

## Cultural Works Interacting with the Generational Aesthetic Gap between Gen X and Gen Z in China: A Qualitative Study

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**Abstract :** The spread of digital technology in China has worsened the generation gap and intergenerational competition for cultural and aesthetic discourse. Meanwhile, the increased accessibility of cultural works has encouraged the sharing and inheritance of collective cultural memories between generations. However, not each cultural work can engage positively with efforts to bridge intergenerational aesthetic differences. This study argues that in contemporary China, where new media and the Internet are widely available, featured cultural works have more potential to help enhance the cultural aesthetic consensus among different generations, thus becoming an effective countermeasure to narrow the intergenerational aesthetic rift and cultural discontinuity. Specifically, the generational aesthetic gap is expected to be bridged or improved through the shared appreciation or consumption of cultural works that meet certain conditions by several generations. In-depth interviews of Gen X and Gen Z (N=15, respectively) in China uncovered their preferences and commonalities for cultural works and shared experiences in appreciating them. Results demonstrate that both generations' shared appreciation of cultural work is a necessary but insufficient condition for its effective response to the generational aesthetic gap. Coding analysis rendered six dimensions that cultural works with the potential to bridge the intergenerational aesthetic divide should satisfy simultaneously: genre, theme, content, elements, quality, and accessibility. Cultural works that engage multiple senses/ compound realistic, domestic and contemporary cultural memories/ contain the narrative of family life and nationalism/ include more elements familiar to the previous generation/ are superb-produced and unaffected/ are more accessible better promote intergenerational aesthetic exchange and value recognition. Moreover, compared to the dilemma of the previous generation facing the aesthetic gap, the later generation plays a crucial role in bridging the generational aesthetic divide.

**Keywords :** cultural works, generation gap, generation X, generation Z, cultural memory

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