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1. Education

Ravensbourne University London, United Kingdom

2024.09 – 2025.10

MA Design Communication / Master's degree in Journalism and Communication (Design Communication), recognised by the Chinese Service Center for Scholarly Exchange (CSCSE)

Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology, China

2015.09 – 2019.07

Bachelor's Degree in Fashion Design and Engineering (Fashion Product Strategy and Buying)

2. Research Interests

Core Research Direction: Art, Design and Social Issues

My research focuses on how art and design can engage with social issues and public communication, examining the roles of visual narratives, information communication, and cross-media expression in shaping social cognition, public discourse, and cultural communication. Through design practice, I seek to reflect contemporary social issues and contribute to greater public awareness, discussion, and potential improvement of these issues.

Domestic Social Issues

Information Communication and Public Cognition in the Short-Video Era

This research examines the influence of short–video platforms and other contemporary information media on public cognition and value judgement. It explores how platform business models, algorithmic recommendation systems, and communication patterns shape information flows, while critically considering the authority and authenticity of mediated content and its influence on the construction of public understanding.

Sexual Consent and Boundary Awareness in Adolescent Intimate Relationships

This research focuses on ambiguous sexual consent, emotional coercion, and insufficient boundary awareness in adolescent intimate relationships. It examines how social norms, communication environments, and gaps in education influence individual psychology and perceptions of intimate relationships, and explores the potential of design communication and public education to strengthen adolescents’ self–awareness and understanding of interpersonal boundaries.

Contemporary Visual Translation of Traditional Chinese Culture

This research explores new forms and modes of expression for traditional Chinese culture within contemporary visual communication. It examines how traditional cultural elements can be incorporated into modern visual systems, with particular attention to visual translation and communication across book design, moving images, digital media, and cross–cultural contexts.

International Social Issues

East Asian Historical Memory and Cultural Identity

This research examines modern and contemporary East Asian history, particularly the influence of memories of war on regional relations, social psychology, and cultural identity. It explores historical narratives across East Asian societies and the factors underlying their formation, while reconsidering the significance of regional cultural ties for cross–cultural understanding and regional identity.

Civilian Experiences and War Narratives in Contemporary International Conflicts

This research focuses on the living conditions of civilians in contemporary international conflicts, with particular attention to the Gaza conflict. It examines emerging forms of war narratives, humanitarian challenges in armed conflict, and issues concerning the implementation of relevant international law in contemporary conflict situations.

3. Research Experience

Independent Scholar | East Asian Identity Research

2025 — Present

Conducting independent theoretical research on the formation, structure, and measurement of East Asian identity, with the aim of developing an integrative research framework capable of explaining identity formation and supporting subsequent empirical measurement.

1. Developed the “**East Asian Identity Research Framework (EAIRF)**” by integrating theoretical perspectives including social identity, social comparison, social exchange, cultural capital, collective memory, and theories of attitudes and behaviour.
2. Developed the “**East Asian Identity Formation Model (EAIFM)**”, proposing a five-dimensional structure comprising Cultural & Everyday Life, History & Politics, Relative Positioning, Social Ties & Interests, and Affective & Psychological dimensions to explain the roles and interrelationships of different dimensions in the formation of East Asian identity.
3. Developed the conceptual foundations of the “**East Asian Identity Scale (EAIS)**” and the “**East Asian Identity Index (EAI)**” to support subsequent survey design, empirical measurement, and comparative analysis across populations.
4. Planned subsequent empirical research using survey data and statistical analysis to test the dimensions and their observed indicators, with structural equation modelling (SEM) and related methods proposed to estimate dimensional weights, validate the model structure, and construct the composite index.

Independent Scholar | Chinese Culture Visual Evolution Research

2015 — Present

Independently conducting research on the contemporization and continuous evolution of the traditional component of Chinese Culture within contemporary visual contexts. Based on long-term visual creative practice, the research explores how traditional culture can continuously generate new visual forms by absorbing new visual languages, technologies, media, and forms from different eras while maintaining cultural continuity, and further examines the extension of these mechanisms from the Chinese Culture application layer to a cross-cultural general theoretical layer.

1. Based on visual creative practice related to Chinese Culture, constructed the “**Chinese Culture Visual Evolution Framework (CC-VEF)**” to explain the mechanisms through which the traditional component of Chinese Culture undergoes continuous renewal and evolution within the visual contexts of different eras.
2. Proposed two core creative principles, the “**Chinese Culture Visual Formal Renewal Principle (CC-VFRP)**” and the “**Chinese Culture Visual Selective Emphasis Principle (CC-VSEP)**”, which explain the core creative mechanisms of the visual evolution of Chinese Culture respectively through the absorption of new visual languages, technologies, media,

and forms emerging in different eras, and through the selection, refinement, and strengthening of specific visual and cultural characteristics within cultural objects.

3. Proposed the **“Chinese Culture Visual Cultural Continuity Condition (CC–VCCC)”** as a fundamental boundary condition to define the basic boundary between formal innovation and the continuity of culture in the process of visual evolution, which, together with the two core creative principles, constitutes this framework.

4. Further abstracted from this framework to form the cross–cultural **“Visual Evolution Framework (VEF)”**, consisting of the **“Visual Formal Renewal Principle (VFRP)”**, **“Visual Selective Emphasis Principle (VSEP)”**, and **“Visual Cultural Continuity Condition (VCCC)”**, providing a general theoretical structure for the further application and examination of the relevant mechanisms in other cultural contexts.

4. Research Outputs & Design Works

Zhao, Z. (2026). Toward a Theory of East Asian Identity: An Integrative Framework for Formation, Measurement, and Assessment.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.21815391>

This study proposes an integrative theoretical framework for the formation, structure, and measurement of East Asian identity. It develops a five–dimensional analytical structure and establishes the conceptual foundations of the EAIS and EAI for subsequent empirical research and quantitative validation.

Zhao, Z. (2026). Contemporization and Continuous Evolution of the Visual of Chinese Culture: A Framework with Principles and a Condition Derived from Visual Creative Practice.

DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22012246>

The research proposes CC–VEF as a theoretical framework for the visual contemporization and continuous evolution of the traditional component of Chinese Culture, consisting of the two core creative principles CC–VFRP and CC–VSEP, together with CC–VCCC as a fundamental boundary condition; and further abstracts from this basis to form VEF as a general theoretical framework for cross–cultural visual evolution, consisting of VFRP, VSEP, and VCCC, providing a foundation for the application and examination of the relevant theory in different cultural contexts.

Design Works and More Research Outputs: www.zhengzhao.com

5. Professional Experience

Zhongheng (Hangzhou) Cultural & Creative Co., Ltd. | Designer

2020.04 – 2026.06

Conduct research, visual translation, and creative practice related to traditional Chinese culture, focusing on the redesign and contemporary application of traditional cultural elements. Work includes patterns, motifs, illustration, and cultural and creative product development, alongside exploration of how traditional culture can be represented within contemporary visual communication.

Beijing Baiye Design & Strategy Co., Ltd. | Designer

2023.12 – 2026.06

Engage in brand visual systems, design strategy, and original visual projects, including brand identity design, content strategy, and art and design research, with experience in project coordination, visual communication, and independent creative practice.

6. Research & Professional Skills

Academic, historical, and interdisciplinary literature research

Literature review, theoretical analysis, and conceptual framework development

Chinese– and English–language academic reading and long–form writing

Interdisciplinary research and analysis of social issues

Survey design, structural equation modelling (SEM), and statistical analysis

Visual communication, information visualisation and web design

Content editing, layout design, and book design

Adobe Photoshop / Illustrator / InDesign