



Research on the Young-oriented Application of Intangible Cultural Heritage in Urban Public Spaces: A Case Study of Nantong Riverside Park

Jiaqi Zhu, Peiyu Shi*

Nantong Vocational College of Science and Technology, Nantong, Jiangsu, China

Abstract: Intangible cultural heritage is an important part of Chinese traditional culture, carrying the memories and cultures of different ethnic groups. However, in the process of rapid urbanization, intangible cultural heritage is facing real challenges such as the loss of inheritors and the disappearance of skills. And data shows that the market size of intangible cultural heritage will exceed 100 billion yuan in 2025, and young people will become the main consumers. Based on the core proposition of "youthification of intangible cultural heritage", combined with the current consumption data trends, this article explores how intangible cultural heritage can be applied in urban public spaces in a youth-oriented manner, and takes the Binjiang Park in Nantong City, Jiangsu Province as a specific case, proposing a systematic design plan for "intangible cultural heritage ecological corridor", aiming to provide replicable paths for the revitalization of intangible cultural heritage for other cities.

Keywords: intangible cultural heritage, urban public space, rejuvenation, cultural inheritance, and ecological corridor

1. Introduction

In 2025, the scale of China's intangible cultural heritage (ICH) market is expected to exceed 100 billion yuan, an increase of over 50% compared to 2020, with a compound annual growth rate of 20%. The consumption group of ICH cultural and creative products is 65% of the post-90s generation! Young people have become the main force in the consumption of ICH cultural and creative products. Urban public spaces, as the carriers of citizens' daily lives, inherently possess the functions of cultural dissemination and social interaction. Integrating ICH into them and conducting "young-oriented" design not only can activate the vitality of the space but also can achieve the transformation of cultural inheritance from "passive protection" to "active participation".

2. Core Principles for Young-oriented Design of ICH

The young-oriented design of ICH should not only consider the innovative design of ICH, but also analyze the factors that the consumption group can accept. Therefore, to ensure that the young-oriented application of ICH neither loses its authenticity nor has the vitality of the times, this plan applies exploratory design through methods such as interviews to summarize the following principles:

2.1 Principle of Interactive Experience

Abandon "window display-style" static display and emphasize "participatory, touchable, and creative". Through ICH workshops, DIY, digital interaction and other forms, let the public, especially teenagers, become the main body of cultural practice. To cater to different groups while preserving the authenticity of ICH, different age groups' ICH experiences can be designed, such as parent-child ICH experiences, children's ICH experiences, and adult ICH experiences, with different difficulty levels of ICH experience projects designed according to different age groups.

2.2 Principle of Scene Integration

ICH elements should be organically integrated into public spaces. For example, blue printed fabric is cleverly used as an element symbol in modern urban space design[1], coordinating with the architectural style, landscape layout and supporting facilities. ICH elements avoid forced stacking or symbolic collage. We should deeply analyze the natural environment, ecological characteristics and existing facilities of the area, and on the basis of fully respecting the site's context, seek the convergence points between ICH and space functions, aesthetics and cultural connotations, achieving a mutually symbiotic and win-win situation where ICH empowers public spaces and public spaces showcase the charm of ICH.

3. Construction Plan for the Intangible Cultural Heritage Ecological Corridor of Nantong Riverside Park

Nantong is a national historical and cultural city, boasting numerous national-level intangible cultural heritage projects such as blue printed cloth, kite-shaped paper kite, children's play, redwood carving, and Tongzuo furniture. It has a profound cultural heritage. The Riverside Park is built along the Yangtze River, with excellent ecological resources and a dense flow of people. It is an ideal carrier for implementing the modernization of intangible cultural heritage. This article proposes the plan to create an "Nantong Intangible Cultural Heritage Ecological Corridor" here.



Figure 1. The silhouette of young people as the sun sets (Source: From Jiaqi Zhu)

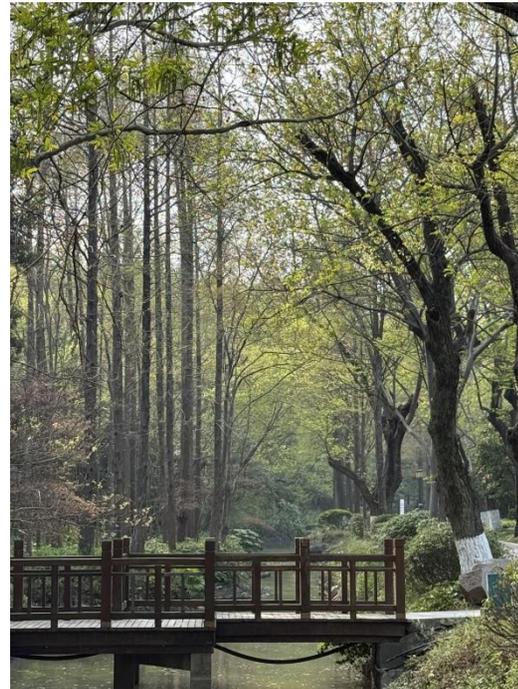


Figure 2. Binjiang Park has a beautiful ecological environment (Source: From Jiaqi Zhu)

3.1 Art Exhibition Center — A Window for Visual Narration

Establish an art exhibition hall that combines permanent exhibitions and temporary exhibitions to comprehensively and systematically showcase the development history of Nantong's intangible cultural heritage, representative works, and the touching stories of their inheritors.

3.2 Art Exchange Center — A Platform for Thought Dialogue

Set up multi-functional meeting rooms and open salons to create a youth art exchange center. Regularly hold activities such as "Intangible Cultural Heritage by Young People", "Face-to-Face with Inheritors", and "Designers' Workshops", which can not only promote the distance between intangible cultural heritage and the public, allowing more young people to deeply explore and understand intangible cultural heritage, but also stimulate more inspiration for intangible cultural heritage design through the collision of different voices.

At the same time, we can also invite university teachers, cultural brand representatives, and community residents to jointly discuss the contemporary transformation paths of intangible cultural heritage, forming a continuous knowledge production and community network.

3.3 Art Reading Center — A Quiet Space for Reflection

Create a trendy "intangible cultural heritage reading library" for the youth group, collecting precious materials such as local chronicles of different ethnic groups, various traditional craft atlases, photo archives, and intangible cultural heritage research literature. This space not only provides a deep study venue for art researchers, university teachers, and cultural enthusiasts, but also serves as a bridge connecting traditional knowledge and contemporary thinking.

3.4 Art Experience Center — A Playground for Hands-on Practice

Focus on representative intangible cultural heritage projects of Nantong and set up safe, environmentally friendly, and

low-threshold manual experience courses such as plant tie-dyeing, paper-cutting, engraving, blue and white print block printing, and pottery throwing. All materials are selected from natural, non-toxic, and biodegradable materials, which is particularly suitable for family participation.

3.5 Art Leisure Center — An Extension of Life Aesthetics

Integrating intangible cultural heritage into daily consumption scenarios is a key measure to promote its dynamic inheritance. In the tea and coffee space, provide local Nantong tea drinks such as Wolf Mountain tea and Hai'an white tea, and have professional tea artists perform intangible cultural heritage skills such as "Long Mouth Copper Pot Tea Art" on-site, making a cup of tea a multi-sensory immersive experience integrating visual, taste, and culture; set up a small opera corner, where viewers can scan the QR code to order plays and participate in interactions, allowing ancient singing styles to rejuvenate in a relaxed atmosphere. Through these life-oriented and creative consumption scenarios, intangible cultural heritage is no longer a static exhibit in a museum, but rather takes into account public feedback and needs from multiple perspectives, fully applying humanistic care to achieve a more complete and user-friendly experience[2].

4. Constructing a Resilient City New Paradigm Driven by "Intangible Cultural Heritage"

"Human resources" are the primary factor for urban development. Contemporary young people choose to live in cities, not only considering salary and job positions, but also the youth cultural atmosphere of the city. The intangible heritage ecological corridor significantly enhances the city's stickiness to the youth group by providing rich public cultural services, creative practice platforms and social scenarios. College students can carry out graduation projects and social practices here; young designers can collaborate with inheritors to develop cultural products; freelancers can work remotely in tea and coffee spaces and participate in evening salons. This "culture as life" environment helps reverse the traditional impression of Nantong as a "talent outflow area" and gradually transform it into a "youth cultural creative highland" in the northern wing of the Yangtze River Delta[3].

5. Conclusion

The construction of the intangible heritage ecological corridor along the Nantong riverbank is not a simple cultural embellishment, but a systematic urban renewal experiment using intangible heritage as a medium. It embeds cultural inheritance into the main axis of urban development, is oriented towards the needs of young people, uses public spaces as the carrier, and adopts a multi-party collaboration mechanism, ultimately pointing to a future Nantong with greater cultural depth, ecological resilience and humanistic warmth.

Acknowledgments

This paper was supported by the following fund projects: Nantong Institute of Technology Youth Fund Project (Project Number: KY202202) — Research on Nantong Intangible Cultural Heritage Symbols in Metro Public Art"; 2025th Nantong Science and Technology Innovation Think Tank Project (Project Number: CXZK202510) — "Research on Urban Renewal and Old City Reconstruction Strategies in Nantong".

References

- [1] Liu Miaorong. Research on the Construction of Cultural Space of Blue Printed Cloth [D]. Heilongjiang University, 2025. DOI:10.27123/d.cnki.ghlju.2025.001663
- [2] Li Jiao. Design of Public Art Spaces in Urban Rail Transit [J]. Art Review, 2015(10).
- [3] Ou Zhizhao, Lei Yongliang, Lin Fei. From Anime IP to Intangible Cultural Heritage: Bringing Emergency Science Popularization to Life [N]. China Emergency Management News, 2025-07-19(001). DOI:10.28046/n.cnki.ncaqs.2025.006983.

Author Bio

Jiaqi Zhu, Lecturer, Nantong Institute of Technology; Corresponding Author: Peiyu Shi, Engineer, Nantong Institute of Technology.