Designing Cultural-Creative Products with the Six Categories of Hanzi (Chinese Character Classification)

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Abstract : Chinese characters, or hanzi, represent a process of simplifying three-dimensional signs into plane signifiers. From pictograms at the beginning to logograms today, a Han linguist thus classified them into six categories known as the six categories of Chinese characters. Design is a process of signification, and cultural-creative design is a process translating ideas into design with creativity upon culture. Aiming to investigate the process of cultural-creative design transforming cultural text into cultural signs, this study analyzed existing cultural-creative products with the six categories of Chinese characters by treating such products as representations which accurately communicate the designer's ideas to users through the categorization, simplification, and interpretation of sign features. This is a two-phase pilot study on designing cultural-creative products with the six categories of Chinese characters. Phase I reviews the related literature on the theory of the six categories of Chinese characters investigated and concludes with the process and principles of character evolution. Phase II analyzes the design of existing cultural-creative products with the six categories of Chinese characters and explores the conceptualization of product design.