

## **IP Project Thesis**

The goal of my project is to design and construct my own brand of dolls. At the beginning of the Fall Semester, the concept of my IP project was to collaborate with a friend who has already graduated and to create a sales promotion design project for her brand as my IP project. Since my concentration was advertising last year during my stay in Beijing as an exchange student, there was the aspiration to incorporate the advertising experience into my IP project. At that time, my friend just started her brand of dolls a month ago. She got a number of doll products made, but she has not done any promotions or advertising yet. Therefore, this could be an excellent opportunity for me to design an advertising package for her brand and designed a series of posters, postcards, graphics and a website for her brand.

However, my initial concept is modified as progressing down this path. The reason was that this sales promotion design project for my friend's brand lacked my own creativity and originality since it was mostly based on my friend's doll designs. Although I had participated in several designs of my friend's dolls, there has not been a doll made from scratch solely by myself. As an alternative, I believed that it could be a challenge to do things that I had never done before. Therefore, the idea of crafting my own dolls and establishing my own business emerged.

In recent years, establishing small-scale personal business is becoming popular among students in Hong Kong. The notion of student business impressed me. Students in Hong

Kong are particularly encouraged to launch their own business by involving in the New Year's Market. High school or college students are either self- supporting or supported by their schools to set up booths at the New Year's Market in order to market their own products.

These students manage the designs of their souvenirs, dolls and toys that they are advertising. They organize everything by themselves including product design, booth design and sales promotion skills. For instance, last year was the Pig's Year in the Chinese zodiacs. Therefore, there were numerous product designs based on the idea of pigs, such as piggy banks, piggy balloon hammers and piggy cushions, etc. Creativity sprang from these booths. The inventiveness of these students motivated me to develop my own products and encouraged me to start my own brand of dolls.

With this new motivation, materials for doll making progress to be a concern. The idea of making use of my old clothing abruptly dawned on me. It happened one day when several pieces of old clothing were uncovered in my wardrobe. The urge of creating something out of these old clothing emerged. Therefore, without any premeditated sketches or pattern, I was cutting and sewing with several needles, threads and a pair of scissors. After an afternoon worth of effort, my very first doll was made.

The process of transforming a piece of old clothing into a doll struck me as magic. That magical process has had its way with me, leading me from experimentation with old fabrics into a novel creation of an incredible idea, to make dolls out of old clothing. My old clothing used to be a piece of me; each piece infused with intricate memories. For instance, there was a piece of black and white polka dots clothing that was bought together with a friend, and it brings back the pleasant memory of high school in Hong

Kong. However, as they get dull and no longer in trend, they are stacked at the bottom of the closet and acquire new clothing instead. The process of transforming a piece of old clothing into a doll struck me as magic: the magic that old clothing can in fact take a new form of existence as dolls. This magical process of giving a new existence and meaning for my clothing refreshes my mind. It also allows me to achieve a new level in this project.

Inspired by this breakthrough, the research of the history of dolls in different forms and styles was carried out. Dolls are the oldest known toys, and they have gone through notable changes in materials and styles throughout history. Throughout my exploration, a new perception of dolls was revealed. To me, a doll is a small representation of a fantasy character, an animal or a human-being. Its design for each of these roles is unique and holds its own tale. It can be connected to a person and can provoke one's emotion. For instance, a stuffed animal can act as an adorable companion or a delightful pet.

Employing these insights to my doll designs, an amount of dolls were fabricated during the Fall Semester. They are composed of my old clothing and socks. Each of them is hand-made and holds the form of abstract bunnies. Every fragments of the old clothing are utilized as much as possible. For instance, I used the buttons on the old clothing as the eyes of the bunny, and I used the left over pieces of clothing as the tail and feet of the bunny. By doing so, waste of materials can be prevented. It also preserves the character and style of the piece of old clothing. These features and details make the bunnies inimitable.

In the previous semester, my dolls were presented to a diversity of people including my friends, my classmates, and even unfamiliar people. In order to get a more wide-

ranging evaluation of my dolls, opinions of people from different backgrounds as were gathered. Therefore during the Christmas vacation, the dolls were brought back to Hong Kong to test for their marketability. I requested my friends, who were either students or office workers, to hang the bunnies onto their personal belongings that they carried to school or to work. The outcome is that if people only give responses such as “it is so cute” or “oh my God, they are so nice,” they may not actually be my potential customers since they might have just been courteous to your work. However, people who include “where did you buy this?” or “how much are these?” in their responses may be prospective customers since this demonstrated some elements of their buying intent. Through this approach, the general result is that about six or seven people out of ten show interest in buying my dolls.

Furthermore, a group of my friends and people who were interested in the dolls donated a lot of their old clothing to me during my two-week-stay in Hong Kong. With this amazingly extra supply of materials, it is one step closer towards the institution of my brand of dolls.

Enthused by the additional huge bag of old clothing received in Hong Kong, the idea of having the dolls being personified and having their own character profile became apparent. The story outline is about a stack of old clothing and old socks. They had remained at the bottom of a closet for a long, long time since they are no longer desirable to their owners. Petrified and puzzled, they had no idea why they were thrown into the dark closet world. They kept anticipating that their owners would take them and rescue them out of the closet, but it never happened. In spite of this, the group of old clothing desperately prayed for a miracle so that they could escape from the shady closet. God

granted their wishes and turned them into dolls that have their own eyes, mouths, ears and legs. In the end, they fled from the gloomy closet and launch their new lives in the vivid outer world.

As this semester continues, more distinctive and unique designs of dolls were produced. Each doll retains its own personality. For instance, I have created this bunny with blonde hair. It holds a personality of one who remarkably enjoys adorning herself. Her owner used to dye her hair blonde and have pigtails, so she involuntarily mimics her previous owner's appearance.

As each doll's individuality is more defined, advertising for my dolls develops into an essential issue. A renowned online shopping website, Etsy, will be the major key to marketing my dolls. Etsy is a website where a diversity of handmade items are bought and sold. The idea of promoting my dolls through Etsy is confirmed. In addition, there will be an original website fabricated by myself. There will be a brand introduction page, a sales page, a contact page, doll profile pages and pictures available for download in the original website. The sales page will be linked with Etsy; this link will enable potential customers to access the background stories of the dolls in my website. Currently, photo shooting is carried on and will be applied in building the website. As for the exhibition, there will be a scene display that incorporates both the actual dolls and the website itself. The website will be displayed on a laptop and is open for visitors to browse through. The actual dolls will be displayed as an immediate interaction with the audiences. Therefore, there is a sense of intimacy created between the audiences and the dolls themselves. With this plan in mind and working step by step, the goal of launching the business of my brand of dolls will be fulfilled.