

An Exploration of Incorporating Republican-Era Shanghai Calligraphic Typefaces into Typeface Design Courses for Ideological and Political Education from the Perspective of Cultural Confidence

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Abstract: Current efforts to integrate ideological and political education into typeface design courses face challenges such as insufficient exploration of local visual contexts and inadequate utilization of regional aesthetic education resources. The “Shanghai Artistic Typeface” of the Republic of China era emerged from the cultural innovation and development of domestic products in modern Shanghai; it blends the structural framework of Chinese characters with Western Art Deco styles, embodying the spirit of modern Shanghai’s urban culture and the essence of artisanal craftsmanship. This paper uses Republican-era Shanghai artistic typefaces as a vehicle for ideological and political education, drawing on the distinctive features of aesthetic education at local universities to analyze their multidimensional educational implications and value for curriculum integration. Through instructional designs that include contextual analysis, technical training, and contemporary revitalization and adaptation, it constructs a comprehensive teaching pathway tailored to typeface design courses. Teaching practice demonstrates that leveraging Republican-era Shanghai Artistic Calligraphy to advance ideological and political education within the curriculum can guide students to transcend a narrow design perspective, reshape their understanding of the local context of modern Chinese character design, foster cultural confidence, and facilitate the revitalization, regeneration, and transmission of traditional visual resources within the contemporary design context.

Keywords: Shanghai calligraphy of the Republic of China era; Ideological and political education in the curriculum; Cultural confidence; Regional cultural context; Teaching approaches

Online publication: September 30, 2026

1. Introduction

In typeface design education, integrating value-oriented guidance deeply into professional skills training has long been a pedagogical challenge in visual communication design courses that incorporate ideological and political education. Currently, the integration of ideological and political education in undergraduate classrooms often remains superficial and vague; teaching materials frequently rely on traditional calligraphy, foreign typeface examples, and generic symbols of “red culture,” which are disconnected from core instructional content such as character form deconstruction and character creation logic. As a result, it is difficult to establish an effective link between professional competence and ideological and political literacy.

For local universities in Shanghai, the design of courses incorporating ideological and political education generally suffers from a lack of exploration of local visual resources. From the 1920s to the 1940s, Shanghai was a major cradle of modern commercial design in China. Influenced by the “Buy Domestic” movement and the New Culture Movement, the uniquely styled “Republic of China-era Shanghai calligraphic typefaces” emerged. These typefaces blend the structural framework of Chinese calligraphy with the decorative art language of the West. Widely used in books, newspapers, domestic product logos, and urban public visual spaces, they not only hold significant value for typographic research and innovative adaptation but also embody multiple layers of meaning—including industrial salvation, artisanal dedication, and urban identity—thereby providing a regional cultural context for local design education.

Currently, these modern typeface resources unique to Shanghai have not yet been systematically incorporated into the curriculum-based ideological and political education system. Research on ideological and political education in design courses has largely focused on discussions of macro-level educational strategies, with few existing studies that adopt a Shanghai-specific perspective and integrate historical research with classroom implementation. Based on this, this paper draws on teaching contexts at local universities in Shanghai and uses Shanghai’s artistic typefaces from the Republic of China era as a research subject to explore practical pathways for integrating them into ideological and political education within typeface design courses.

2. The cultural significance and multidimensional value of ideological and political education in Shanghai’s artistic calligraphy during the Republic of China era

Shanghai’s artistic lettering during the Republic of China era emerged from a historical context shaped by the “Buy Domestic” movement, the rise of national industry, and intellectual liberation. Each classic example embodies a specific spirit of its time, thereby forming four interrelated dimensions of ideological and political education that can be integrated into the practical implementation of ideological and political education in typeface courses.

2.1. Industrial self-reliance: The “Buy Chinese” movement and the cultivation of national confidence

In modern times, Shanghai served as the epicenter of the “Buy Domestic” movement during the Republic of China era. The rise of national industries spurred independent exploration of a local visual design system and enabled Shanghai’s artistic lettering to transcend the traditional ideographic function of writing, becoming a vital medium for the visual expression of domestic brands. In the 1920s and 1930s, foreign goods dominated the consumer goods market, and foreign brands, backed by sophisticated commercial design and promotional

systems, squeezed out local industries. To counter this situation, Shanghai's national entrepreneurs actively developed the domestic goods industry. As a core visual element in product packaging and advertising posters, artistic lettering played a pivotal role in shaping the brand image of modern domestic goods and became part of the era's movement to "revive domestic goods through design and save the nation through industry" ^[1]. Drawing on the fundamental structure of Chinese characters, local designers modernized and stylized them, creating typefaces that not only met the functional demands of commercial communication but also embodied the era's aspirations to revitalize national industry and foster cultural consensus.

2.2. The "Red Buds" dimension: The expression of a spirit of national salvation in the calligraphy of progressive publications

Shanghai during the Republic of China era served as a central hub for modern intellectual enlightenment and literary and artistic innovation, and the typographic designs featured in progressive periodicals constituted an important early manifestation of China's modern "red" visual culture. Unlike the decorative style of commercial typography, these typefaces were characterized by a simple, bold, solemn, and majestic style. Through their typographic forms, they conveyed progressive ideas and awakened the public, aligning with the era's overarching themes of spreading new ideas and striving for national survival. The cover lettering designed by Lu Xun for *Benliu* (The Torrent) employed geometric forms; its upright and crisp strokes symbolized new ideas breaking through feudal shackles and surging freely ^[2]. During the War of Resistance, local designers such as Qian Juntao carried forward this creative approach, blending Chinese and Western design languages to reconstruct the forms of Chinese characters, using typeface design to promote cultural and artistic propaganda and awaken the public. These creators transformed Chinese character design into a means of disseminating ideas and mobilizing society, demonstrating a conscious commitment to using design to contribute to social progress.

2.3. The artisan's depth of expertise: Handcrafted creation and professional design competence

In today's world, where digital design technologies are widespread, looking back at the purely handcrafted typeface creation system of the Republic of China era helps cultivate the craftsmanship and professional integrity required of contemporary design practitioners. Renowned Shanghai designers such as Zhang Guangyu have delved deeply into traditional calligraphy and folk decorative aesthetics, spending years refining hand-drawn typography for books and periodicals. They meticulously refined the details of each character for publications, striking a balance between traditional heritage and modern aesthetics through their handcrafted work, thereby embodying a creative attitude of relentless pursuit of perfection. Lu Xun similarly demonstrated meticulous rigor and a relentless attention to detail in book design and typeface creation, embodying the down-to-earth and dedicated professional character of modern literary and artistic designers ^[3]. This spirit of craftsmanship—rooted in dedicated refinement—can serve as a reminder for contemporary design education to break free from ingrained routines of template-based, "fast-food" approaches, guiding students to develop a professional design philosophy characterized by focus, rigor, and innovation.

2.4. The dimension of cultural continuity: Cultural autonomy in local modern Chinese character design

Shanghai's artistic lettering from the Republic of China era serves as a crucial thread in the early

development of modern Chinese decorative typefaces and is an integral part of Shanghai's urban visual heritage. It documents nearly a century of Shanghai's urban memory and regional aesthetic preferences, revealing the tension in Chinese character design between continuity and variation, as well as between adherence to tradition and innovation^[4]; Incorporating this tradition into typeface design curricula helps students trace the developmental lineage of modern Chinese character design, reduces blind adherence to Western, Japanese, and Korean typeface design paradigms^[5], and—through the exploration of indigenous cultural essence—promotes the contemporary transformation of the Republic of China-era Shanghai artistic calligraphy tradition, thereby enhancing the cultural awareness and confidence in originality among young designers.

3. Existing issues in incorporating ideological and political education into typeface design courses and the adaptive value of artistic typefaces from Republican-era Shanghai

3.1. Practical observations on integrating ideological and political education into undergraduate typeface design courses

Currently, teaching materials for undergraduate typeface design courses largely revolve around “red culture” and outstanding traditional Chinese culture, while content related to the urban cultural context remains relatively weak. Local visual resources, such as the artistic lettering of Republican-era Shanghai, have yet to be systematically organized and integrated into the curriculum; ideological and political education is often presented as an add-on module following technical training, failing to be embedded in key components such as case analysis, tracing exercises, and original design. Consequently, the moral education framework that organically emerges from within the discipline remains relatively weak; Course assessments place heavy emphasis on the visual presentation and technical evaluation of student work, while paying limited attention to students' cultural awareness, understanding of values, and ideological and political development; there is still room for improvement in quantifiable, comprehensive educational evaluation metrics^[6]. At the same time, teaching materials on modern and contemporary typeface design are fragmented, and there is a lack of modern and contemporary Chinese character design resources that can directly support classroom instruction^[7], which objectively hinders the in-depth advancement of ideological and political education within the curriculum.

3.2. The adaptive value of artistic typography from Republican-era Shanghai

Shanghai art lettering from the Republic of China era represents a landmark achievement in the modernization of Chinese character design and constitutes a distinct, indigenous modern design tradition that differs from Western typeface systems^[8]. Organizing and incorporating such resources can address the relative lack of case studies at the urban contextual level in current teaching, helping students develop a concrete understanding of the evolution of modern and contemporary Chinese typefaces during their professional studies. Born out of the historical context of the “Buy Chinese” movement and the Enlightenment, these typefaces inherently embody values such as industrial self-strengthening, artisanal dedication, and cultural innovation, thereby enabling a natural integration of ideological and political education with professional knowledge; Academic circles have established a relatively mature typological classification for Republic of China-era artistic typefaces, encompassing diverse categories such as calligraphic variants, modified print

typefaces, adaptations of Western styles, and decorative creative designs^[9]. This rich variety of typeface forms can be aligned with tiered instructional components such as theory, tracing, and original creation; The design practices of Republican-era Shanghai artistic lettering combine communicative functions, aesthetic value, commercial attributes, and social responsibility^[10]; its diverse value system can serve as a reference for constructing a comprehensive evaluation framework that balances professional techniques, aesthetic literacy, cultural awareness, and patriotic sentiment, while also moving beyond the single-dimensional evaluation method dominated by visual effects in assessment.

In light of the above, this study attempts to construct a comprehensive teaching pathway for integrating Republican-era Shanghai artistic lettering into typeface design courses with ideological and political education, with the aim of providing a reference for similar curriculum reforms.

4. A comprehensive teaching approach for integrating Republican-era Shanghai calligraphic art into ideological and political education in the curriculum

4.1. Redefining course objectives

Traditional typeface design courses tend to focus on technical skills such as character structure, stroke creativity, and typographic applications. By incorporating artistic typeface resources from Republican-era Shanghai, it is necessary to add a layer of value-oriented guidance on top of the professional objectives, thereby forming a three-dimensional “knowledge—skill—value” framework: At the knowledge level, students gain an understanding of the design language, historical context, and representative designers of Republican-era Shanghai artistic typefaces, as well as the internal logic behind the transformation of Chinese character design from traditional calligraphy to modern artistic typefaces; at the skill level, students develop the ability to visually analyze traditional typeface resources and adapt them for modern contexts; at the value level, the program is guided by cultural confidence and the principle of “preserving tradition while innovating.” These three-dimensional objectives are not merely parallel or superimposed: professional knowledge serves as the foundation, design skills as the pathway, and value guidance as the ultimate goal, striving to achieve an influence that is “subtle yet profound.”

4.2. Before class: Developing school-based resources and laying the groundwork for preliminary preparation

4.2.1. Development of a school-based case study repository

Drawing on historical materials such as *The Story of Modern Chinese Typography* (by Zhou Bo), *Chinese Type Modern* (edited by Zhou Bo), and *Shanghai Typography* (co-authored by Jiang Qinggong), a dedicated repository of case studies for integrating ideological and political education into the curriculum can be established. Each case study includes citations to the original source, year of creation, design context, and educational implications. The repository is uploaded to an online learning platform, where students can independently access and study the materials before class. Each case study is accompanied by three key elements—“Historical Background,” “Design Characteristics,” and “Ideological and Political Dimensions”—enabling instructors to directly link professional knowledge with ideological and political content when utilizing the materials.

4.2.2. Designing lightweight pre-reading assignments

Assign preparatory tasks before class, requiring students to independently research the historical context

of the “Made in China” Movement and the New Culture Movement during the Republic of China era. Through this preparatory learning, students will establish a cognitive connection between “typeface—era—spirit,” laying the groundwork for deeper engagement in subsequent classroom sessions. For the preparatory assignment, select 2–3 representative case studies from the resource library. Instruct students to read the case descriptions, observe the structural characteristics of the typefaces, and conduct a preliminary analysis. Additionally, include open-ended questions to stimulate critical thinking. The total time allocated for this preparatory work should be limited to 1–2 class periods.

4.3. During class: A three-stage, tiered approach to integrating ideological and political education into core practical training

The course does not include separate ideological and political education sessions; instead, it integrates educational values into three professional components—theoretical instruction, hand-drawing practice, and original design—with the aim of advancing skill development and the cultivation of values simultaneously.

4.3.1. Theoretical instruction: Integrating professional knowledge with contemporary stories

During lectures on the history of Chinese typeface development and the theoretical characteristics of representative typefaces, the teaching of specialized knowledge can be integrated with the interpretation of ideological and political content. Specifically, when explaining the typographic logic, stylistic features, and decorative stroke techniques of Republican-era artistic typefaces, instructors can simultaneously introduce the historical context and spiritual essence behind these typefaces, guiding students to understand the explorations and commitments of modern designers as reflected in the character forms. For example, the typographic design for the title of Lu Xun’s *Wild Grass* draws on the balanced structural framework of seal script while incorporating the fluid brushwork of running script. By breaking free from the traditional calligraphic model for book titles, it explores a modern visual expression of Chinese characters. Created during a period when Enlightenment thought was in a state of uncertainty, the image of wild grass—resilient and unyielding—serves as a spiritual portrait of intellectuals seeking truth amid adversity during that era. The title lettering designed by Qian Juntao for the progressive Shanghai publication *Literary and Art Monthly* belongs to a variant of Song Black typeface, featuring sharp, vigorous strokes that imply a sense of incisiveness. Amid a harsh public opinion climate, the designer infused the publication’s pursuit of critiquing reality and enlightening the public into the letterforms, using the visual form of Chinese characters to convey the power of ideas. Zhang Guangyu’s title design for *Era Cartoons* employs geometric techniques to bridge Eastern and Western visual languages. With bold and expansive letterforms, the design was created with the intention of awakening the public through a popular visual medium and shouldering the responsibilities of the era. By analyzing these cases layer by layer—from a professional perspective, students can understand how modern designers drew upon traditional resources to explore the modernization of Chinese characters; from a values-based perspective, they can appreciate the steadfastness and self-reflection of that generation of intellectuals amid a turbulent environment.

4.3.2. Practical sketching training: Cultivating the artisan spirit through skill development

In addition to basic training in Song and Hei typeface characters, students are required to freely select five classic examples from the repository of Republican-era Shanghai artistic typeface case studies provided by the instructor and conduct hands-on classroom practice in hand-drawn tracing: replicating stroke thickness, structural

proportions, and decorative details, with the entire process completed by hand without computer assistance.

Before beginning the tracing practice, students are first introduced to the spiritual essence and scholarly attitude of modern typeface creators. Designers during the Republic of China era approached typeface creation with a hands-on, meticulous approach, consistently upholding a philosophy of striving for perfection. Shanghai's artistic typefaces from that era are artistic products that blend the virtues of craftsmanship with professional skill^[1]. Using this as a pre-class introduction helps students understand that tracing is not merely about replicating the outward appearance of characters, but also about internalizing the rigorous and truth-seeking spirit of their predecessors.

During the tracing process, students must repeatedly adjust character forms without the aid of digital tools; this hands-on experience helps them discard a superficial and perfunctory approach to design and fosters rigorous professional ethics.

After completing the tracing, students are required to write reflections on their experience and share their understanding of character design and historical context in class, thereby deepening their appreciation of the ideological and political implications embedded in the practical training.

4.3.3. Practical training in artistic reproduction: Cultivating the artisan spirit through skill development

Original design is the core element for effectively implementing ideological and political education through the curriculum. Only by applying this to the level of students' independent creation can the cultural value embodied in Republican-era Shanghai calligraphy be transformed from theoretical understanding into an internalized sense of identity, thereby preventing ideological and political education from remaining merely at the level of rote memorization. To this end, specialized original design assignments can be incorporated into practical training sessions to guide students in thoroughly analyzing the design language of Republican-era Shanghai calligraphic typography. By absorbing its formal logic, decorative techniques, and the design aesthetic that blends Chinese and Western elements, students can ultimately create original typefaces imbued with distinctive local cultural characteristics.

Before the practical training begins, share with students outstanding design examples of the contemporary revitalization of Republic of China-era calligraphic typefaces, guiding them to distinguish between superficial replication and substantive transformation. Represented by the "Shanghai Modern Typeface," this font library is China's first Chinese and Western character set rooted in urban culture. The project collaborated with typeface researchers to conduct historical research, tracing the visual tradition of Republican-era commercial calligraphy influenced by the Shanghai Art Deco movement of the 1930s and 1940s. Rather than directly copying or replicating old typeface patterns, the project extracted the upright geometric framework and the design logic of combining straight lines and arcs found in both Republican-era decorative lettering and Art Deco style. By discarding the intricate decorative details of the past and utilizing modern font technology, the team reconstructed a complete GB standard font library containing 7,293 characters, achieving a modern reinterpretation of historical typographic resources. The typeface has already been implemented in public spaces such as the Bund Source urban area, the main visual identity for the Shanghai Tourism Festival, and riverside light and shadow projections; students can also observe its real-world application effects firsthand during extracurricular field research. The "Riding the Waves" font is another representative work of the contemporary reinterpretation of modern calligraphic lettering. Used in the title of the TV drama *Flowering*, the typeface embodies the unique era-specific charm of old Shanghai,

demonstrating the stylized application of Republican-era Shanghai artistic typefaces in commercial film and television visuals. These examples help students understand viable pathways for the contemporary adaptation of local typographic traditions: distilling the creative essence of Republican-era Shanghai artistic typefaces—which blend Eastern and Western elements and embrace openness and innovation—and reimagining them through contemporary aesthetics, thereby avoiding the simplistic replication of old typeface forms.

4.4. After class: Expanded practical activities and extending the ideological and political education environment

To extend the educational impact of the classroom, students are organized to visit urban renewal districts outside of class to research contemporary interpretations of Republican-era calligraphic typography and gain an understanding of how local design traditions can transcend simple replication to achieve innovative transformation within a modern context. Group seminars are held to discuss “Insights from Republican-era Design for Contemporary Design,” combining pre-class case studies with in-class practical exercises to summarize pathways for preserving modern typographic culture and achieving design innovation. At the conclusion of the course, a dedicated exhibition was held to showcase students’ calligraphic reproductions and original typefaces inspired by ideological and political themes. Students were encouraged to submit their work to professional competitions and to apply the design wisdom of Republican-era calligraphy to real-world contexts such as urban cultural branding and cultural and creative design.

4.5. A two-way integrated curriculum assessment system

This course restructures the evaluation mechanism from a single-dimensional skills assessment into a comprehensive evaluation system that integrates “professional skills” and “ideological and political literacy,” with the two components weighted at a 6:4 ratio toward the final grade. The professional skills component accounts for 60% and corresponds to the evaluation criteria for the two major practical training modules: reproduction and original design. The ideological and political literacy component accounts for 40%, with formative assessment indicators established for the three learning phases—before class, during class, and after class—and embedded throughout the practical training tasks.

The evaluation criteria for professional skills (60%) are as follows: The “Tracing” module focuses on the accuracy of character reproduction and is scored based on three indicators—character form, structure, and stroke details—to assess students’ mastery of the stylistic language of Republican-era Shanghai calligraphy; The Original Design module is comprehensively scored based on design concept, the rationality of character structure, visual aesthetic expression, the completeness of the proposal (including sourcing of reference materials), and layout presentation, reflecting students’ ability to transform traditional resources into modern typefaces.

Assessment of ideological and political literacy (40%) is primarily based on process-oriented materials and is scored separately for each learning phase: Pre-class preparation is scored based on the quality of analysis of the historical context and selected case studies in the student’s preparatory notes; the in-class tracing session is scored based on the student’s reflective essay on the tracing experience, emphasizing their understanding of the artisan spirit and a rigorous creative attitude; the original design segment is graded based on explanatory texts, emphasizing the depth of students’ understanding of the cultural essence of Shanghai’s artistic lettering culture during the Republic of China era, as well as their ability to transform the spirit of that era and apply it to their own design practice.

These two categories of indicators are combined in the overall course evaluation, ensuring that the

results reflect not only students' professional practical skills but also their growth in terms of cultural understanding and value expression.

5. Exploration and reflection on teaching practice

As a practical implementation of the “ideological and political education through the curriculum” approach, this study explores the teaching of “Republican-era Shanghai calligraphic lettering” as a specialized module within a typeface design course, using phased thematic instruction to validate the feasibility of the aforementioned implementation approach.

5.1. Overview of the implementation of thematic units

The three-week special module on Shanghai Artistic Typefaces from the Republic of China era is integrated into the regular typeface design curriculum and runs concurrently with existing content such as foundational typeface theory, Chinese and Western typeface systems, and modern typeface creation. The unit is divided into two phases: the first half focuses primarily on theoretical instruction and practical tracing exercises, tracing the developmental trajectory of Republican-era Shanghai artistic typefaces, analyzing the structural characteristics of typical typeforms, and completing tracing exercises of representative typefaces to establish students' basic understanding of local modern typeface resources; the second half consists of original adaptation workshops, requiring students to distill the design language of Republican-era Shanghai artistic typefaces and complete typeface reinterpretations.

In terms of educational expansion, students are encouraged to submit their creative work from this module to professional competitions—using these contests to foster learning—such as the “Founder Award” and the “NCDA” (National College Digital Art & Design Awards). By adhering to competition standards, students are motivated to deeply explore local modern typeface resources and produce original adaptations with contemporary value.

5.2. Practical feedback and reflections on optimization

After three weeks of teaching this thematic unit, we can summarize some preliminary feedback from the practical experience. Most students were able to accurately identify the stylistic characteristics of Shanghai's artistic lettering from the Republic of China era and create their own reinterpretations based on their personal design perspectives; some students' original typeface designs even achieved success in professional competitions. A particularly notable change is that many students were able to uncover the spirit of the era behind the typefaces through tracing the origins of their source materials and interpreting their designs, moving beyond mere stylistic borrowing toward a deeper sense of cultural identity.

For example, one student drew inspiration from the fusion of Chinese and Western elements and the geometric design logic found in Shanghai's “artistic calligraphy” from the Republic of China era to create a new typeface. The resulting work, “Lidao Hua Typeface,” was shortlisted in the Chinese Student Category of the “Founder Award.” In the design rationale, the student examined the creative aspirations of modern designers during the “Buy Chinese” movement—who sought to integrate Eastern and Western influences while remaining rooted in local culture—and argued that this open and independent creative approach could be carried forward into contemporary typeface design; Another student drew inspiration from the title of Lu Xun's *Wild Grass*, which combines the structural framework of seal script with the brushwork of running script, to create a new typeface. While preserving the character's inherent character, the student adjusted

stroke details to better align with contemporary aesthetics. This work, titled “Flowing Seal,” won second prize in the typeface category of the “NCDA” (National College Digital Art & Design Awards). The design rationale focused on analyzing the pioneering spirit of modern literati in transforming Chinese characters and exploring a native modern visual language; Other students drew upon the archival resources provided by *Chinese Type Modern*, selecting typefaces from Republican-era propaganda slogans as references. By incorporating the powerful brushstroke characteristics of the originals, they reconstructed stroke forms to create headline typefaces suitable for today’s communication environment; in their design rationale, these students discussed the historical value of modern typefaces as carriers of spiritual inspiration and sought to carry forward this essence in contemporary design.

A shift in mindset is evident from the students’ overall design texts and classroom presentations. Many students no longer prioritize drawing on overseas typeface resources but are instead willing to actively explore the context of modern Chinese typefaces; for them, cultural confidence has evolved from an abstract concept into a comprehensive process encompassing material collection, spiritual distillation, and redesign, and their approach to designing with local typeface resources has also undergone a marked transformation. Judging by the explanatory texts submitted for the original design phase, most students were able to clearly cite the original sources and design contexts of the typefaces they drew upon, and explained their understanding of the spirit of the times based on their own interpretive approaches. Some texts even articulated the relationship between tracing the origins of source material and expressing its value.

As this was a small-scale exploration conducted over a three-week thematic module, there are still areas for improvement: students’ ability to reinterpret the spirit of the times varied significantly, with some works leaning toward formal replication and offering only a superficial transformation of the cultural essence. Moving forward, efforts could focus on optimizing task guidelines and refining the case study repository to guide students toward a deeper contemporary reinterpretation of local modern typeface resources.

6. Conclusion and outlook

From the perspective of cultural confidence, this study takes typeface design courses at local universities in Shanghai as its teaching context and uses Shanghai’s artistic lettering from the Republican era as a local visual medium to explore pathways for integrating ideological and political education into typeface design curricula tailored to art and design majors. The study overcomes the limitations of traditional typeface courses—which emphasize technique at the expense of cultural context—by integrating the aesthetic characteristics, the spirit of the times, and the artisanal essence of Republican-era Shanghai calligraphic typefaces into specialized practical training. Drawing on Shanghai’s local modern design resources, it guides students in developing an understanding of regional cultural context, thereby promoting the synergistic enhancement of professional skills and cultural literacy.

Teaching practice has demonstrated that thematic instruction grounded in Shanghai’s local visual resources has effectively reversed students’ ingrained tendency to prioritize foreign design while neglecting local cultural contexts. Throughout the entire process—from tracing the origins of case studies, analyzing cultural contexts, to re-creating typefaces—students have gained a deep appreciation for the creative ethos of modern Shanghai designers, who were rooted in their local context while embracing both Eastern and Western influences. Their sense of identity with local typeface culture and their commitment to innovation

have significantly improved, achieving a deep integration of ideological and political education with professional practice.

Moving forward, we will further refine the school-based resource repository on Republican-era Shanghai artistic typography, enrich teaching materials on regional context, and optimize the classroom application system for local visual resources; we will continuously refine thematic teaching methodologies, standardize and systematize mature models for integrating ideological and political education, and adapt them to the overall typography curriculum. At the same time, we will conduct long-term tracking of students' creative practices to explore the lasting influence of regional contextual resources on the design thinking of young designers. It is hoped that through continuous pedagogical exploration, this initiative will provide a teaching framework for the contemporary transmission and innovative application of local traditional design heritage.

Disclosure statement

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

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