

12X12

Innovating Culture through
THE CHINESE ZODIAC

BY

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**A PROJECT IN LIEU OF THESIS PRESENTED TO THE COLLEGE OF FINE ARTS
OF THE UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT
OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE
OF MASTER OF FINE ARTS**

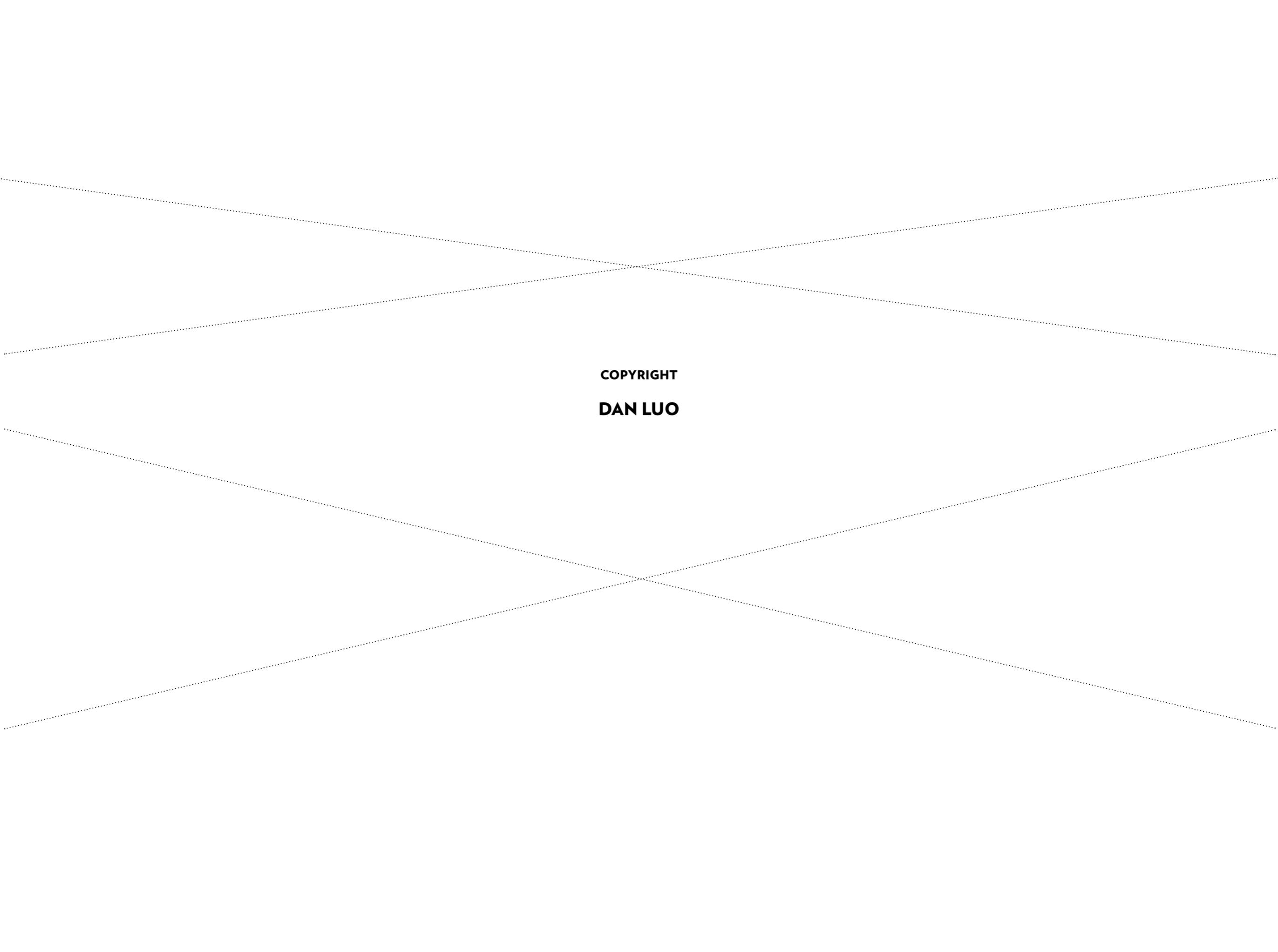
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With all the support, encouragement, and advise, I am truly grateful to all my committee: Professor Maria Rogal, Professor Brian Slawson, and Professor Katerie Gladdys.

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In this creative project I explored the research question, “How to innovate the culture of the traditional Chinese Zodiac in the context of present Chinese society?”

This question was explored in two stages: 1) formal explorations and revisions of the signs of the Chinese Zodiac using a contemporary lens, and 2) creating a new visual language to integrate the Chinese and Western Zodiac signs.

This project began as a way to explore the popularity of the Western Zodiac (signs and signification) with Chinese youth, who seemed to abandon the ancient Chinese forms in favor of a system imported from the west.

Although my initial interests were in cultural preservation, researches and creative activities resulted in the creation of a hybrid contemporary visual language that integrates the Chinese and Western to appeal to a popular audience of young urban Chinese people. The resulting 144 hybrid symbol system, known as 12X12, are applied to artifacts of daily life to foster national confidence, self-identification, and the joy of the everyday in modern China.

NOTES:

<1> Open Door Policy: Deng Xiaoping set in train the transformation of China's economy when he announced a new "open door" policy in December 1978. Before then, China's main trading partners had been the USSR and its satellites. Deng realised that China needed Western technology and investment, and opened the door to foreign businesses who wanted to set up in China.

BBC, "Open Door Policy", http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/shared/spl/hi/in_depth/china_politics/key_people_events/html/8.stm, accessed Aug. 2011

<2> The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976) was a mass campaign of enormous dimensions. Aside from the general revolutionary high-tide that swept China, the period was marked by a large number of sub-campaigns. Indeed, whenever the situation called for a shift in orientation within the larger framework of the Cultural Revolution, this was engineered by setting in motion a new campaign. Factional struggles within the leadership also functioned as catalysts for campaigns.

Chinese posters, "The Cultural Revolution (1966-1976)", Last edited date: 5 April 2012, <http://chinese-posters.net/themes/cultural-revolution-campaigns.php>, accessed Jun. 2011

<3> The book "Astrology" was introduced into China by Ma Ha Ma at Ming Dynasty (1368-1644). It is the first Western Zodiac book introduced into China

china.com.cn 中国网, "scientific achievements in the History of Hui 回族历史上的科学成就", *china.com.cn* 中国网, Sep 19 2008, http://www.china.com.cn/aboutchina/zhuanti/hzfq/content_16503119.htm, accessed December 2011

<4> Zheng Jun 郑军, *Zhong Guo Li Dai Sheng Xiao Wen Shi Yi Shu 中国历代生肖纹饰艺术*, 200

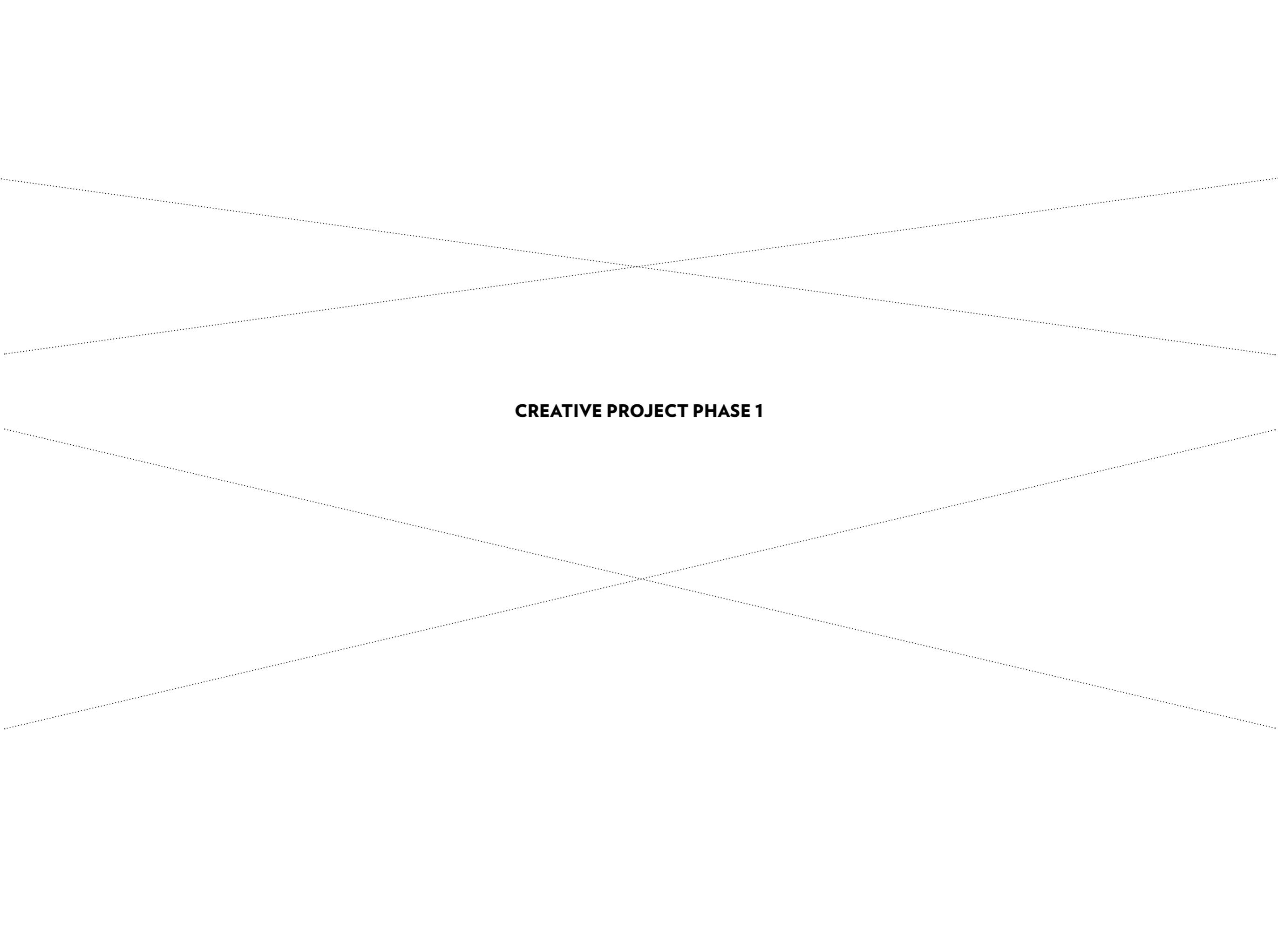
The boundaries between the different design disciplines are becoming increasingly blurry with the emerging technologies available. At the same time, graphic designers share more opportunities and responsibilities as problem solvers, visual communicators, and authors. As such, I am interested in exploring how graphic designers can play a role to innovate culture in creative ways.

This project focuses on how visual communication can be used for cultural innovation through the Chinese Zodiac. I use the emerging digital technologies, contemporary concepts from art and design, and existing design methodologies to explore ways of innovation in order to bring the new meaning from unique traditional culture and transform it into a new culture. My intent is to change the attitude of Chinese youth (between 18 & 30) towards the Chinese Zodiac culture to bring joy to their modern life with new culture.

The project started with the idea to preserve the Chinese Zodiac by developing its visual aspects to be contemporary. The project came from my personal experiences and observation. I am from the generation born after 1980. Our generation was largely affected by two policies that took place in the year of 1978. One is the "One Child Policy." It limits families to having one child in order to control the large population in China. We do not have brothers or sisters and we all grew up with the friends of the same age. It means most of us have the same Chinese Zodiac symbol since symbols are assigned by sequential year. Thus, there is not much difference to talk about among us in terms of our Chinese Zodiac symbol.

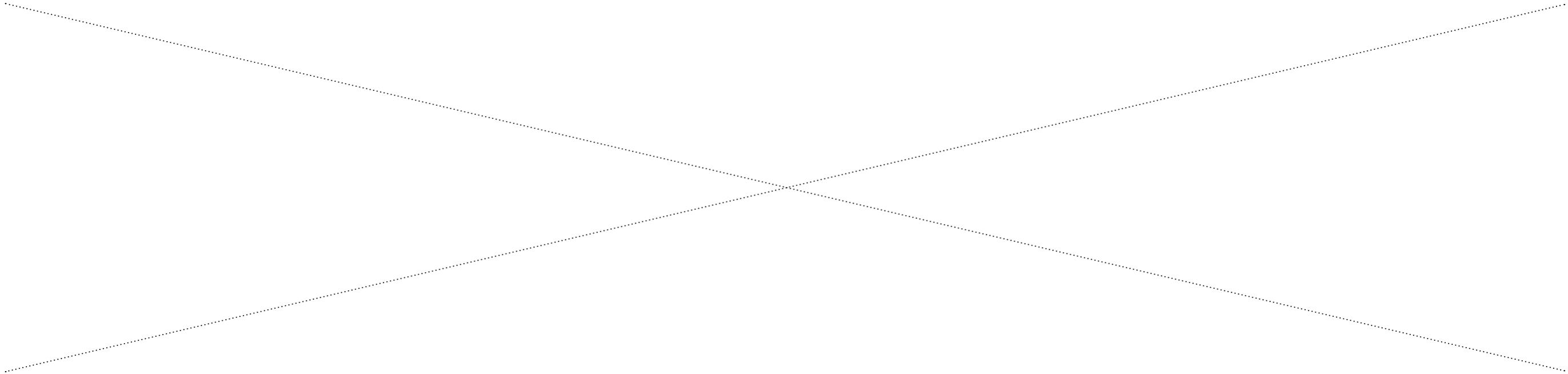
Besides the "One Child Policy", people in my generation were affected by "Open Door Policy".¹ It was designed to promote foreign trade and economic investment. After 1966 and before the policy took place, people were not allowed to discuss things from the capitalist world because of the Cultural Revolution Campaigns (1966–1976).² Due to the "Open Door Policy", our generation had a chance to discuss many things from capitalist countries, such as the Western Zodiac. Although the concept of the Western Zodiac was brought into China during Ming dynasty³ long before 1978 when China opened the market, the Western Zodiac culture began to be popular since the early 90s. Personally, I know the Western Zodiac from the Japanese cartoon "Saint Seiya: Knight of the Zodiac", which was introduced into China in 1990. The story was developed with the background of Greek astrology (the Western Zodiac). The Western Zodiac was always a conversation topic when I was in elementary, middle school, high school, and college. I was only fascinated by the Western Zodiac, most of time I did not pay too much attention to the Chinese Zodiac.

However, the Chinese Zodiac captured my attention in the summer of 2010 when I returned to China to visit my family. I came to a bookstore by chance. The book "*A Collection of Chinese Zodiac Patterns from All Ages*"⁴ caught my attention. I was not sure why I picked up the book and why I was reading it. But when I read the book for a while, I realized that I had not paid attention to the Chinese Zodiac that from our own traditional culture for a long time. I felt that something was not right. I could not define the problem. I decided to do more research to find out.



CREATIVE PROJECT PHASE 1

CREATIVE PROJECT PHASE 1
PROBLEMS



I began to study the popularity of the Chinese Zodiac in different large Chinese web portal sites. As shown below, “sohu.com” (FIG. 1) is one large and popular Chinese web portal sites. “mitbbs.com” (FIG. 2) is the largest Chinese online forum in North America. Both of them only have the Western Zodiac discussion boards (highlighted in the images with the red color). The Chinese Zodiac discussion boards are nowhere to be found. “tianya.com” (FIG. 3) is the largest Chinese forum in China. It has a Chinese Zodiac discussion board and a Western discussion board. However, according to the difference of the number of the total posts, the Western Zodiac board is more popular.



FIG. 1 Screen shot of the website: sohu.com



FIG. 2 Screen shot of the website: mitbbs.com

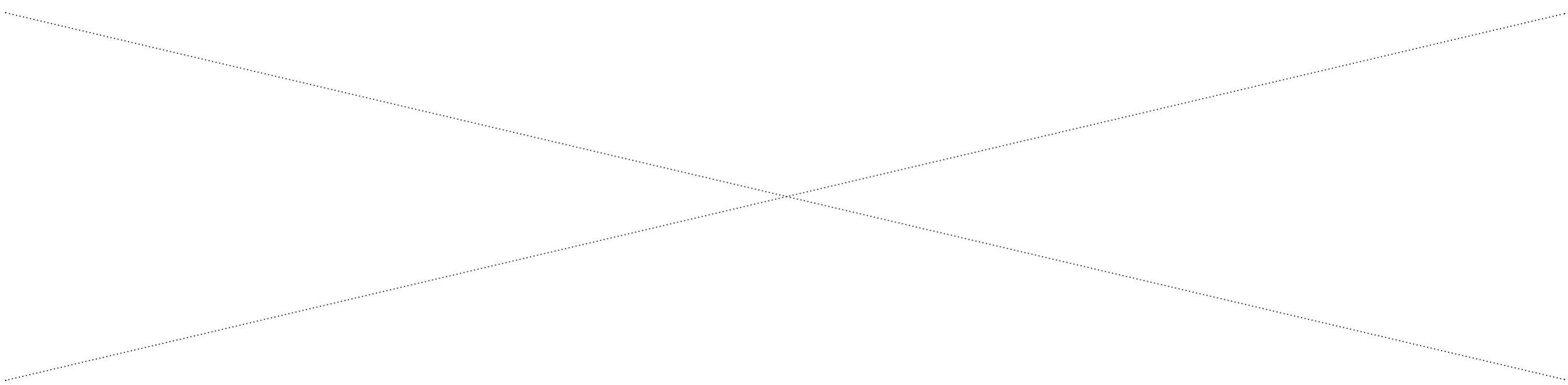


The Western Zodiac Board:
Main Posts: 41003
Total Posts: 937915

The Chinese Zodiac Board:
Main Posts: 6564
Total Posts: 175499

FIG. 3 Screen shot of the website: tianya.com

CREATIVE PROJECT PHASE 1
PROCESS
The Chinese Zodiac Exploration through a Contemporary Lens



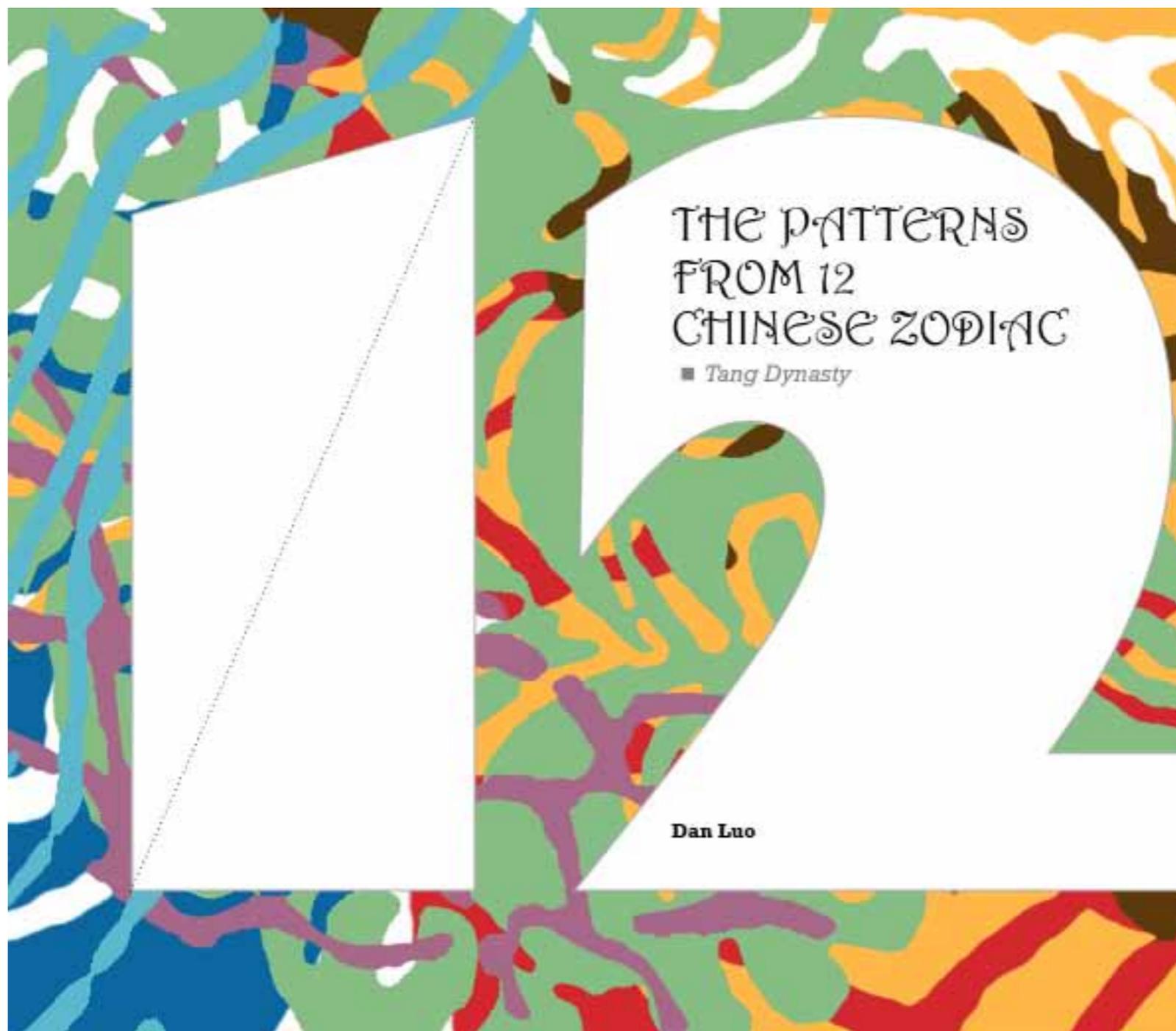
1.1 The Study of Traditional Pattern on the 12 Chinese Zodiac Animal Figures

Concept

The catalog is a collection of patterns. They were collected from the lithography of the Chinese Zodiac stone engraved by artist Yang, Zhiyi, and anonymous artists in Tang Dynasty. I select the twelve figures of Chinese Zodiac because they have many representative patterns developed in Tang Dynasty (618-907), which flourished the most of all dynasties in the history of China. The purpose of collecting the patterns from the Chinese Zodiac was to discuss the meanings of the patterns and the cultural history of the twelve Chinese Zodiac symbols.

Analysis & Findings

The process of creating this book about traditional patterns inspired me to develop a new visual language for the Chinese Zodiac figure design and directly led me to the next project: the Chinese Zodiac Animals figures exploration.



Please click to see the video

FIG. 6 Book Writing: The patterns from 12 Chinese Zodiac Animal Figures (Tang Dynasty)

1.2 The Exploration of the Chinese Zodiac Animals Figures – through the method of contemporary drawing

Concept

The intention of the project is to develop a modern visual language of the 12 Chinese Zodiac animal figures using contemporary drawing techniques and methods. The idea came from the problem I observed during my field study in Beijing, China, in 2010. The issue of designing the Chinese Zodiac imageries at present is that it lacks its unique and fresh visual language that should derive from the culture of Chinese Zodiac and represent the significance of contemporary and modern contexts. In other words, The design of the Chinese Zodiac in China tended simply to follow classic works done in the past or use traditional elements without innovation. Consequently, the Chinese youth gradually lost their interest in the Chinese Zodiac culture because of the visual language, and the culture therefore may fade away from their modern life. In turn, I realize that it is important to develop new imageries of the Chinese Zodiac in order to communicate with young audiences to preserve and deliver the culture. In my opinion, not only should the visual language have its functionality, but also it is an effective way to ensure its vitality and uniqueness.

The first attempt in drawing “New Composition of the 12” (FIG. 7) was to abstract the patterns from 12 Chinese Zodiac animal figures and then overlap them and find new shapes among the old shapes. In the process of drawing this, I developed a method in a very contemporary and nontraditional way. It involved contemporary drawing techniques and methods. And I applied this on the second attempt to draw “The New Chinese Zodiac Drawing” (The work was exhibited in Focus Gallery, UF) (FIG. 8), which developed into the new visual form for each animal figures. It is because the Chinese Zodiac figures are used individually.



FIG. 7 New Composition of the 12



[Please click to see the video](#)

FIG. 8 The New Chinese Zodiac Drawing, Focus Gallery, UF 2011

NOTES:

<1> Chinese Paper Cutting or Jianzhi is the first type of paper cutting design, since paper was invented by Cai Lun in the Eastern Han Dynasty in China. The art form later spread to other parts of the world with different regions adopting their own cultural styles. Because the cut outs are also used to decorate doors and windows, they are sometimes referred to “chuang hua” , meaning Window Flower.

fWikipedia contributors, “Chinese Paper Cutting ,” *Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia*, http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chinese_paper_cutting, accessed Sep. 2011

Drawing Process

1. Drew around 50 pieces of the realistic animal figure for each animal in order to familiarize myself with the major structure and features of the animals.
2. Drew around 100 pieces of abstract figure drawings for each animal. Each drawing was finished in 45 seconds using left hand. The purpose was to get very relaxed drawing and unexpected abstract graphics.
3. Scanned the left handed drawing pieces for each animal figure, removed the background, and then overlapped the lines to discover new shapes among the lines in order to create new animal figure image.
4. Vectorized the figure images in “Adobe Illustrator” so that the file can be cut using laser cut machine.
5. Eventually, the “Rat” and “Ox” new figure images were installed in the Focus Gallery of the University of Florida for a 2 week exhibition.

Analysis & Findings

The value of the project was to promote the visual forms of the Chinese Zodiac from the antique visual language to a contemporary language. This was explored by the contemporary drawing methods. Meanwhile, the overall style still keeps the senses of Chinese paper cut¹ style but it is modern appearance rather than traditional.

The drawing methodology and the process can be a standard procedure to explore the visual language of the Chinese Zodiac animal figures. The potential products that could be developed from this drawing experiment are the modern stickers (Window Flower)(See note 1) for Chinese to decorate their windows with the same function as the traditional Chinese paper cut. Based on the findings, there are some questions from the exploration. Although the visual language is new and fresh, is it an effective way to bring the joy back to Chinese youth life? Is it an effective way to innovate Chinese Zodiac culture? Paper cut products are normally only used during Chinese year. As a result, this attempt cannot truly communicate with the Chinese young in their daily life. According to the analysis and findings, I decided to bring a new method (interactive design) into the project. And it brought me to the next experiment.

1.3 The Chinese Zodiac Animals Figures Exploration – through the method of interactive design

Concept

Interactive Design is

“the practice of designing interactive digital products, environments, systems, and services. Like many other design fields’ interaction design also has an interest in form but its main focus is on behavior. What clearly marks interaction design as a design field as opposed to a science or engineering field is that it is synthesis and imagining things as they might be, more so than focusing on how things are. Interaction design is heavily focused on satisfying the needs and desires of the people who will use the product.”¹

NOTES:

<1> Cooper, Alan; Reimann, Robert; Cronin, Dave, “About Face 3: The Essentials of Interaction Design”, Indianapolis, Indiana: Wiley. pp. 610. 2011

<2> Jesselanglely, “The Digital Age”, Jul 22, 2011, <http://www.comluv.com/the-digital-age/>, accessed Sep. 2011

<3> Processing, <http://processing.org>, accessed Feb. 2011

As we all know, we are in a digital age that “describes the moment where everyone came in contact with and became fully dependent on technology to get information and get it quickly.”² The computer technology is getting smaller and smaller and takes place everyday. With the emergence of smart phones and tablet computers, the interaction is not only limited to desktop computer anymore. Thus, drawing interactive technology into the Chinese Zodiac innovation exploration could be a solution for the problem of communication. It could be a method to bring entertaining, education and engaging design into their daily life. Specifically, the project was developed with “Processing” which is an open source programming language and integrated development environment (IDE) built for the electronic arts and visual design communities.³

The intention of the project “User Generated Pattern APP” (FIG. 9) is to develop a medium that allows the audience to draw and play to obtain unexpected patterns and graphic within the animal figures. The project used the rat figure designed in the last project as the shape and used programming language of Processing generate unexpected pattern as the filling. The intriguing part is that the patterns will be different every time when audiences interact with the program.



Please click to see the video

FIG. 9 User Generated Pattern App

Methodology

The project was created using Processing programming language, which is a simplified version of Java language. The circles' style, its size, its color, and the texts were determined by the mouse location on the screen. Different locations will trigger different colors, sizes and styles. The audience is able to draw within the rat shape when he/she releases the mouse click button and move around the mouse inside the shape. Once the audience has a graphic he/she wants, he/she can press the 'space' bar on the keyboard to save the graphic to the local disk.

Analysis & Findings

The project allowed the audience to create user-generated patterns for the animal figures. Each graphic is unique to the audience who create the piece. He/she can use the graphic in many different ways. For instance, the graphic can be printed on paper and cut to be a modern window decoration. The graphic can also printed on other items such as a cup, a key chain, a T-shirt and other living goods etc. It is a good way to transfer the idea of the graphic to the actual products. The graphic makes the products become more personal and diversified. Based on this exploration, I decided to develop the interactive design idea even further. The next project involves another concept: virtual reality (VR).

1.4 A New Experience of the Chinese Zodiac — through VR technology

NOTES:

<1> Pimentel, Ken, and Kevin Texeira, *Virtual Reality: Through the New Looking-Glass*, Intel/Windcrest McGraw Hill, 1993

<2> Unity3: “Unity 3 is a game development tool that has been designed to let you focus on creating amazing games.”

Unity3, <http://unity3d.com/unity/>, accessed Sep. 2011

Concept/ Methodology

Virtual reality (VR) is a term to describe a computer-simulation environment, which is able to simulate the physical environment or imaginary world. VR technology allows the audiences to immerse themselves in a certain context created by the project. “In general, the term *virtual reality* refers to an immersive, interactive experience generated by a computer.”¹ Specifically, the project was developed by the game engine—“Unity 3”² and the 3D modeling program—Maya.

The concept of the project “Hi Cat!”(FIG. 10) is to construct a super realistic environment that allows the audience to navigate the space and immerse themselves. The project was designed to provide a different Chinese Zodiac culture experience, which is not only a visual experience but also an interactive experience. The project still uses the rat figure as an example to explore the concept. The idea of the environment design is to simulate an imaginary space that implies the Chinese Zodiac story “How did rat take the cat’s position?” In the story, one of the Chinese Zodiac animals was supposed to be the cat but a rat took the cat place by doing some tricks. So the cat trapped in her sweet dream did not catch up to the Chinese Zodiac coronation. The rat convinced the God to give the place to him. The project attempted to simulate the fantasy land the cat was trapped in. The intriguing space is designed to allure the player to navigate and eventually get frustrating and lost himself/herself in it. The intention is to provide a chance to the audience to experience the feeling of the cat in the Chinese Zodiac story rather than narrate the story to them.

The navigable environment is a closed space without entry and exit. The player was set in the center of the space as initial value. They will not be notified that the space is a loop navigable space. The audiences will get frustrated and gradually get the idea. It means you will be trapped if you are attracted by the beautiful space and start to navigate. However, you won’t feel frustrated and trapped in the space if you choose to stay where you are and no moving at all. It simulated what happened to the cat in the Chinese Zodiac story and his feeling.



[Please click to see the video](#)

FIG. 10 Hi Cat

NOTES:

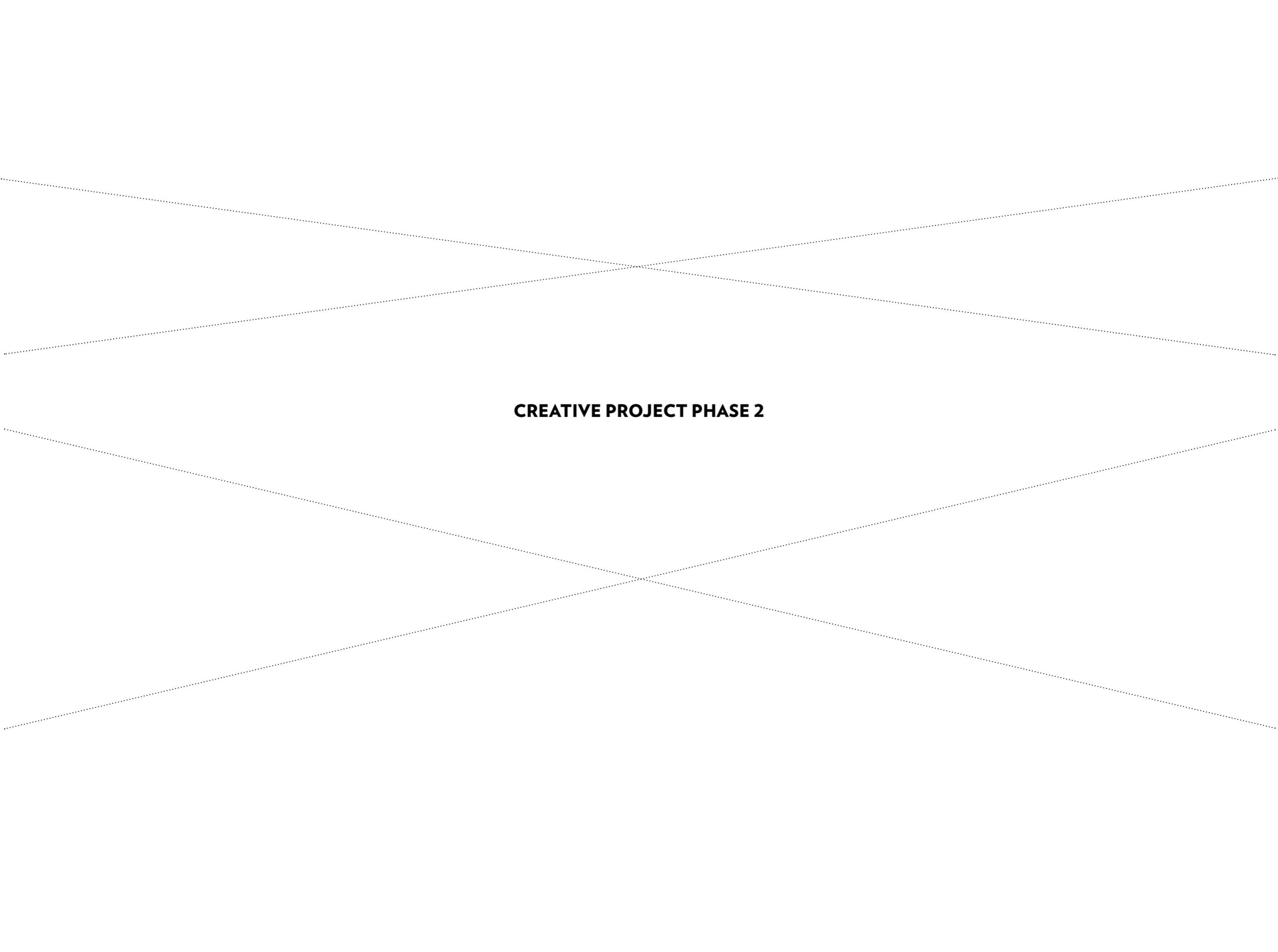
<1> Game engines: A game engine is a system designed for the creation and development of video games.

Wikipedia contributors, "Game engine," Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia, http://http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Game_engine, accessed Sep. 2011

Analysis & Findings

The project is an experimental work. It was inspired by contemporary game art and focuses on using a game engine¹ to explore thinking, ideas and questions in the context of interactive art. The project developed the idea far away from the traditional game design even though it was developed with a game engine. It concentrated on providing a space that asks the audiences to experience the feeling abstracted from the Chinese Zodiac "rat story" rather than telling the story itself to audiences. Although the attempt is hardly a commercial game, the structure of the project was well designed. It could easily transformed into a commercial game design, which will approach broader audiences. It could be a very engaging solution.

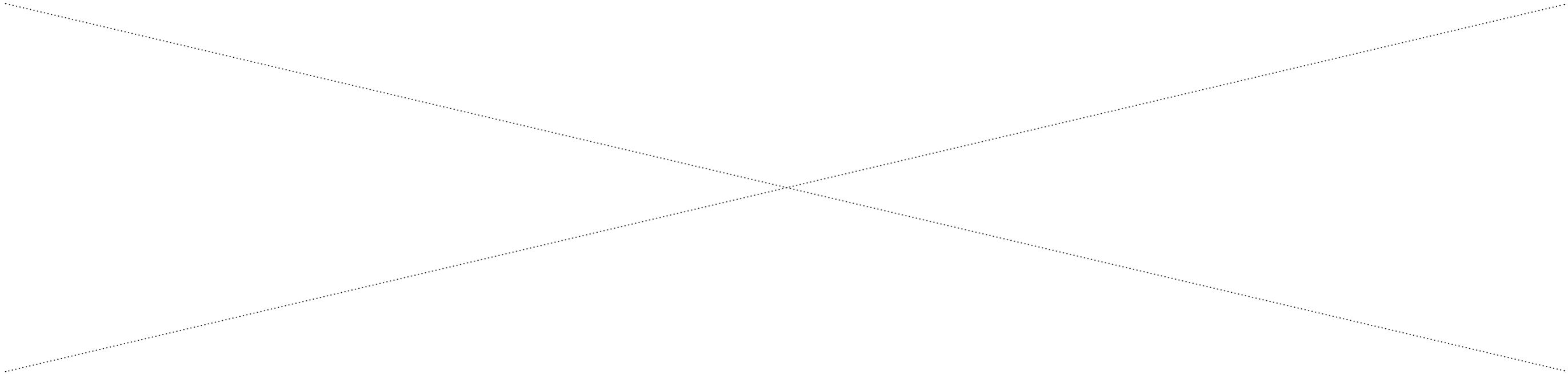
After I completed this exploration, I realized that the project was at a bottleneck. Although this approach could be a engaging solution for distributing the knowledge of the Chinese Zodiac culture, it has not bring the culture into the daily life of the Chinese youth. In the meantime, I kept doing my research, which eventually led me to the path of the Chinese Zodiac innovation.



CREATIVE PROJECT PHASE 2

CREATIVE PROJECT PHASE 2

PROBLEMS



My focus was on the study of the Chinese Zodiac cultural social customs. As part of my research I interviewed Chinese young people (18-30) who I wanted to be the target audiences for the project. The Chinese Zodiac roots in Chinese traditional culture and is widely known and presented as twelve auspicious animal figures associated with sequential years. Each is linked with a legend and description of a person’s personality, future luck, and possible events in their life. However, according to my new study, the Chinese Zodiac is not only a part of traditional Chinese culture but also a lifestyle.

First, the most significant event of the Chinese Zodiac culture is the Chinese New year represented by a Chinese Zodiac figure according to the Chinese year. Here is an example that shows how Chinese people celebrating Dragon Year in 2000 and 2012. According to the image: Dragon Dance 2000 (FIG. 11) , people were doing the dragon dance with the accessory of the dragon figure. The major figure in the image: 100 yuan polymer dragon note (FIG. 12) is a traditional dragon drawing. The note was issued in 2000—by People’s National Bank of China for the intention of celebrating the Chinese New Year. In the FIG. 13, the images were taken from the year 2012. As shown in these images, Chinese people still celebrate the Chinese Dragon New Year with the Chinese Zodiac animal figure—Dragon.

100 yuan polymer dragon note
It was issued in 2000 - year of the dragon by People’s National Bank of China



FIG. 11 Dragon Dance 2000: The image was taken in the Fire Dragon Festival of Si Chuan province in the 2000 Chinese New Year (The Dragon Year) from: ccler.com/UpFiles/Article/200806/2008060520474366349.jpg

The front features the dragon image to celebrate the 2000 dragon year



The reverse features the China Centenary Altar in Beijing, a key construction marking the advent of the new millennium.



FIG. 12 100 yuan polymer dragon note from: images.shop.360buy.com/shop/ware/description/14898/cap/1001034326/17f34535-1b24-495b-836f-a2c03228dc80.jpg



Please click to see the video

FIG. 13 images from:
[dycq.com/UploadFile/%E6%96%B0%E5%B9%B4%E5%BF%AB%E4%B9%90-2\(1\).jpg](http://dycq.com/UploadFile/%E6%96%B0%E5%B9%B4%E5%BF%AB%E4%B9%90-2(1).jpg)
cnr.cn/newscenter/gnxw/gnjx/201201/W020120105288369752497.jpg
image.gxnews.com.cn/uploadpic/2012/01/19/91559f7fb61306c67d849827506a8f4b.jpg
cicn.com.cn/pic/attachement/jpg/site2/20120113/4487fc7d9044107a1fff01.jpg
upload.cnforex.com/images/2012/1/23/04.jpg
upload.cnforex.com/images/2012/1/23/02.jpg

Second, according to the interview answers to the question: “When is the first time that you knew of your Chinese Zodiac symbol?”, it shows that basically all Chinese knew their own Chinese Zodiac symbol since they were very little. (FIG. 14) Apparently, the Chinese Zodiac is not disappearing as I assumed.

你什么时候知道自己的生肖的?

When is the first time that you know your Chinese Zodiac symbol?

“5, 6岁吧。”

Five , six years old.

“记事起。”

When I started to remember things.

“从小就知道。”

Since I was very little.

“是个中国人打小儿就知道。”

As long as you are Chinese, you would know when you were very little.

“一直都知道，谁都知道自己的属相。”

I always know. Everyone(Chinese) does.

FIG. 14 from Appendix: The Interview notes

NOTES:

<1> Currencyhaus, “China Millienium Commemorative 100 Yuan Polymer Notes”, <http://currencyhaus.blogspot.com/2011/01/china-millienium-commemorative-100-yuan.html>[dycq.com/UploadFile/%E6%96%B0%E5%B9%B4%E5%BF%AB%E4%B9%90-2\(1\).jpg](http://dycq.com/UploadFile/%E6%96%B0%E5%B9%B4%E5%BF%AB%E4%B9%90-2(1).jpg), Jan. 15 2011, accessed Nov. 2011

Third, besides the findings above, a survey from the newspaper *Chinese Youth Daily* led the project eventually to the path of cultural innovation. According to the survey,

59.2% Chinese Youth, more or less worship and have blind faith in things foreign; 48.7% Chinese Youth are not confident when they are facing the people from developed country. According to the physiology professor Po Wang from Beijing University, the developing status of economy and the confidence level are two different things. The confidence of people is not only tied to a nation’s economic and cultural status, but also more importantly reflected by the self-identification of their own historical culture and traditions. The confidence of the nation will be gone at the same time when people lose that self-identification and acknowledgment. It is very important for people to regain the appreciation of their own tradition. All the new findings make me believe that at present it is necessary to innovate the traditional culture so that it’s able to communicate with Chinese youth again and fit their modern life to foster the self-identification.¹

Thus, I had a breakthrough in the next exploration — Chinese Zodiac culture innovation the second stage of the study.

“How to innovate the culture of the traditional Chinese Zodiac in the context of the society of contemporary China?” It became a central question of my project. The approach came from the study of the interview I conducted among Chinese youth. The interview clearly shows the need of the Chinese youth regarding to the topic of the change of Chinese society since 1978. They want to express themselves and to discover a medium to convey the meaning of who they are in the context of the society of contemporary China. They admire the new life style and advanced technologies from western countries and also they want to be respected as new Chinese youth. They want to take out the old and undeveloped impression. As a result, in the perspective of the Chinese youth, the Chinese Zodiac culture implies the old China and the Western Zodiac culture represents the new life style from the western countries. They embraced the Western Zodiac culture and lost their interest in Chinese Zodiac, meanwhile, they have conflicting thoughts regarding this. Many interviewees mentioned that they know the Chinese Zodiac culture is the root of China. Although the Western Zodiac is popular and interesting, they know it is not their own culture and it cannot completely represent that who they are.

Thus, the project needs to discover a way to bridge the two cultures in order to bring the joy back to the modern life of Chinese young people, and to provide a media for Chinese youth to foster national confidence and self-identification in the China.

Additionally, based on my interview (Appendix: Interview notes), four keywords were abstracted from the answers. They represent the impression of the status of the Chinese Zodiac by Chinese youth. They are:

old-fashioned
rustic
cheesy
undiversified

NOTES:

<1>
beta.tarot.com/articles/astrology/western-vs-chinese-astrology
en.astralfeeling.com/L3.double-Zodiac_connections.php
www.8s8s.com/xx/site.htm

Correspondingly, some other keywords indicate the qualities that Chinese youth are looking for in the new design. They are:

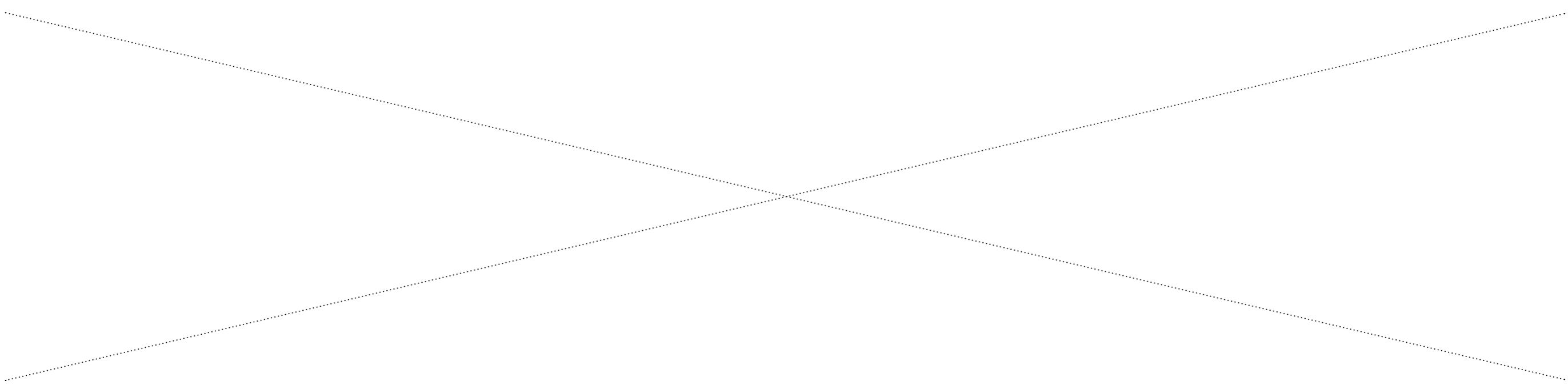
revolutionary
new meaning
practical
diversified
modern
abstract
fashion
Chinese
no animal figures

The study inspired me in many aspects. Especially, one person said, “I feel my personality matches my Chinese Zodiac and my Western Zodiac.” I feel the same way as well. Meanwhile, based on my study of some Zodiac web sites¹, they had studies of comparing and combining these two cultures theoretically. I then made the decision to create a hybrid Zodiac by combining the two.

CREATIVE PROJECT PHASE 2

PROCESS

Creating a New Visual Language to Integrate the Chinese and Western Zodiac Signs



NOTES:

<1> Author notes: There are many versions of the derivation of Chinese Zodiac. The widely accepted version was from a historical document, (Lun Heng) by Wang, Chong in Han Dynasty. It is the first document that recorded the derivation of Chinese Zodiac. In this document, each year was assigned to one of the twelve animals according to Di Zhi, a calendar scheme in ancient China.

<2> Zheng Jun 郑军, Zhong Guo Li Dai Sheng Xiao Wen Shi Yi Shu 中国历代生肖纹饰艺术, 2003

2.1 The Exploration of The New Symbols – based on the findings from the interview

Concept

The 12 Chinese Zodiac animals were assigned by sequential years.¹ They cycle every 12 years. And the 12 Western Zodiac signs were assigned by dates. They cycle roughly every 12 months, I multiplied the original Chinese Zodiac meaning with the Western Zodiac signs meaning. The intention is to diversify the meaning of the Chinese Zodiac and to bridge these two cultures, and to appeal to the Chinese youth and bring the joy to their modern life, meanwhile, it provides a medium for Chinese youth to foster national confidence and self-identification in modern China.

The exploration was based on the findings from the interview and the previous projects. There are several issues regarding the status quo of Chinese Zodiac in terms of its content and visual forms.

First, the visual forms of Chinese Zodiac cannot represent the aesthetic of contemporary China society. According to the book “*A Collection of Chinese Zodiac Patterns from All Ages*”², the figure design did not have many changes since early modern society. Most of them are animal figure design, which has featured the styles from ancient time. According to my interview (Appendix–A: The Interview Notes), the Chinese youth expect something revolutionary that they have never seen anywhere before.

Second, the Chinese Zodiac was assigned by years. It means if we were born in the same year, we cannot find our uniqueness through the Chinese Zodiac. With the increasing influence of western cultures and extensive use of the Internet in China, Chinese younger generations are more accepting of and interested in the Western Zodiac, which roots to Greek mythology. It gives the Chinese young people a chance to identify themselves and to know others through the 12 Western Zodiac which was assigned by date. It means even though they were born during same year, there is the difference through different constellations.

Third, in the interview (See the last interview question from Appendix–A: The Interview Notes) clearly shows the need of Chinese youth regarding the topic of change since 1978. They want to express themselves and find a medium to convey the meaning of who they are in the context of contemporary Chinese society. They admired the new life style and advanced technology from the western world. Also they want to be respected as new Chinese youth. They want to get rid of the old and underdeveloped impression.

Based on the new progress of the study, the solution naturally came to multiply the original meaning of the Chinese Zodiac by combining them with the 12 Western Zodiac signs. As a result, it transferred into a new culture with the new 144 hybrid symbols integrating the Western Zodiac signs with Chinese characters of Chinese Zodiac. The new symbols work as a language and each symbol individually conveys the meaning of self-identification from the perspectives both the Chinese and the Western Zodiac.

Although I had a concept of combining the two Zodiac systems, how to visualize them became a key question. I developed many drafts (FIG. 15) to find a visual method and form. Eventually, I decided to use Chinese characters rather than the animal figures because Chinese characters are pictographic and have a very strong abstract structure. The hybrid symbols' structure is the Chinese characters and one of the strokes is the Western Zodiac sign (FIG. 16 Video: The Process of Designing the Hybrid Symbol). As a result, there are total 144 hybrid symbols (FIG. 17), which are easily recognized by an audience who can read Chinese.



FIG. 15 Draft Design

The 12 Chinese Characters of the Chinese Zodiac



Please click to see the video

FIG. 16 The Process of Designing the Hybrid Symbol

CHINESE ZODIAC / CHARACTERS
YEAR

CONSTELLATION
MONTH

	鼠 Rat	牛 OX	虎 Tigther	兔 Rabbit	龙 Dragon	蛇 Snake	马 Horse	羊 Ram	猴 Monkey	鸡 Rooster	狗 Dog	猪 Pig
Capricorn												
Aquarius												
Pisces												
Aries												
Taurus												
Gemini												
Cancer												
Leo												
Virgo												
Libra												
Scorpio												
Sagittarius												

FIG. 17 144 hybrid symbols

Analysis & Findings

The aspect was a breakthrough among my explorations and studies. The visual form was designed with simplified Chinese characters with modern fresh aesthetic rather than realistic or abstract animal figures. The Chinese characters used a common language.

During the critique of the project, a key question was addressed: How to present the new symbols into daily life. Designers are the people who are sitting on the edge of the circle of a society and looking at the place far away from the center of the society to bring the advanced thinking and ideas back into people's daily life. How to bring the 144 hybrid symbols into the daily life of Chinese youth becomes a new challenge that led me to the next exploration.

2.2 The Vehicles: Bring the New Symbols into the Daily Life of Chinese Youth

According to the analysis and findings from the last project, the 144 hybrid symbols needed vehicles to bring them to the daily life of Chinese youth. Based on the function of Zodiac symbols and the findings from my interviews, I chose to create a store to showcase the way the 144 symbols could be applied to products of everyday life and a website to explain the system.

2.2.1 Vehicle 1: Website “144 symbols finder”

Concept

The project is a website (FIG. 18) designed for finding a person’s hybrid symbol by inputting his/her date of birth. The intention of the design is to communicate the meaning of the 144 symbols, which is the foundation of the project. I developed a brand for the 144 symbols. The brand name is “12X12”, as the name suggests, that represents the idea of how was the 144 hybrid symbol developed.

Methodology

The website was programmed with HTML, CSS, and JavaScript. There are two calculation systems. One was designed for calculating the Chinese Zodiac corresponding to the year. The other one was designed for calculating the Western Zodiac corresponding to the birth-month and birthday. (A special thanks to Ning Yun for the technical assistance.)

Analysis & Findings

The website superficially communicated the concept of the 12X12 project.



FIG. 18 Website "144 symbols finder"

2.2.2 Vehicle 2: A store

In the stage of exploration, I focused on finding a vehicle to present the hybrid symbols in a practical way. The vehicle needs to give life to the symbols. The symbols will not only be presented as a graphic but also as some other forms that can benefit Chinese youth's daily life. The Chinese Zodiac products in China are more personal items. According to the Chinese history, there are many daily use personal items, such as paper cuts of window decorations (FIG. 19), the Chinese Zodiac pendant lock for baby (FIG. 20), the tiger pillow (FIG. 21). Moreover, according to the interviewees, many expressed their interest in having practical products for daily use.



FIG. 19: paper cuts of window decorations
from: redchina.tv/userfiles/image/20100224/%E8%99%8E%E5%89%AA%E7%BA%B8.jpg



FIG. 20: the Chinese Zodiac pendant lock for baby
from: img.artww.com/33763/1027846-2.jpg



FIG. 21: the tiger pillow
from: img07.taobaocdn.com/imgextra/i7/397415165/T2.bhjXfBaXXXXXXXXX_!397415165.jpg

An idea of designing a store for selling the hybrid symbols products was coming out naturally. The function of the store was not only for showing the products but also to deliver the in depth concept of the project. Correspondingly, the store was divided into three parts.

1. Information Centers:

Website—144 symbols finder

The audience will be able to read the project description and find out his/her own hybrid symbol by inputting the date of birth.

2. Products Exhibition

I took 12 hybrid symbols from the diagonal line of the 144 hybrid symbols (FIG. 22: the 12 hybrid symbols on the diagonal line) applied color on the symbols and I developed the pattern coming from the symbols. Besides these, I also developed “the story patterns” (FIG. 23) from the contemporary drawing because it represents the starting point for this project and it tells the history of the project. Based on all the patterns design, I designed many prototype products (FIG, 24: the prototype products). Most of the products were manufactured by Zazzle.com according to my design specifications.. I personally made the table set (the dining table, the chairs, and the lamp) with the story patterns.



FIG. 22: the 12 hybrid symbols on the diagonal line



FIG. 23: the story pattern



FIG, 24: the prototype products

3. Commercial (FIG. 25: Video: 12 X Aries)

The advertising was designed to show many applications of the hybrid symbols and the future potential of the products. .



[Please click to see the video](#)

Eventually, the prototype store — 12X12 (FIG. 26: MFA thesis show, FIG. 27: the video of the products) was set up in the University Gallery, UF



Click the arrow to see the video of the products



Dining Table Set

Commercial: 12 X Aries (FIG. 25)

Website "144 symbols finder" (FIG. 18)

The story pattern lamp



The story pattern napkins



The table and the chairs are designed with the story pattern

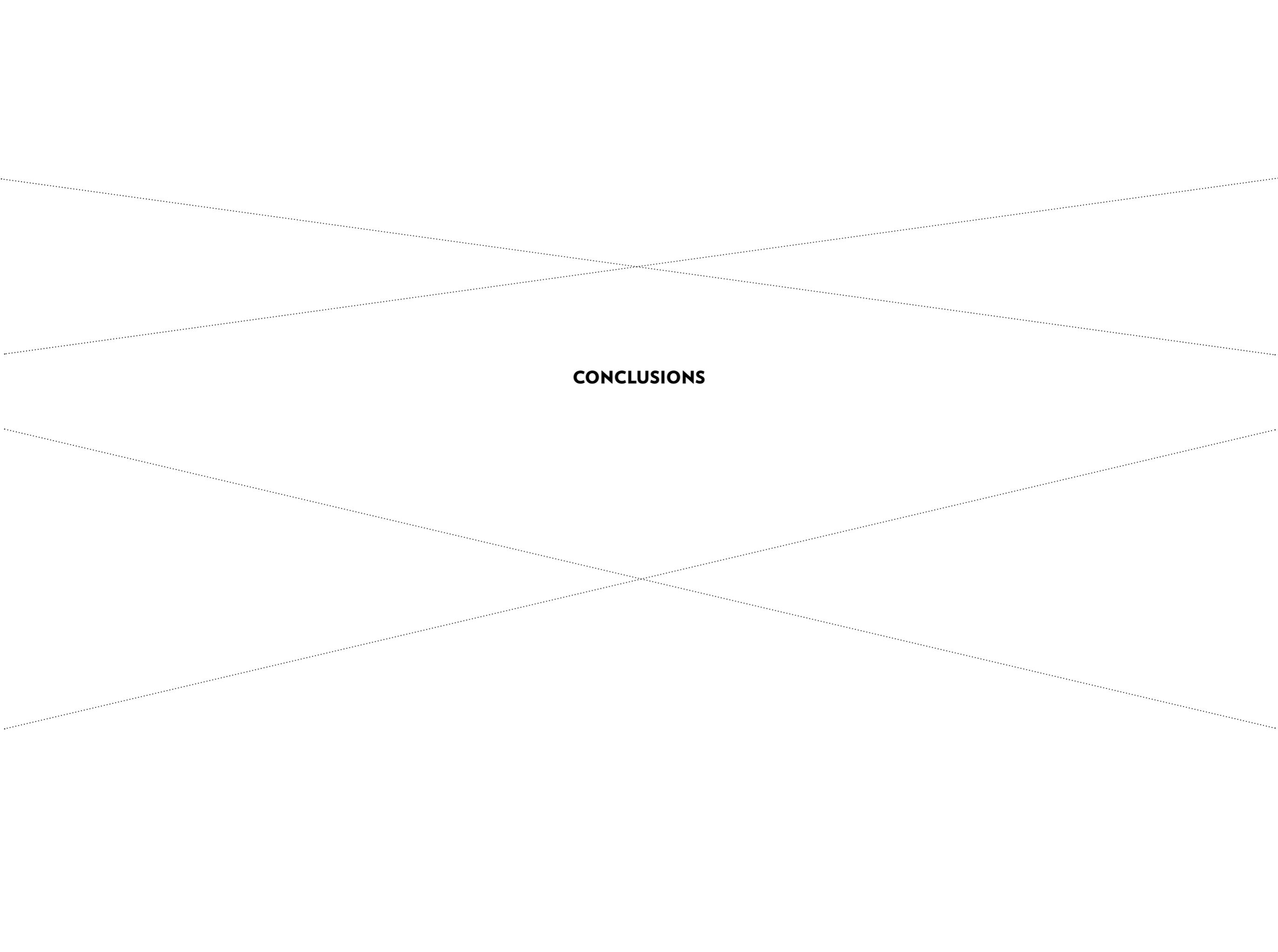


FIG. 25: Video: 12 X Aries



[Please click to see the video](#)

FIG. 27: the video of the products



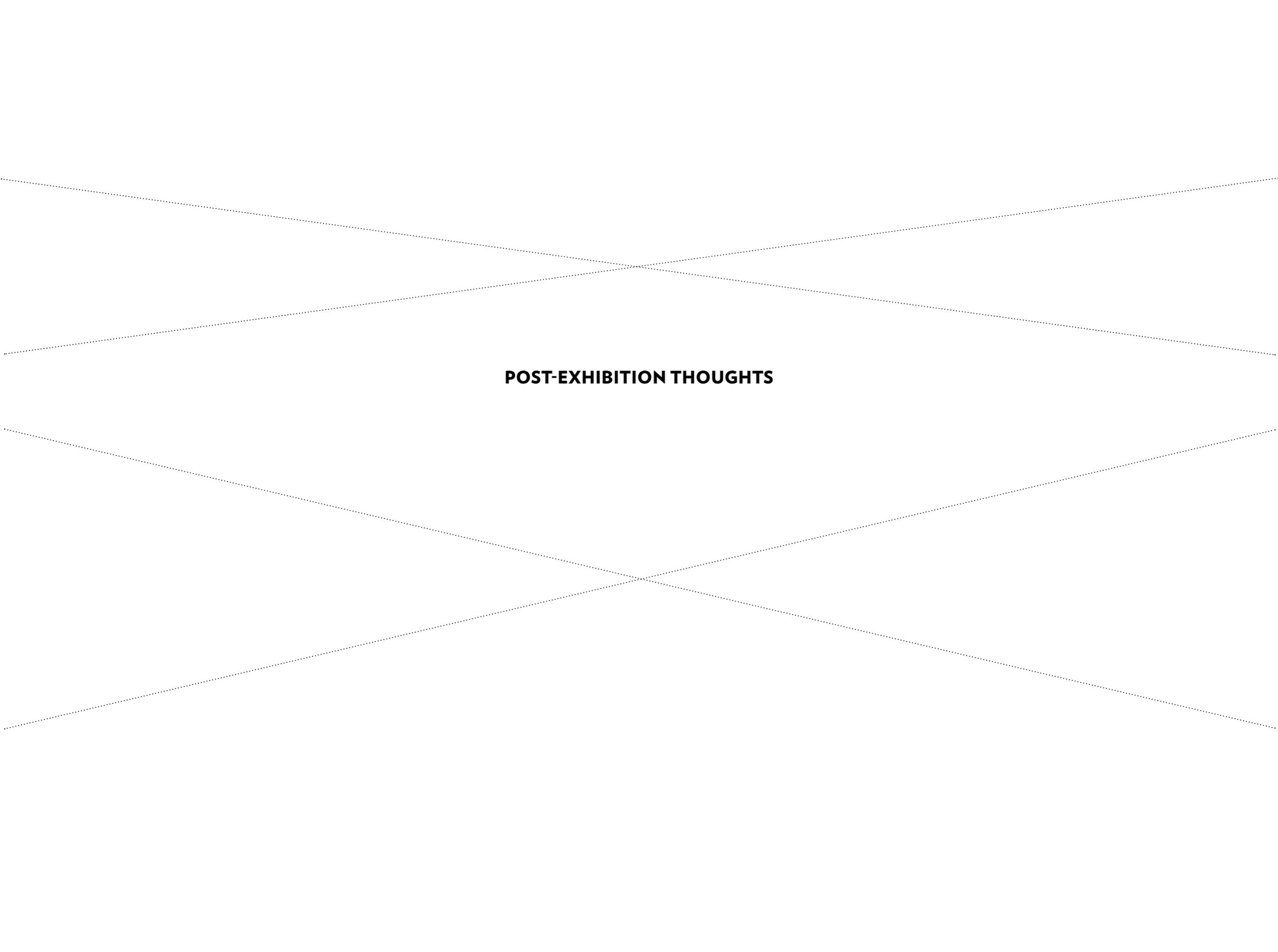
CONCLUSIONS

Although the project began with cultural preservation, research and creative activity resulted in the creation of a hybrid contemporary visual language that integrates the Chinese and western to appeal to a popular audience of young urban Chinese youth. The resulting 144 hybrid symbol system, known as 12X12, diversified the original meaning of the Chinese Zodiac by combining them with the 12 Western Zodiac signs. The new symbols works as a language and each symbol individually conveys the meaning from both perspectives of the Chinese Zodiac and the Western Zodiac. The 12X12 symbols are applied to artifacts of daily life to foster national confidence, self-identification, and the joy of the everyday in modern China.

Although the project is in a prototype stage, my intent is for, 12X12 to be both a physical and online store to deliver the in-depth concept of innovating the Chinese Zodiac culture.

Since at the prototype stage, there were many production limitations. I will need to reconsider what is the better solution of the design and the production. Here are some new questions will be answered in the future.

- Which product lines will fit into 12X12 concept and will bring the most benefit into people's lives and attract youth?
- How to develop 12X12 in a sustainable and durable context?
- How to efficiently educate/ inform people about the in depth concept of 12X12?



POST-EXHIBITION THOUGHTS

Post-Exhibition Thoughts

The exhibition involved many products, which cost around \$3000 to produce. Although it was a prototype store with about 15 products, it made me think how much money needs to be invested into the store if I open a real store in China or in the US. What distribution channels need to be involved? The price range is another thing need to be considered carefully because it directly affects if I can deliver the meaning of the project to broader audiences in China.

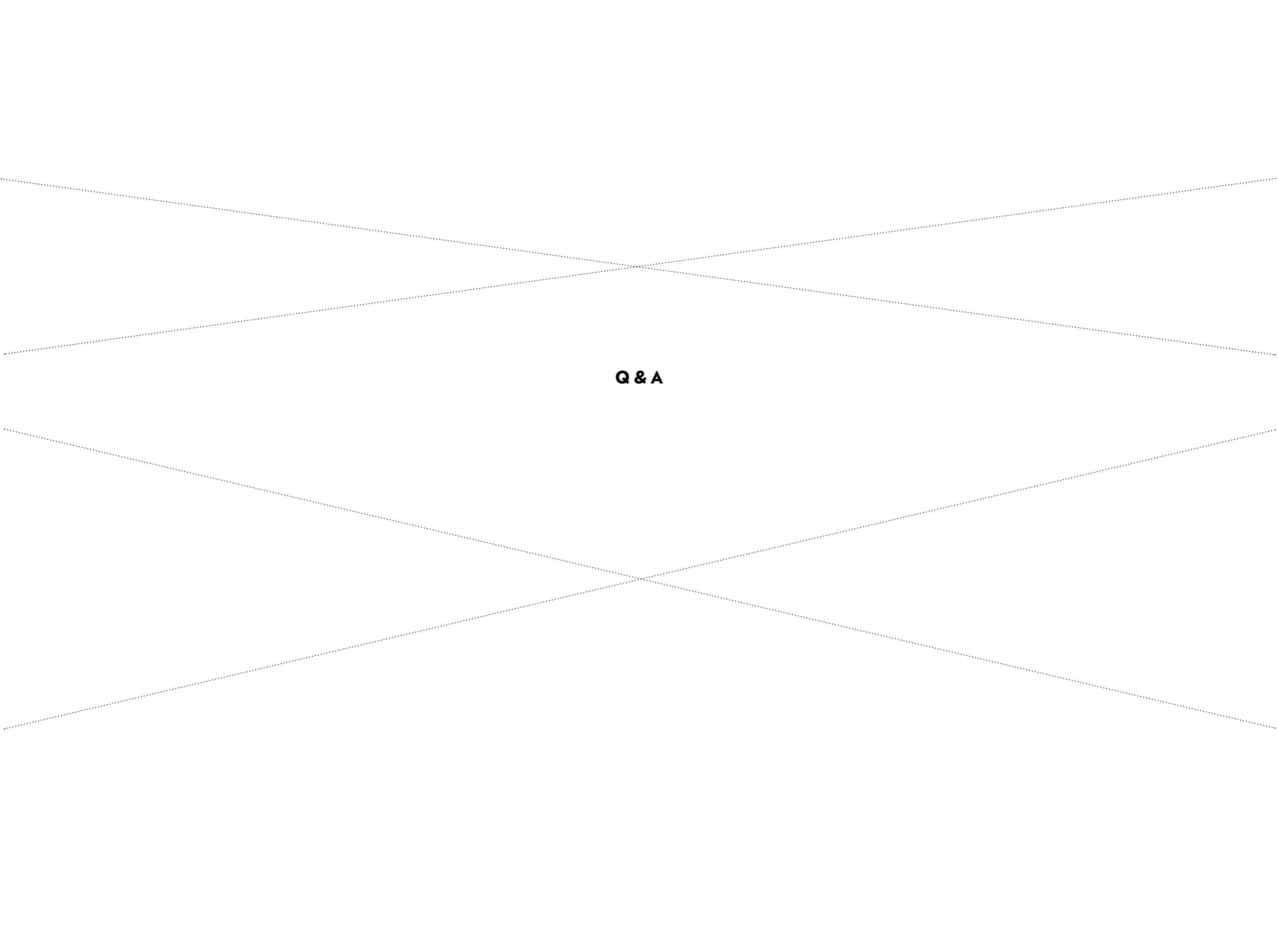
Regarding the exhibition I was asking myself a question: *What will I do differently if I do it again and have more production time?*

I will not produce so many different kinds of products; I will only focus on two products lines: one is fashion accessories products which will be smart phone cases, jewelry, scarves, belts, ties and cuff links. It is because I am personally very into fashion trends and I know how to design small fashion items. I believe I can make more creative product design. The other one is dining products: dinnerware, placemats, and napkins. It will get closer to people's daily lives.

However I want to address my public role as a designer—I think my personality and my thinking are intertwined. For designing any projects, The solution needs to benefit the people who will be the target audiences and also give me a sense of achievement. It is about balance. I believe a work cannot reach people if it cannot even move myself.

In this case, I believe I can make better quality product design by narrowing down the product lines. More importantly the store will give a clear vision to the audiences. To do this, I would contact some manufacturers in China to make the products. I wouldn't have the limitation of the products structures and materials. I had with zazzle. I believe the visions of the store will be clearer.

Furthermore, the role of development and preservation/reinvention of culture in the production and materials of my products could be expanded to preserve/reinvent some traditional Chinese crafts. For instance, the silk scarf production industry in China. In this industry, there are many small hand-craft silk scarf production studios in the city of Suzhou, Wuzhen. Since silk is a very delicate fabric, many studios and craftspeople still prefer sewing the edges of the scarf and patterns on them by hand in the traditional way. I was thinking that by collaborating with those craft studios, my project is not only to get Chinese youth interested in the Chinese Zodiac culture but also get them interested in other aspects of Chinese culture, such as traditional hand craft culture. This would also provide means to continue this tradition and enhance the livelihood of the workers.



Q & A

Q: What were reactions from the audience at your exhibition opening and after?

A: My answers are from the observation of two groups audiences. One is the Chinese audience who attended my opening(March 23, 2012). Most of them are international students like me. They came from my generation and grew up in China. They were impressed by the concept and the visual design. They were excited to find out their own 12X12 symbols and immediately connect themselves with the meaning of the symbols. They took pictures with their own symbols as well. One girl came to me and she said: "It is really good. I can see myself in it. I love my symbol. It is cute and represents my two sides. You know, our Chinese Zodiac and the Western Zodiac." And another Chinese girl talked to me: "It looks so modern and fashionable. I cannot wait to have something from here." I heard some others reading the symbols on the walls, like, "Look, it is the 'tiger' ", " I am the dragon one, see my personality here! It is so cool." At the moment, I realized that my design successfully changed their attitude towards the Chinese Zodiac. And I am so happy than the work spoke for itself. I don't need to explain too much about the concept. The Chinese audiences get the meaning naturally.

There is one visitor I want to mention specifically. She is an Art professor from a Chinese ceramic design college. When she came to my opening, she came to me and asked many questions. We had a long conversation regarding 12X12 design. She said, "It is wonderful. I can see you brought our traditional culture into an international stage. You interpreted the culture in a very innovative way. I am so proud. We Chinese should do more things like you. We need to communicate our culture with the Western world. I can see they love your design. I believe the Chinese youth will also love it once you brought this back to China. We need to keep in touch and maybe we can collaborate in future."

Then the other group is from here the United States. Most of them at very beginning did not understand the meaning of the symbols because they could not read Chinese. They were fascinated by the visual language and interested in the story of *the story pattern*. Many came to me with questions. One of the comment questions were that "What is the meaning of the graphic?" and "Why did you combine them?" I relayed they are the Chinese characters of the name of 12 Chinese Zodiac. But they are combined with the 12 sign of the Western Zodiac. The symbols structure is the Chinese characters and one of the strokes is the Western Zodiac sign. Many responded along the lines of:
"Wow, it is so interesting." "I never heard about this before." "So they are all Chinese Characters. It's so beautiful." "I love the way it looks." "I love to see the meaning behind the symbols. Can you explain a little bit more why do you combine them?"

I began to explain the concept behind the projects. I told them the traditional meaning of the Chinese Zodiac and why it is not really popular among Chinese youth, why Chinese youth has negative attitude towards the present Chinese Zodiac design and why Chinese youth are interested in the Western Zodiac. I point out the significant and the function of 12X12 is to really change the way the Chinese young people look at the Chinese Zodiac as traditional culture. I hope the Chinese youth can see the modern, fashion, interesting and good features of their own culture in the context of globalization. I hope they are proud of themselves as modern Chinese youth. Meanwhile, I hope the people from outside of China can also appreciate China as a modern, creative, and open-minded country.

After my explanation, some of them said *“Interesting, I am very impressed all the concept behind the graphics.”* *“I can see these from your work. It is very oriental feeling but cool. It is something very unique and modern.”* *“I can see the pillow on my couch. I love the story. It is not some sort of random design. It is something meaningful and attractive for sure.”* Some of them gave me their business cards and asks me to let them know when I opened my store so they could buy the products.

I am really happy about the responses especially from the Chinese audiences. I love how they reacted to the work. I love to see the smiles on their face. I love to see how they take pictures with the 12X12 symbols. I can tell they love the symbols and the story. I believe it was not only a show but also edutainment—edutainment is a form of entertainment designed to educate as well as to amuse.

Q: How will people know what this is about? There is very little accompanying material to explain in depth the concept or the history. How could you accomplish this even if not at this stage?

A: An official website of 12X12 is necessary. I plan to make a section on the story of the project. In these section, there will be a video tour of my exhibition. I will explain in depth the concept and the history behind the design. It will have two versions. One is the Chinese version and the other one is English version. I do want the project to be international.

Of course, the project needs to take the benefit from the social networks in China. Weibo(Chinese Twitter) is a major social network and very popular in China at present. I will definitely get a Weibo(Chinese Twitter) account for 12X12 in China to distribute the thoughts, and news . I will also build a facebook page of 12X12 (<http://www.facebook.com/dandan12X12>) to distribute in depth the concept and the history. Also I thought about designing a information tour in Unite 3. It is more like a Virtual Reality tour of my exhibition. I want to rebuild the thesis show in Maya with my voice to explain everything behind the design. By navigating the tour space, the audience will interactive with the space, and my voice so that they will get the in depth concept and history of the project.

Q: Why a store and why did you choose wearable or personal items for the home, for the iphone, etc?

A: The intention of the project is to change the attitude of Chinese youth towards the present Chinese Zodiac design reflecting the traditional Chinese Zodiac culture. It is designed to foster national confidence, self-identification, and the joy of the everyday in modern China. People tend to gain self-identification from their own personal experience, many traditional Chinese Zodiac products were very personal items in the history. Such as “长命锁” (the Chinese Zodiac pendant lock) for baby. Made from silver or gold in ancient times, the pendant lock has two sides. One side is the Chinese Zodiac animal figure and the other side was written “长命百岁” (good health and long life). It is specific for the newborn baby. The parents will buy the special pendant necklace to bless and protect their baby. Moreover, during the interview, many interviewees expressed their willing of having practical daily use products.

Q: Many of thesis artifacts were manufactured by Zazzle. What part of the work comes from your own creative ability?

A: I created and designed the symbols, the patterns and how they appeared on the products. They are all coming from my own creative ability. The production part can be done by any manufacturer. Of course, with the limitations of production, I cannot really design the shape and structure of some products. I will definitely make unique object once I have a chance to really design the shape and the structure of the produces.

Q: Often the Zodiac and horoscopes are seen as mysticism, why are you attracted to this system of astrology?

A: Because it is about a person's personality and life. I always want to find a way to know who am I and also to know the people I am interested in. It is so amazing that you can see the difference and similarity from the Zodiac systems.

Q: : If symbols belong to a culture, is it right that an artist/designer can appropriate, alter, and commercialize them?

A: I think it depends on the intention of the artist/designer. I believe it is nothing wrong as long as the intention is to benefit people's life, to inspire people and to make people think. Culture is made by people and here I am creating or innovating culture.

Q: Have other designers also worked with astrological symbols?

A: Whenever you google “12 constellation” or “12 Western Zodiac”, you will see there are many different design works of the Western Zodiac signs using words and illustrations. The Chinese Zodiac is a little bit different. You cannot see many Chinese character designs in terms of the Chinese Zodiac if you google the Chinese Zodiac. More often, you will see the animal figure design. But most of them are using the ancient visual language. You barely see modern elegant visual language in the Chinese Zodiac design.

Q: : It seems that others also use the “double Zodiac, 144 signs” but your integrated symbols are unique. Can you talk about how they are visually combined? Is the hybrid symbol more confusing than a singular one?

A: The hybrid symbol was the combination from the Chinese characters of the 12 Chinese Zodiac and the signs of the 12 Western Zodiac. The hybrid symbol design used the structure of the Chinese characters. In other words, anyone can read the hybrid symbol in Chinese as long as he/she knows how to read Chinese. The sign of the Western Zodiac was designed as one of the strokes of the Chinese characters.

It may look confusing to someone who is not familiar with the Chinese Zodiac system and cannot read Chinese. But I don't think it confuses the target audiences of the design. They are familiar with both Zodiac systems and can read Chinese. It is clear and attractive to them because it is made of Chinese characters, so they can read them and know the meaning.

Q: It this still not culture preservation through repurposing?

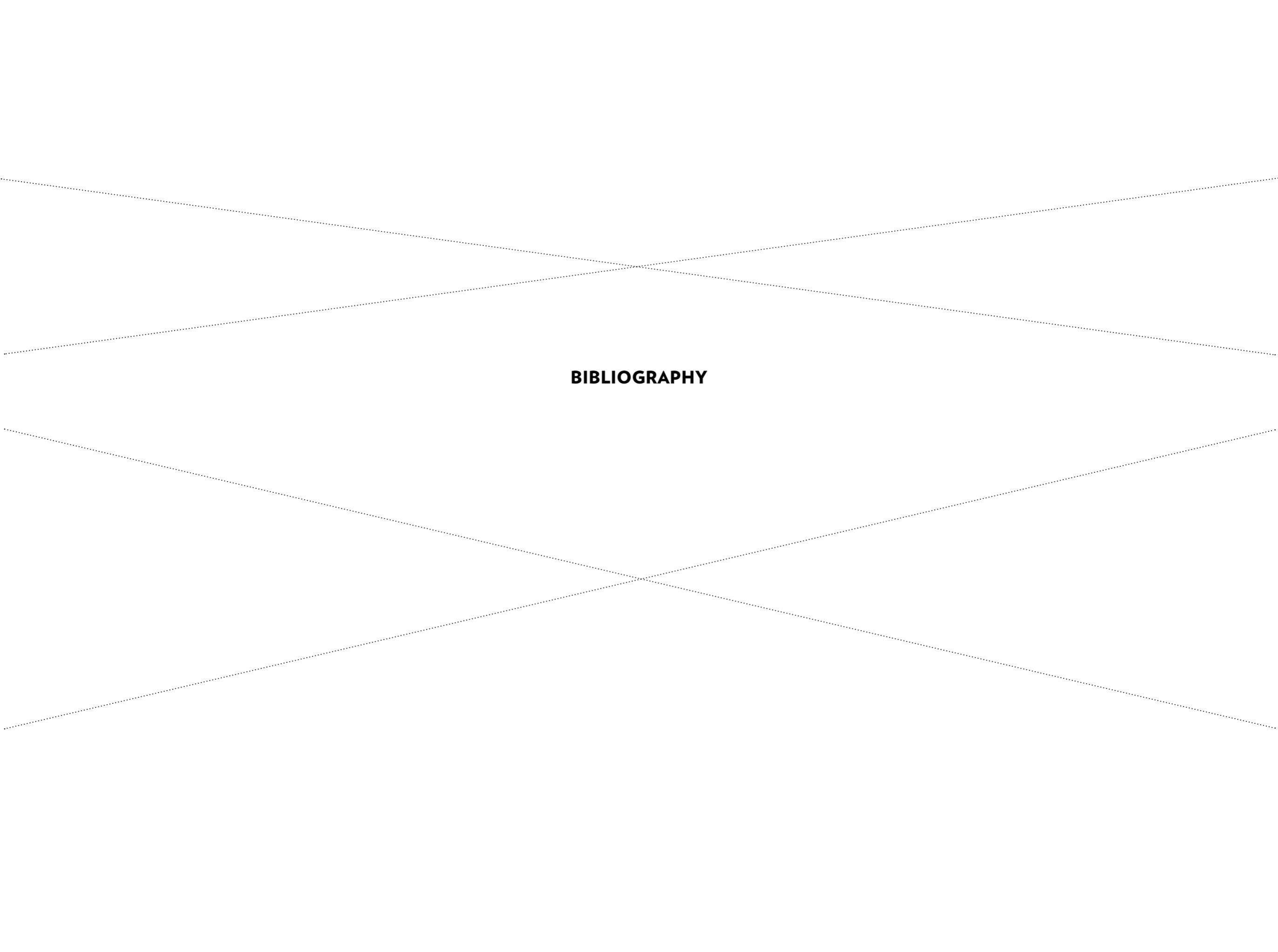
A: The project is more about culture preservation through innovation in order to change the relative negative attitude towards the traditional culture from the Chinese youth. As a result, the design informs them that our Chinese traditional culture can be innovated to become interesting and fashionable.

Q: : How was the website technology coded? Is it a JavaScript?

A: The structure of the website was coded with HTML and CSS. And yes, the calculation was done with JavaScript. It has two calculations. One is for calculating the Chinese Zodiac. The other one is for the Western Zodiac.

Q: Is there any logic to the color in the symbols?

A: Well, logic. Not really. About the color in the symbols, I applied my own fashion understanding and taste in it. Some designers believe that design is all about marketing and business but nothing to do with personal taste. I cannot agree with it. I think design is not like the natural sciences. The design solution is not like math, such as $1+1=2$. We as designers are trained to have sharp eyes and have sensibility to tell what is beauty in its proper context and what is the right form according to the function. Thus, a designer's personal taste and sense represent all his/her understanding and experience of designing the project. The solution and the design will lack uniqueness, fun, creativity if it doesn't have any sense of personality. The personality of a design is the key to make it different from others.



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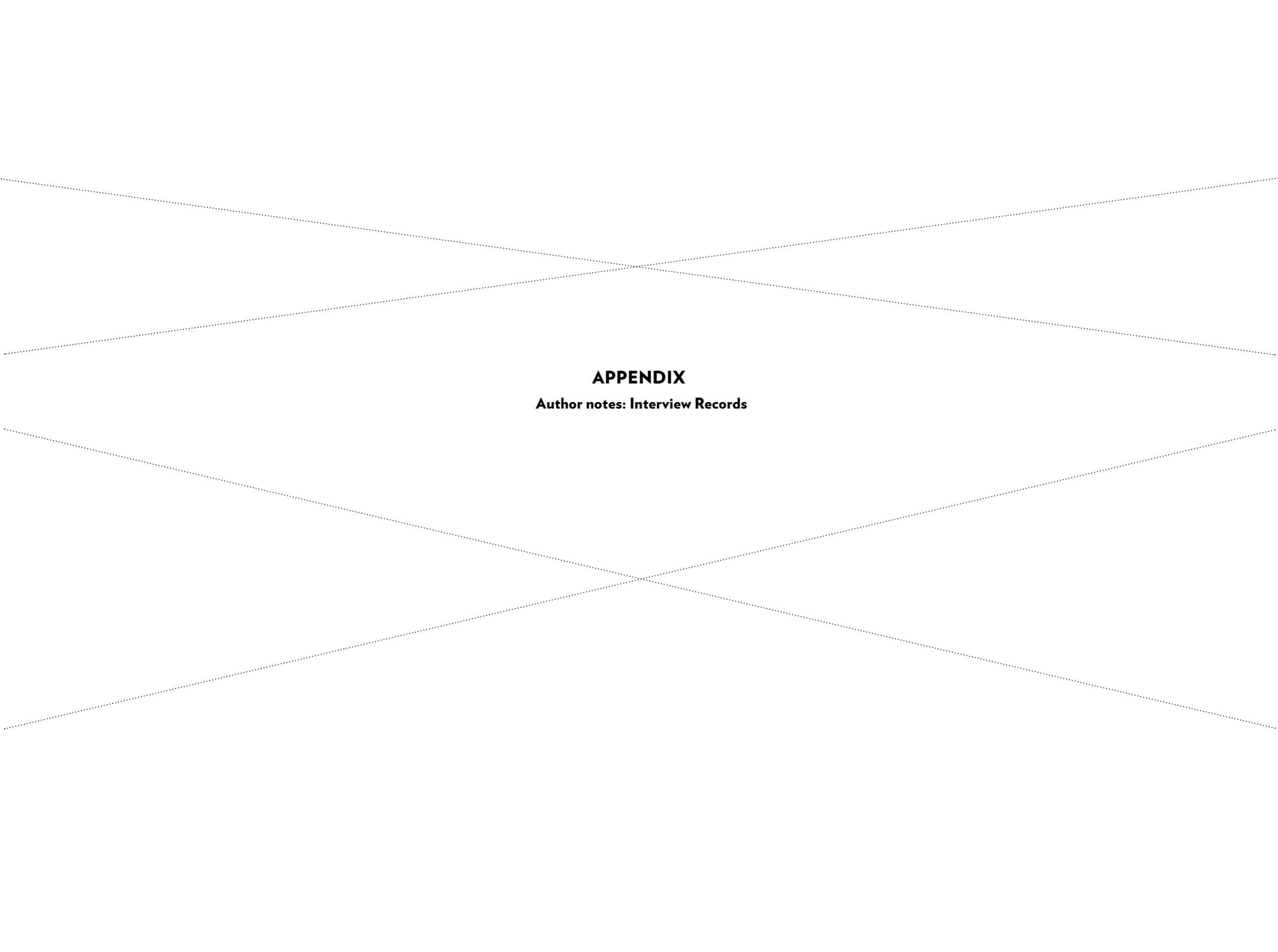
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APPENDIX

Author notes: Interview Records

Appendix-A

你什么时候知道自己的生肖的？

When is the first time that you know your Chinese Zodiac?

“5, 6岁吧。”

Five , six years old.

“记事起。”

When I started to remember things.

“从小就知道。”

Since I was very little.

“是个中国人打小儿就知道。”

As long as you are Chinese, you would know when you were very little.

“一直都知道，谁都知道自己的属相。”

I always know. Everyone(Chinese) does.

1978年改革开放和独生子女对你的影响，和你觉得中国社会的变化？

How did the “Open Door policy” and “One Child One family policy” affect your life? And what the change of Chinese society did you observe?

“主要还是大开国门，让人看到很多新鲜的东西，比如易拉罐都是我90年代初才看到的。从小都是和同龄人长起来的。”

We saw so many new things we'd never seen before, such as soda in a can. I saw it around early 90s for the first time. We grew up with friends of same age.

“星座开始流行起来了，知道了很多港台外国歌星等等流行文化。感觉大家从那会儿开始就特憧憬外面的世界。希望自己和别人不同，就是与众不同的感觉。”

The Western Zodiac began to be popular. I knew a lot of pop culture from HongKong Stars and foreign stars. I feel people began to have fantasy of the world outside of China. I wish I can be distinguished with others and be unique.

“希望有个哥哥，挺幸福的，基本都是跟同龄人长大的，很少聊生肖。因为可聊的很少，因为身边都是同龄。因为没有差异所以没有话题。会聊星座的，因为同年不同月。”

I wish I could have a brother. It will feel so good. I grew up with friends of same age. So we don't talk about our Chinese Zodiac. There is not too much to talk about. We are all some age and same Chinese Zodiac animal. We'd rather talk about the Western Zodiac because we were born in different month.

“中国人走出去，国外东西传进来，网络发达后传进来更多，很小就收到西方文化的影响。对中国传统文化冲击很大，我觉得这样不好。西方文化目前为止，物质文明领先中国，所以学习先进技术，后来物质精神全盘接受，从精神上就否定了自己。”

We have a chance to go out and the foreign things have a chance come into China. With the development of the internet, there are more foreign things coming into China. We are influenced by the western culture since we were little. I don't think it is good that the western culture overshadow our traditional culture. The western material civilization is more advanced than China so far. So we wanted to learn from them but then we accept everything from outside and deny our own culture and spirit.

Appendix-A

当提起生肖的时候你想到的是什么，或者什么感觉？

How do you feel and what do you think when someone mentioned Chinese Zodiac to you?

“挺传统的，除了过年，现在不怎么用的上吧。”

Very traditional. It cannot be used daily.

“古老的，和现代有点脱节。”

Old, ancient, it is a little disconnected from modern life.

“过年的时候提起来，知道是什么年，自己属什么。还有结婚的时候算一下两个人配不配。”

It will be mentioned during Chinese New year. We know what is the year and our own Chinese Zodiac animal..

“比较神奇，感觉类似星座，我比较关注自己的生肖，传说什么的。但感觉和日常生活联系不多，用不上。”

Mysterious. I feel like it is similar to Western Zodiac. I pay more attention to my Chinese Zodiac animal and its legends but I don't think there is anything I could use it daily in any forms.

“就是俗，没有年轻人的东西。现在的（设计）形象上没统一。”

It is just cheesy. There is no young people stuff in it. The visual language of different animal figures do not have unified style.

“它太安静了 只是静静的呆在那里 社会走的这么快 没有带着它一起走 没有给它赋予新的东西 旧的文化也蒙灰了。”

The Chinese Zodiac is too quiet right now. It just stays the same all the time. Our society is developing so fast but we didn't take our Chinese Zodiac develop as same speed as our society. We didn't apply anything new to them so the old culture is dusted right now.

提起星座，有什么感觉？跟生肖有什么联系？

How do you feel about the Western Zodiac? How do you compare it to the Chinese Zodiac?

“觉得自己又符合属相又符合星座。”

I feel my personality matches my Chinese Zodiac and my Western Zodiac.

“星座聊的东西挺多的，可谈性比较大，因为星座按照月份来的。而生肖按照年的，不够细致。”

There are so many things we can talk about with the Western Zodiac because it is divided by months. Since the Chinese Zodiac are divided by years, it is not diversified enough.

“能了解自己和别人性格什么的（星座）。跟生肖作用差不多。如果很想认识一个人，会用星座做话题。”

I can know others' personality and my own from the Western Zodiac. It works like the Chinese Zodiac. I will use the Western Zodiac as a topic if I really want to know someone.

“外国的东西，不是咱自己的不过说得东西挺有意思的，大家都聊。生肖是咱自己的，其实没什么大联系。”

(The Western Zodiac) is foreign stuff. It is not about us(Chinese) but it is interesting and everyone talks about it. The Chinese Zodiac is about us. They don't have too much connections.

“小学的时候，女孩子们都会拿一本星座书一起看一起讨论 觉得不知道星座就像是落伍了一样。”

All girls were reading the Western Zodiac magazine and talking about it when I was in elementary school. You feel you are so old-fashioned and not cool if you don't know the Western Zodiac.

“跟别人说话的话题。星座比较洋气，生肖土，其实都是说你这个人是什么样的，性格啊，命运啊。2人配不配之类的。”

They are conversation topics. The Western Zodiac is much more fashion and cool. The Chinese Zodiac is old-fashioned and rustic. Actually, they are all about the personality, future of a person.

你对生肖设计有什么建议?

Do you have any suggestions for Chinese Zodiac design?

“希望是改革性的创造，不要再个过去的一样，简洁一点吧，别老一堆动物。”

I hope it is a revolutionary creation rather than something that similar with the past. And I like simple abstract shape. Don't use animal figures all the time.

“我也不是搞设计的，不懂，就是别太土了吧，但是也别看着都不是咱们自己的东西。”

I don't know. I am not a designer. Just don't design something rustic and old-fashioned but also don't make it not like Chinese things.

“做些实用的日常用品吧，做点新的东西吧，别总是吉祥物什么的。”

Make something practical and useful like daily products. Make something fresh and new meaning. Don't make souvenir all the time.

“能代表年轻人品味的，时尚些。”

(Design something) that represent the taste of young people. Fashionable and tasty.

“别总是做什么动物的了，还有那些传统图案，都俗了。”

It is so cheesy to still use the animal figures and traditional patterns. Don't do it anymore.

Dan Luo

Dan Luo, as known as Dan Dan was born in Beijing China. She is a problem solver, a thinker and designer with the interdisciplinary design practice background. She has comprehensive knowledge in motion graphic design, industrial design, visual communication design (branding, packaging, infographic design), photography, interactive design (Apps, games, web) and illustration.

She attended Beijing Institute of Technology in Beijing, China where she received a Bachelor degree in Industrial Design. She also received Master degree in visual communication design from Tsinghua University in Beijing, China. In 2012 she received a Master of Fine Arts from the University of Florida where she studied graphic design. At the University of Florida's School of Art + Art History, Dan Dan co-founded with her colleague the organization I___Local whose mission is to promote the activities of local businesses, organizations and individuals of Gainesville community.

She has worked for many clients, including Beijing 2008 Olympics, CCTV (China Central Television), and Beijing Normal University, University of Florida, AIGA Atlanta etc. Her work was exhibited in both China and the US. Dan Dan continues to make contribution to design industry with strong concepts and great attitude.