post-80s. Moreover, using bilingual text in my experiment caters for a generation that strives for Western popular culture. However, through these experiments, I realised that the design outcome showed the limitation of presenting Post-80s. The concept of the poster was obviously literal, which has violated the idea of building a visual language to represent the Post-80s. Hence, I explored a way to adapt a visual interpretation, which applies in many different design contents (as discussed in section 2.1.4 on Connecting visual components and Post-80s generation).
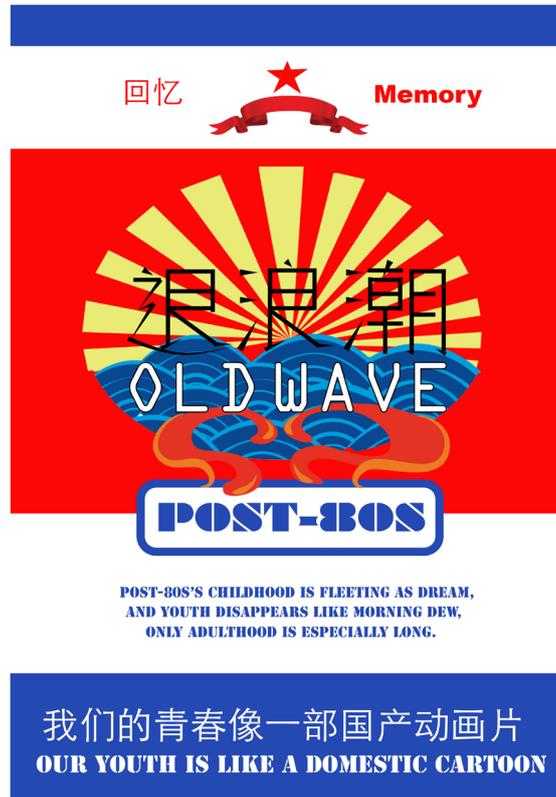
Figure 27: Yi, J. (2013). *The experiment of poster of Post-80s.* Private Collections

Figure 28. T*he Chinese alcohol brand Red Star Erguotou*. Retrieved from http://baijiu.baike.com/article-401485.html

2.2.1 Digitally-generated vs hand-drawn practice

In the initial practice, I focused on the digitally-generated representation. Designing artifacts digitally with the computer is efficient for creative alteration and reproduction. Based on this idea, I have transformed a few pieces of hand-drawn design into digital-generated works. Nonetheless, I found that the digitally generated design has not produced a stimulating representation. There is a significant distinction between the two effects. Figure 29 shows the evidence that the oily ink of the ball pen struggles to fill in all the space of the pattern; by using the ball pen, the blue and red patterns get an organic visual impression, which cannot be represented digitally. Furthermore, while working on the hand-drawing process, I was careful, so as to avoid any mistakes, which can be easily repaired in the digital-generated practice; therefore, the hand-drawn practice required the creator to be cautious and meticulous, which also highlights the individuality and preciousness of the artifact.
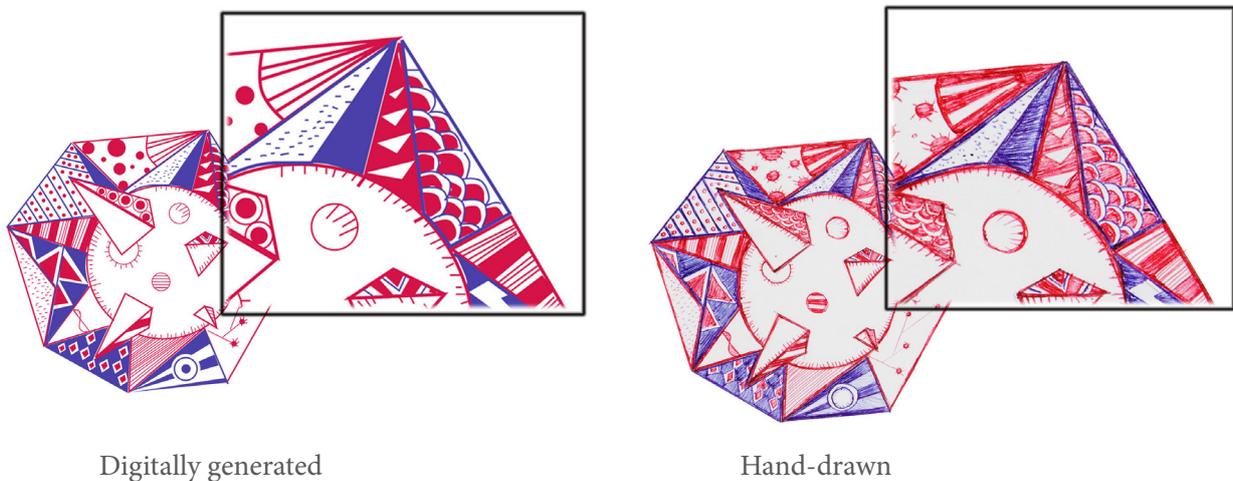
Digitally generated   Hand-drawn

Figure 29: Yi, J. (2013). *The comparison between digital-generated and hand-drawn artifacts.* Private Collections

2.3 Testing the effectiveness of the experiments

While working on the design process, I was exploring many different ways of applying the blue and red visual component to achieve the distinct voice of the Post-80s. These experiments aimed to maximize the potential of the different design approaches when applying the blue and red visual language in contemporary design fields.

2.3.1 Transforming the visual language

In this practice (Fig. 30a and 30b), I transformed an initial poster design to the new visual language – blue and red scrawl. Both design works carry visual and conceptual significance of Post-80s childhood memory. In the first poster design (Fig.30a), I extracted the key design elements from Chinese vintage symbols – with a domestic cartoon and ancient Chinese liquor to represent the Post-80s. The digitally-generated initial poster conveys the information to the viewer through literal representation. In the second design work (Fig. 30b), the blue and red visual language gives a highly ornamental impact. Taking my exploration further led me to look at artists that engage with a similar issue. The Chinese Post-80s artist Wang2mu [王二木] created a poster to illustrate the unforgettable childhood memory through the red and blue colours (Fig.31). Wang2mu's pieces are full of meticulous details and presented through commonly explored themes of childhood nostalgia of the local Guangzhounese [9] [广州人] culture. His work has a strong visual impact that utilises blue and red colours by arranging these vintage symbols. He creates intriguing imagery that encourages the audience to immerse themselves in the irony behind the poster. In my experiment (Fig. 30), through comparing two pieces of poster design, I transformed the literal representation (Fig. 30a) into pictorial representation (Fig. 30b). For instance, in figure 30b, keeping the original format of the Erguotou label design (Fig. 28) implies "Memory" [回忆] and prompts the viewer to associate it with the theme of Post-80s; the use of contrasting colours – blue and red, and the sharp-edged graphic forms imply the rebellious and paradoxical features of the Post-80s. Yellow preserves the original meaning of the sign of Old Wave and also adds a dynamic aspect to the visual language. This experiment was effective in demonstrating the application in a modern design.

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[9] Guangzhounese are people of Guangzhou province in southern China. It is common that they speak the Cantonese dialect instead of Mandarin.

a

b

Figure 30a & b: Yi, J. (2013). *Redesigning the poster of Old-wave (a) through blue and red visual component (b).* Private Collections


Figure 31: Wang, E. (2012). *The painting of red and blue ballpoint pen* [Painting]. Retrieved from: http://wang2mu.blogbus.com

In another experiment (Fig. 32), my intention was to apply the visual language on the vintage Chinese brand warrior to revive our memory of it. The inspiration came from Project Reborn [回忆回力] of the *Warrior shoes [回力鞋]* by the Beijing-based company AMg Labs. This project is a creative initiative to rebrand the vintage Chinese brands in today's consumer context. It is an attempt to re-establish the presence of vintage brands by opening up ways of connecting with a new generation of young Chinese consumers. Warrior shoes brand was popular in the 70s and 80s but the brand failed in the 90s when the overseas brands dominated the consumer market. Somehow, in the past 10 years, the younger generation has started to wear this shoe in a nostalgic way (as discussed in section 1.1.2 on Chinese vintage symbols of the 80s). The designers of AMg Labs completely reconstructed the shoe and also redesigned the whole brand identity (Fig. 33b). The designers reference traditional Chinese seal to redesign the logo (Fig. 33a), combining the Chinese characters of [回忆] " Memory" and [回力] "Warrior" (literally it means rebound) to graphically represent the rebound of the brand through our memory. However, in my opinion, keeping the original product design is imperative to complete our childhood memory, thus I only redesigned the graphic decoration on the shoes through my own visual language. Moreover, I borrowed the seal design from the case study, and used the blue and red visual component to connect the [回忆] " Memory" and [回力] "Warrior", thereby strengthening the nostalgic impact of the brand. These two experiments helped unlock the potentiality of the blue and red visual components on the branding strategy for the Post-80s.

Figure 32: Yi, J. (2013). *Redesigning the brand of Warrior.* Private Collections

Figure 33a. *Redesigning the brand of Warrior by AMg Labs* [Design]. (2010) Retried August 25, 2013, from http://pic.iresearchad.com/adver_logo/2009730123825.gif

Figure 33b. *Redesigning the brand of Warrior by AMg Labs* [Design]. (2010). Retried August 25, 2013, from http://reborn.amusegroup.com

2.3.2 Flexibility - stop motion and 8-bit electronic music

To illustrate the flexibility of the blue and red visual component, I created a stop motion animation to reflect on the processes of the experiment. Stop motion[10] records the processes of how the puzzles are joined together. The playful process of creating the stop motion also inspired me to realise that l should look at another aspect relating to the Post-80s in order to enrich my project. To do so, the visual components were presented in dynamic media, which was accompanied by 8-bit electronic music[11] . This type of music stimulates the Post-80s to recall the "Super Mario"[12] of their childhood memory. Bringing the 8-bit electronic music into the experiment enhances the nostalgic past. However, the stop motion was unable to take my research further in the development of a visual language. I decided to stop testing this approach and concentrated on the static media to pursue the final outcome.
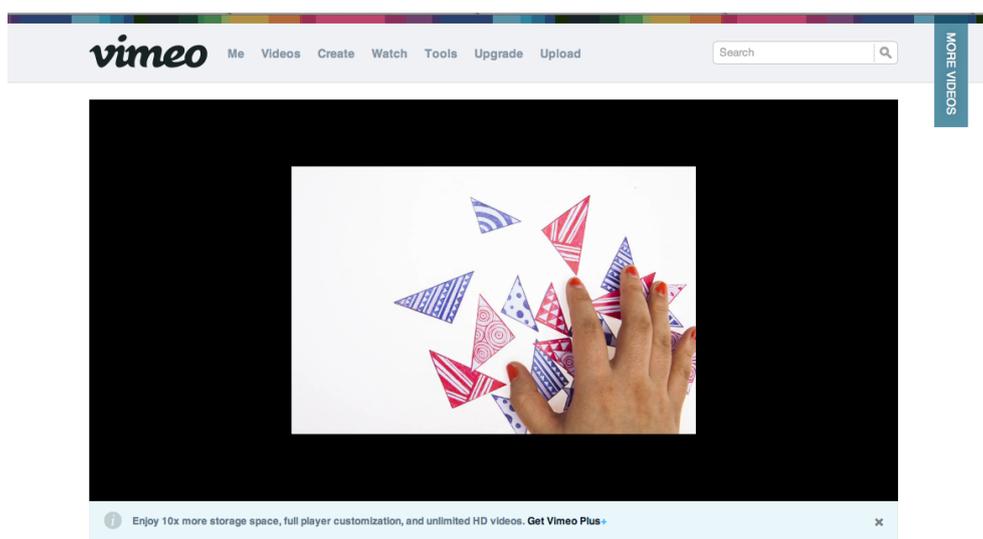

Figure 34: Yi, J. (2013). *Stop motion practice.* Private Collections

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[10] Stop motion is an animation technique that makes a physically manipulated element appear to move on its own. The element is moved in small increments between individually photographed frames, creating the illusion of movement when the series of frames is played as a continuous sequence (Wikipedia.com). Technically, stop motion records the processes of how the puzzles are joined together.

[11] A Chinese 8-bits musician Sulumi (Sun Dawei) (2011) explains that strictly speaking 8-bit music is a unit of measurement for data size, commonly made from the sound chips found in video game consoles, like Game Boys; different CPUs in different Game Boys are measured in varying bits. According to Jing Daily Magazine (2011), the Post-80s generation has been raised in environments that are wholly unlike those their parents grew up in, and they often chose to express their individuality through music.

[12] The 8-bit background music of the video game "Super Mario" was unforgettable to the Post-80s.

CHAPTER 3

Final Publication

The creative output of this practice-based research is presented in a Chinese-English biligual book publication that synthesises my investigation of the potential of vintage symbols of the post-80s in contemporary Chinese design contexts. The outcome focuses on the application of blue and red visualisation strategies. The contents consolidate the design potential of my researches into the Post-80s generation, concurrently revealing the characteristics of the Post-80s. They are filled with Post-80s childhood memories that were influenced by globalised Western thoughts. Primarily it is manifested through the blue and red visual components to enrich contemporary Chinese design contexts and to intensify the identity of Chinese designers.

3.1 Format

The publication cover has a layout in which the of Chinese texts are read from right to left, and the English from left to right (Fig. 35). This follows the traditional reading habits of both cultures. The most apparent typographic difference between Chinese and English is that one is logographic while the other is alphabetic, and their construction and visual qualities are very distinct (Tam, 2012, p. 44). According to Hong Kong designer Chi-Hang Tam, there are three common types of bilingualism in Hong Kong, which are Parallel, Code-mixing, and Code-switching[13]. I had tested mixing up both English and Chinese contents and realised the different aesthetic and readability of the two languages make the layout looks unbalanced (Fig. 36). Therefore, I decided that the publication should be based on the parallel format (Fig. 37); however it is completed by separating the English (Fig. 38) and Chinese (Fig. 39) in two different layouts to maintain aesthetic harmony and cohesiveness.

The cover of English Version   **The cover of Chinese Version**

Figure 35: Yi, J. (2013). *The experiment with cover designs for the Chinese and English versions.* Private Collec-

[13]. Chi-Hang Tam (2012, p. 40) explains that the three types of bilingualism-Parallel, Code-mixing, and Code-switching are commonly found in Hong Kong. Parallel is the most common of the three, where two language are presented as equivalents to each other; Code-mixing is where one language is embedded into another below the clause level (word and short fragment). Code-switching is where one language is interweavoven into another at clause level or above.
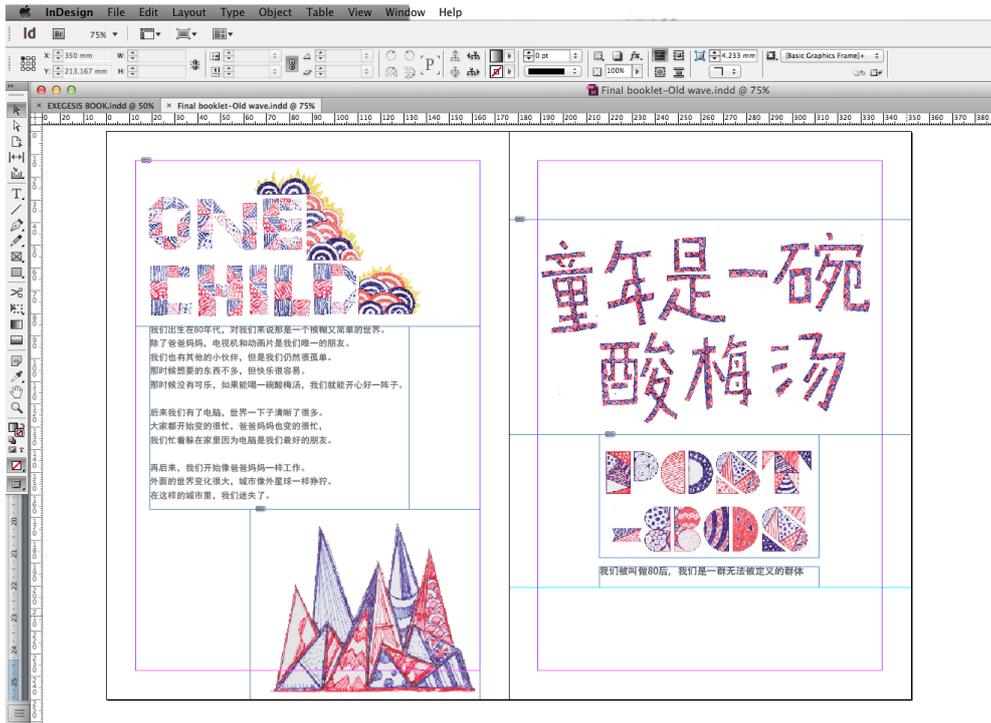
Figure 36: Yi, J. (2013). *The experiment with Chinese and English texts in the same unbalanced layout.* Private Collections

Figure 37: Yi, J. (2013). *The experiment of Parallel format.* Private Collections
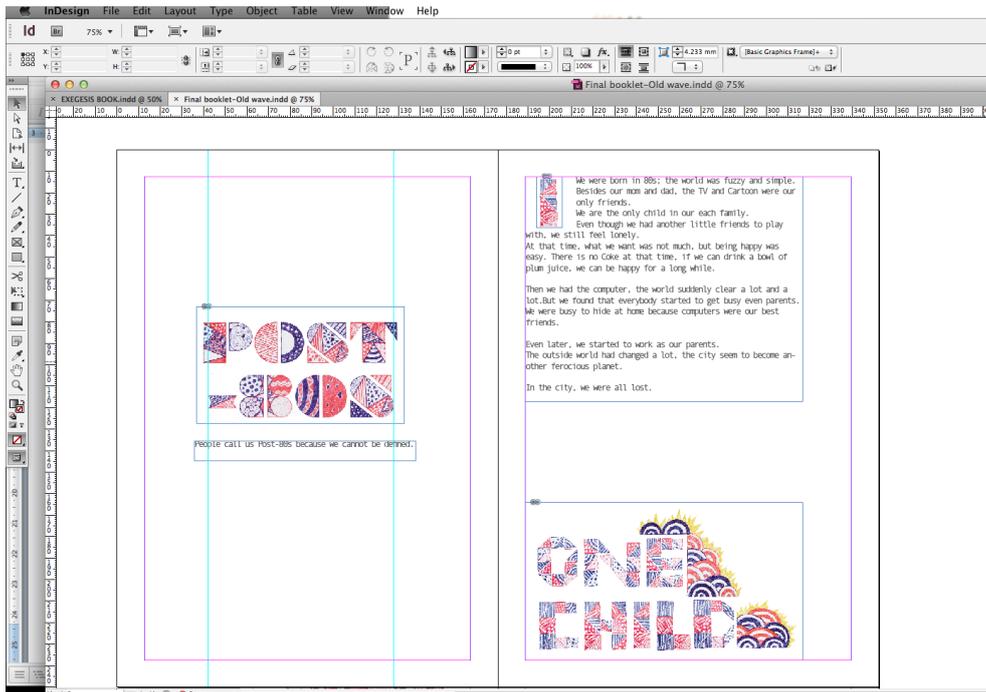
Figure 38: Yi, J. (2013). *The experiment with the English layout.* Private Collections
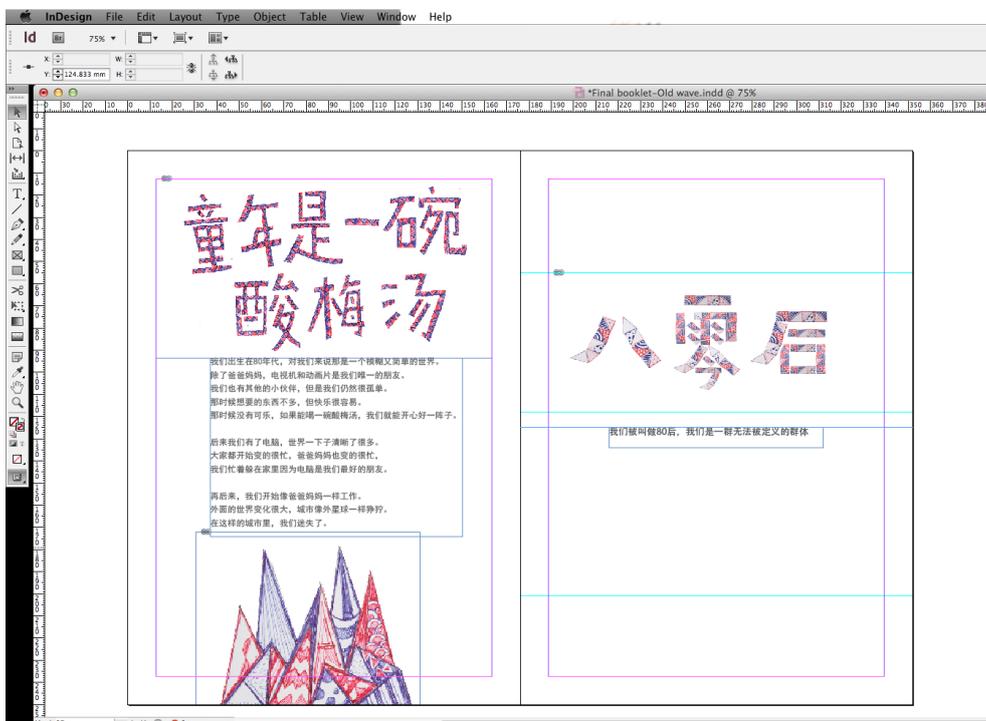
Figure 39: Yi, J. (2013). *The experiment with the Chinese layout.* Private Collections

3.1.1 Cover design

The cover design of "Old-Wave" carries continuity crossing over the English and Chinese cover (Fig.40). Wave patterns are the key visual element to correspond to the return of nostalgia Old-Wave [退浪潮]. Along with the primary blue and red colours there is yellow which gives a 'dazzling light' to suggest the buoyant retro brand renaissance in the current consumer market. Vintage signs and products from collective nostalgia memories of the Post-80s have now become new Chinese chic (as discussed in section 1.2 on Old Wave-A new trend development). Thus I purposely infuse the work with flamboyant movements and yet leave substantial white space so as not to constrain the unsettling vitality.

Figure 40: Yi, J. (2013). *Cover design*. Private Collections

3.2 Post-80s language

When exploring the characteristics of the Post-80s, network buzzwords are the source of the research. They express the narrative voice of the Post-80s and thereby evoke associations with the Post-80s. It is uncertain whether the Post-80s invented such term as *Elderly-Devouring Young Adults [啃老]* and *Dwelling Narrowness [蜗居]* (as discussed in section 1.1.1 on The paradox). To an extent, the Post-80s indeed have developed their own type of language. The example given earlier, namely the verse "Our youth is like a domestic cartoon" [我们的青春像一部国产动画片] by Peng Lei (as discussed in section 2.2 on Justification of the visual contents) is an archetype of the Post-80s language. To further introduce the Post-80s narrative voice, I have employed significant amounts of their language to inform the textual contents of the publication. For example, I have written a statement "The childhood is a bowl of plum juice" [童年是一碗酸梅汤] to reflect the simple childhood life of the Post-80s. I wrote the texts throughout the book to reflect the voice of Post-80s. For example, I have described Post-80s' childhood in both Chinese and English as follow:

"我们出生在80年代，对我们来说那是一个模糊又简单的世界。
除了爸爸妈妈，电视机和动画片是我们唯一的朋友。
我们都是家里唯一的孩子。
我们也有其他的小伙伴，但是我们仍然很孤单。
那时候想要的东西不多，但快乐很容易。
那时候没有可乐，如果能喝一碗酸梅汤，我们就能开心好一阵子。

We were born in 80s; the world was fuzzy and simple.
Besides our mom and dad, TV and Cartoons were our only friends.
We are the only child in the family.
Even though we had our friends to play with, we still feel lonely.
At that time, we didn't ask for much, being happy was that easy.
At that time, there was no Coke, if we had a bowl of plum juice to drink,
we would be happy for a long while."

3.2.1 English and Chinese typeface of the texts

I have chosen two different fonts for the texts of the content. The font Andale Mono (Fig 41) is used in the English version, which is irregular in letter-spacing and childish in style. It strongly communicates the paradoxical characteristics of the Post-80s. I have selected the "SimHei" [黑体] font (Fig 42) for the Chinese version. Although it does not perfectly match the English font, it is the most common font used in Chinese textbooks.

Example:

```
"We were born in the 80s; the world was fuzzy and simple. Besides
our mom and dad, the TV and cartoons were our only friends."
(Andale Mono Font)
```

Figure 41: Yi, J. (2013). *Typeface design for the English text*. Private Collections

Example:

"我们出生在80年代，对我们来说那是一个模糊又简单的世界。除了爸爸妈妈，电视机和动画片是我们唯一的朋友。（SimHei）**[黑体]**"

Figure 42: Yi, J. (2013). *Typeface design for the Chinese text*. Private Collections

3.2.2 Self-designed English and Chinese typefaces

For the publication, I have created some fonts to enrich the design content. In the English version, when I designed the "Post-80s" Logotype, which only appears on the first page, I basically scrawled within the shape of the childlike "Baggadocio" font (Fig 43). I approached the second hand-painted font (Fig 44) with the similar scrawling method of my illustrations to convey the personality of the Post-80s in pictorial and literal ways. Similar to the approach of designing with "Baggadocio" font, I scrawled within the shape of the Chinese SimHei font (Fig 45). However, I would wanted to break the regularity of the strokes and therefore I hand-wrote the characters freely to convert the font into becoming a Chinese logographic font (Fig 46).

Figure 43: Yi, J. (2013). *Typeface design*. Private Collections

Figure 44: Yi, J. (2013). *Typeface design.* Private Collections

Figure 45: Yi, J. (2013). *Typeface design.* Private Collections

Figure 46: Yi, J. (2013). *Typeface design.* Private Collections

3.3 Visual identity

The blue and red visual components constitute the main visual identity. It is applied to both typeface and pictorial content. Figure 47 illustrates the two characters *Li Lei [李雷]* and *Han Meimei [韩梅梅]* from the English text book for junior high school of our childhood. Referencing the classic stereotyped English conversation from the English text book caters to the Post-80s audiences (as discussed in section 1.1.2 on Memory of the Post-80s). The visual language shapes an impressive version with ironic themes that visualises the phenomenon.

The text that I wrote for the publication is my reflection on the Post-80s. Text and illustrations on every spread of pages are complementary pairs and collectively the whole publication builds up the visual identity of the Post-80s. For example, in fig 48, the illustration of pinball machine connects with the title "One child" which narrates our childhood life. Pinball machines from overseas used to appear for a short while in our childhood life which is unique to the memory of the Post-80s. I filled up the pinball machine with patterns of my scrawling to suggest that we were very much cared for by our parents in our childhood. However, this also caused overwhelming tension to us and we felt very lonely as a result. From my childhood until now, the game machine "Gachapon" (Fig 49) from the U.S has been popular in China. You are able to get a plastic ball randomly from the Gachapon machine, but without knowing its contents until you open the ball. I metaphorically borrow the 'unknowing' idea to imply "Made in China", which has been criticised as very inconsistent quality of the goods produced. Now China has already passed the stage of 'Made in China' to 'Designed in China'. We no longer are satisfied with only manufacturing products but also creatively design them.

Figure 47: Yi, J. (2013). *Illustration of the Post-80s education*. Private Collections

3.3.1 English and Chinese versions

Both the English and Chinese versions maintain similar contents; however, there are some considerations during the design process to correspond to the different design structures between them. For example, in the English version (Fig 50), my creative approach was pictorial in visualising the phenomenon and conflict between the child and his or her parents under the Chinese 4-2-1 family format, in which the two parents, together with the four grand-parents, over-indulge their only child and yet have also imposed pressure upon his or her daily life. In the Chinese illustration (Fig 51), my creative approach was based on the logographic nature of Chinese type. Thereby I primarily completed the work by scrawling. The work is very edgy in form to convey the over-indulged childhood and the tensions and conflicts created between the child and his or her parents.

3.3.2 Layouts

After considering of the different language systems and aesthetics of the English alphabet and Chinese characters, I have maintained a similar layout for both of them with some fine tuning (Fig 52, 53 and 54). The Chinese version has two pages fewer than the English version. The "Kidult" illustration in the English version (Fig 53) does not appear in the Chinese one (Fig 54). "Chinese goods" has taken up four pages in the English version and only two pages in the Chinese version . (Fig 55, 56 and 57). In the English I addressed the transition from 'Made in China' to 'Designing in China'(Fig 56). In the Chinese version (Fig 57), I used "Fu Gu" [复古] to metaphorically imply the transition.

Figure 48: Yi, J. (2013). *One child, English version.* Private Collections

Figure 49: Yi, J. (2013). *Made in China, English version.* Private Collections

Figure 50: Yi, J. (2013). *Family, English version.* Private Collections

Figure 51 Yi, J. (2013). *Family, Chinese version.* Private Collections

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Figure 56: Yi, J. (2013). *Made in China, English version.* Private Collections

Figure 57: Yi, J. (2013). Fu Gu, Chinese version. Private Collections

The holistic design conception for the final publication includes cover, layout, typeface, size, paper materials and bookbinding. The central goal is accentuated by the contemporary creative resolutions of the research and yet is able to evoke emotional connection with the memory of the Post-80s. I have discussed the cover and layout design (as discussised in section 3.1 on Fomat). The design considers both English and Chinese typography, based upon the underpinning of systematic English and Chinese typeface design (as discussed in section 2.1.4 on Systematic typeface design). Furthermore, to represent the characteristics of Post-80s, I came to realise that the paper materials, size and bookbinding must support the aim of evoking a warm feeling towards the Post-80s. Therefore I have made key references to a typical notebook from my childhood to complete the design (Fig. 58). I tried different sizes of paper and decided to work with the A5 size so that the notebook, as a whole, would hold a stronger and more active presence for Post-80s' viewers. At the time of submitting this exegesis for examination, the design of the final publication is in progress. Therefore a supplementary page to this chapter will be submitted to the examiners on the day of the examination, which will also be included in the final publication of the exegesis.

Figure 58: *The notebooks of our childhood*. (n.d). Retrieved August 29, 2013, from http://www.chujusou.com/g-77066.html

Conclusion

The overarching concept of Old Wave, which underpins the final body of work, indicates the position I have arrived at in my investigation. The core of my research project explores a visual identity that is based on my generation; the Post-80s in China. The creative works engage with concepts from the memories of the Post-80s, Chinese vintage symbols and the ideological development of individuality. Old Wave is a contemporary trend development that addresses the nostalgic phenomenon of the current post-80s market; this phenomenon is the driving force of this research journey.

This research has undergone different stages, starting from collecting data, analysing and developing ideas and finally reflecting on my practical works. They authorise my systematic study into the Post-80s generation and concurrently re-appraise my past life. The process has allowed me to recognise and acknowledge my own visual identity and to revitalise design elements from my childhood memories and apply them to inform my current design practice.

By extracting Chinese vintage symbols from the memories of the Post-80s, I have visually transformed the Chinese Tangram to underpin the design approach of my practical work. In parallel, the blue and red ballpoint pen scrawls bring to light the potential of my investigation to construct a contemporary visual identity for the project. The visual contents cover typeface, poster, poem, illustration and branding that aim to test the visual language that I have developed. Through a range of experiments, from computer-generated design through to organic hand drawing, I have explored the values of this visual language in the contemporary design contexts of China. It is a visual voice for Post-80s designers, who have the dominant influence in today's design industry, both nationally and internationally. It is worth mentioning that the final publication does not only represent the current visual identity of the Post-80s, it is also a container for their childhood memories through the creative synthesis of the visual and textual design components. For me, as one of Post-80s, it is a journey through which the Old from my childhood memories sets forth on a New life in my design work.
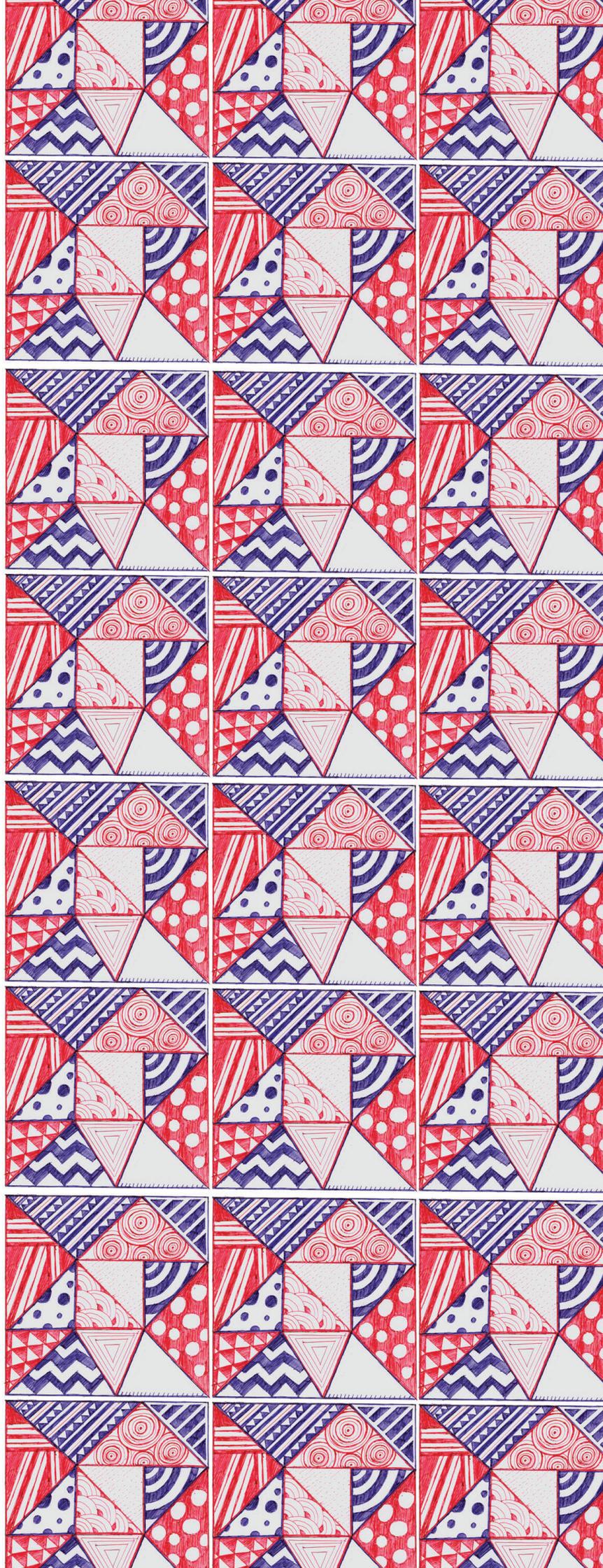
Jingwei(Lovee) Yi

October 2013

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