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**Trendy Toys Energise the City
and Go Global**

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Innovation and Revival: A Line-up of Premium Toys

In the early days of summer, Chaoyang Park in Beijing was transformed into a dazzling showcase of designer toy culture, the city's very own "collectible toy universe," thanks to the inaugural China New Cultural and Creative Market & Trendy Toy Carnival. The event brought together an extraordinary fusion of whimsical collectible figures, cultural and creative products, meticulously crafted intangible cultural heritage handicrafts, regionally distinctive delicacies and dynamic performances steeped in Chinese aesthetic traditions. This vibrant convergence transformed the park into a living canvas where tradition met contemporary trends and nostalgia intertwined with novelty. Original intellectual property (IP) products, home-grown trendy brands, museum-inspired merchandise and time-honoured traditional crafts gathered in one place, creating a large-scale, multifaceted consumer environment centred on designer toys while also marking the first time that designer toy culture has become so deeply woven into Beijing's urban cultural landscape.

Leading domestic collectible brands, including POP MART, 52TOYS and Letsvan, each leveraged its distinctive creative strengths to build immersive IP experience zones. These spaces allowed visitors to encounter beloved characters not merely as static merchandise, but as three-dimensional, emotionally engaging presences. Through interactive installations, thematic décor and narrative-driven environments, these brands elevated their IP products beyond commercial commodities into cultural touchstones that resonate with contemporary identity and imagination.

POP MART, in particular, captivated visitors by erecting a pristine white miniature castle alongside a monumental art installation titled "ROYAL MOLLY." The structure quickly became a magnet for fans eager to snap photographs and immerse themselves in MOLLY's universe. Functioning as a prelude to the exhibition "The Little

Galaxy: MOLLY 20th Anniversary Exhibition" at the 798 Art Zone, the castle showcased a carefully selected range of fan-favourite products: the MOLLY MEGA Collector's Edition, the Astronaut Series, SKULLPANDA's "Four Acts of Flowers" and the Starry-eyed Star People line. In addition, a continuously looping exclusive interview featuring designer Wang Xinming offered intimate insights into MOLLY's origin story, tracing her evolution over two decades, from a simple sketch to a global pop culture icon. This combination of visual spectacle and behind-the-scenes storytelling deepened audience engagement and further highlighted the emotional connections embedded within collectible culture.

Another standout feature of the market was Letsvan's innovative collaboration with masters of intangible cultural heritage

crafts. Partnering with artisans specialising in Beijing embroidery, cloisonné, Beijing silk figurines and traditional Chinese knot buttons, Letsvan created a series of limited-edition, China-chic collectibles based on its core IP, WAKUKU. The collection was met with immediate acclaim, drawing crowds eager to see how traditional craftsmanship and contemporary design had been seamlessly combined.

The Beijing embroidery inheritor designed two exquisitely detailed traditional outfits for WAKUKU, which were complete with a heavily embroidered mini-cape, a front-buttoned Chinese-style jacket, a *mamianqun* (literally, "horse-face skirt") adorned with double-sided Baoxiang flower (an auspicious flower) motifs and trousers worn beneath the skirt. These ensembles imbue the toy with the dignified elegance

of classical Chinese attire, blending the rich heritage of Beijing embroidery with the playful appeal of contemporary collectibles. The cloisonné version of WAKUKU introduced an air of regal splendour. Its body was crafted using traditional copper-based cloisonné filigree techniques, a painstaking process involving wire inlay and coloured glass paste, and further enhanced with genuine leather horns and headwear. The contrast between soft textiles and rigid metalwork created a striking visual effect, transforming the piece into both a toy and a display-worthy work of art. Meanwhile, the Beijing silk figurine artisan incorporated traditional elements such as silk stand-up collars, knot buttons and fine embroidery, complemented by theatrical headdress-making techniques, to create a figure that

bridges the dramatic beauty of Peking Opera and modern toy culture. Inspired by Beijing's iconic swallow-shaped kites, the knot button craft master incorporated classic button styles, including *pipa* and gourd knots, to create detachable headwear accessories, vests and *dudou* (literally, "belly cover"; traditional underwear for women) for WAKUKU. The toy's most distinctive feature was its handheld prop: a swallow kite meticulously assembled using knot button techniques, symbolising the aspiration of "soaring freely and chasing dreams."

These four traditional craft inheritors, each representing a distinct branch of China's intangible cultural heritage, brought together the shimmering gold threads of Beijing embroidery, the intricate artistry of knot buttons, the graceful elegance of silk figurines and the luminous beauty of cloisonné. Their collective craftsmanship blended naturally with WAKUKU's endearing form, offering a compelling example of how traditional techniques can be revitalised through contemporary creative expression. This collaboration stands as a vivid testament to the innovative potential of cultural inheritance in the 21st century.

Beyond its celebration of trendy toys, the market also served as a major showcase

for museum and cultural creativity. Forty-six of China's leading cultural institutions participated, embodying the spirit of "cultural convergence from all directions." Renowned institutions such as the Palace Museum, the National Museum of China and the Capital Museum presented an impressive selection of cultural products that reimagined historical artefacts as companions for everyday life.

The Palace Museum captivated visitors with products including teacups inspired by the artefacts from the "Five Historic Kilns," roof-ridge beast bookmarks, dragon-and-phoenix-patterned blankets and phoenix-crown fridge magnets, each reflecting imperial elegance. The National Museum of China showcased its popular "Li Xiaohai" (Li Jingxun) collection, with a golden hairpin fridge magnet featuring fluttering moths emerging as one of the market's standout attractions. The Capital Museum presented merchandise linked to its exhibition "Corn • Gold • Jaguar: A Grand Exhibition of Ancient Maya and Andean Civilizations," including the "Earth-Supporter" jewellery set inspired by Mayan totems, a golden alpaca necklace modelled after Incan gold artefacts, a jaguar-patterned ice cream replicating ancient pottery designs, corn-shaped plush toys and



1. POP MART's Monsters Chasing Mermaid series blocks
2. The YH Toys exhibition area
3. A child poses with a clown at Weibo IN
4. The Beijing Gifts exhibition booth
5. The National Natural History Museum of China exhibition booth



▲ Weibo IN exhibition booth in Chaoyang Park



▼ The Capital Museum's ancient Mayan civilisation exhibition area



▲ RAGUS & WHITE figurines

mystery seed blind boxes. Meanwhile, the National Library of China offered “Golden List” pendants, *Classic of Mountains and Seas* bookplates and scented plush keychains, while the Natural History Museum of China displayed Lulu Kaka pendants, a baby seal series and butterfly-themed bookmark magnets, highlighting innovative approaches to science communication through cultural products.

The festive atmosphere even drew diplomats from Portugal, Italy, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Iceland and other countries, who explored the market with great enthusiasm. Over the course of more than two hours, they immersed themselves in a range of activities, from appreciating traditional Chinese arts and trying their hand at traditional crafts to interacting with companion robots and watching miniature robot football matches. Through these experiences, the envoys gained a firsthand appreciation of the enjoyment and novelty



▲ Forbidden City-inspired lipstick



▲ A stall at the Cultural and Creative Market

that market culture can offer. More than a commercial fair, the event also served as a bridge for cultural exchange, showcasing Beijing’s dynamic blend of heritage and innovation to an international audience. In doing so, it highlighted the city’s growing role as a place where tradition is not simply preserved, but continually reinterpreted for new generations at home and abroad.

Changes in Shopping Trends: Designer Toys Merge with Beijing’s Urban Culture

Today’s designer toys have long since transcended their origins as niche collectibles and evolved into mainstream cultural phenomena that are increasingly woven into everyday life. More and more people use them as bag charms, phone accessories and car ornaments, or display them in dedicated cabinets and on office desks. This trend reflects not only a form of personal expression but also a means of signalling identity and connecting with like-minded communities. It highlights a broader shift in contemporary consumer culture, one that places greater value on individuality and emotional resonance than on practical function alone. In essence, owning a designer toy is no longer simply

about possession; it is about belonging, storytelling and emotional connection.

When young consumers are willing to queue for three or four hours to secure a limited-edition action figure, or attend sewing workshops simply to learn how to make custom outfits for their collectibles, it reflects a fundamental shift in consumer behaviour. The question is no longer “what to buy,” but “why to buy.” Increasingly, the answer lies in the pursuit of personal enjoyment and emotional fulfilment. Younger generations are spending real money not merely on objects, but on experiences and feelings. They seek not only material satisfaction, but also emotional validation, psychological comfort and a sense of identity. As a result, “emotional value” has become both a major driver of consumption and a powerful justification for premium spending among this new generation of consumers.

Stress relief, companionship and comfort—these are the emotional promises embedded in opening blind boxes, collecting “*guzi*” (goods, a slang term for character-related merchandise), designing doll outfits or embracing emotionally resonant characters such as Panda Roll and the fang-baring little monster LABUBU. These icons have swept through youth culture and

emerged as powerful attractions in both digital and physical spaces. As designer toys become increasingly integrated into urban life and commercial ecosystems, Beijing is witnessing the emergence of a new form of city culture, one in which playfulness, creativity and emotional connection converge.

As China’s national cultural centre and a hub for international communication, Beijing provides uniquely fertile ground for cultural innovation and development. Beyond its rich historical heritage and distinctive local culture, the city offers strong infrastructure, abundant talent and sustained market demand that support creativity in fashion, art and design. With its vast consumer base and mature, well-integrated cultural industry ecosystem, Beijing has firmly established itself as one of the country’s most vibrant centres of popular culture.

Chaoyang District is home to Beijing’s most vibrant popular culture scene and the largest concentration of cultural enterprises. Anchored by the National Cultural and Creative Industry Pilot Zone, the district contains 102 cultural parks and 2,920 major cultural companies. Over the years, Chaoyang has developed a comprehensive industrial chain encompassing animation, film, designer toys, digital cultural innovation and brand licensing. Notably, 80 percent of Beijing’s digital content production companies are based in the district, covering the full spectrum from design and research and development to operations. By 2025, Chaoyang’s trendy toy industry had



► MEGA Space Molly series
▼ POP MART’s Skull Panda statue at Beijing’s CBD
▲ A phoenix decoration at the main venue
▼ Destined One in Yaksha’s Outrage Armor Set

generated an output value of 28.9 billion yuan (US\$4.29 billion). Iconic IPs such as POP MART’s MOLLY and Letsvan’s WAKUKU first rose to prominence here before expanding across China and onto the global stage.

During the inaugural China New Cultural and Creative Market & Trendy Toy Carnival, Chaoyang District unveiled its “Three-Year Action Plan for the High-Quality Development of the IP Designer Toy Industry,” setting ambitious targets of surpassing 50 billion yuan (US\$7.35 billion) in revenue by 2028 and incubating at least 10 highly influential IPs. The plan outlines systematic support across five key pillars: original development, commercial conversion, consumer engagement, talent cultivation and technological innovation. It also introduces targeted measures to support IP development,

attract enterprises and encourage cross-sector collaboration. Through these efforts, Chaoyang aims to build a comprehensive ecosystem characterised by industrial clustering, policy support, scenario-based implementation and cultural leadership, further strengthening Beijing’s position as a global capital of intellectual property.

The cultural sector is a cornerstone of Beijing’s economy, and the trendy toy industry, though still relatively young, is emerging as one of its most dynamic growth drivers. Leveraging strengths in creative design, IP operations and cross-industry integration, it is actively reshaping the city’s cultural consumption landscape. From the opening of POP LAND in Chaoyang Park to Letsvan’s first national flagship store at Hopson One; from the viral success of the 2026 China New Cultural and Creative



▲ Cultural and Creative products from the National Museum of China



▼ A cultural and creative stall



▲ Cultural and creative products from Nobody (Langlangshan Xiaoyaoguai)



▲ Perler Beads



▲ Handmade bean pod elf artworks



▲ Pendant decorations on tourists' bags

Market to the annual Beijing Toy Show; from LABUBU's rise to global fame to the debut of WAKUKU 4.0 at Beijing Fashion Week; and from the MOLLY 20th Anniversary Exhibition at the 798 Art Zone to SKULLPANDA's first North China exhibition, "Blossom Tales," at China World Mall—Beijing has cultivated a comprehensive industrial chain encompassing IP incubation, derivative product development, experiential exhibitions and omnichannel retail.

Trendy toys not only satisfy young people's emotional needs but have also emerged as a distinctive medium for expressing urban culture and a powerful force driving cultural tourism consumption and creative vitality. In September 2023, China's first immersive IP-themed designer toy park, POP LAND, opened in Chaoyang Park. The meeting of beloved designer toy IPs and Beijing's urban cultural landscape has generated innovative consumer experiences while providing a significant boost to the city's tourism and retail sectors. Ahead of this year's May Day holiday, the park unveiled several new attractions centred on two of its most popular IPs, THE MONSTERS and DIMOO. Three new themed zones—the Enchanted Forest Market, LABUBU Warrior

Fjord and Cloud Lake—were introduced alongside five large-scale rides and 17 interactive carnival-style games. This major expansion has significantly enhanced both the park's playability and its narrative depth, creating a more immersive world shaped by IP storytelling. In just two years, the park has evolved into one of Beijing's most distinctive cultural landmarks. Combining amusement rides, live performances, dining, exclusive merchandise and family-friendly attractions, it stands as a vivid example of how creativity, emotion and urban identity can come together to redefine contemporary leisure and cultural experiences.

The Evolution of IP Going Global: Chinese Culture and Eastern Aesthetics Stepping onto the Global Stage

Statistics show that China's trendy toy market continues to expand rapidly, with its value expected to exceed 160 billion yuan (US\$23.53 billion) by 2027. Far more than simply satisfying young consumers' demand for personalised and emotionally

engaging cultural products, designer toys have emerged as an innovative medium for telling Chinese stories and promoting Chinese culture on the global stage. Companies such as POP MART have risen rapidly in recent years, not only cultivating multiple highly successful IPs but also introducing the appeal of Chinese designer toys to audiences around the world.

According to statistics, POP MART achieved triple-digit year-on-year growth across Southeast Asia, Europe and the Americas in 2025, with its global store count surpassing 630 locations. Its flagship IP franchise, THE MONSTERS, featuring the mischievous LABUBU, has become a global phenomenon, generating more than 10 billion yuan (US\$1.47 billion) in revenue and earning recognition as a world-class intellectual property brand. In March 2026, POP MART announced a partnership with Sony Pictures to co-develop a live-action animated film based on THE MONSTERS. Further strengthening its international presence, the company made history in November 2025 by becoming the first Chinese brand to feature an original designer toy IP on a float in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade in New York City, a milestone that sparked widespread discussion across

global social media platforms. Meanwhile, fellow Beijing-based brands Letsvan and 52TOYS have also expanded into North America, Europe and Southeast Asia through strategic distribution networks, opening physical stores and pop-up locations that have attracted large numbers of young fans to their popular IPs.

From IP incubation and market expansion to gameplay innovation and platform integration, Beijing's designer toy companies demonstrate remarkable creativity and competitiveness. 52TOYS is a prime example. Its "Chinese DNA + global vision" development model has elevated Chinese designer toys beyond simple exports into a form of cultural exchange. The company has built an IP portfolio rooted in Eastern aesthetics while maintaining broad international appeal. In recent years, it has introduced numerous products incorporating Chinese cultural elements that have attracted growing attention overseas. For example, its BEASTBOX transformable mecha series includes a sub-line inspired by traditional Chinese auspicious creatures such as the *qilin* (kylin) and the Chinese dragon. Guided by the philosophy of "transcending tradition, revitalising history and inheriting culture," its "Super Revival"

blind box series blends historical heritage with contemporary imagination through concepts including "Tang Dynasty Ladies Doing Yoga," "Daily Life of Court Ladies" and "Terracotta Warriors in Battle." In collaboration with NMC Art Workshop, the National Museum of China's cultural brand, 52TOYS has also reimagined iconic artefacts such as the Eastern Han Dynasty Drumming and Singing Figurine and the Yangshao Eagle-shaped Pot as wind-up toys, quite literally bringing ancient relics to life. Its Panda Roll series, inspired by China's national treasure, the giant panda, captures the animal's endearing clumsiness and places it in a variety of everyday settings, encouraging young people to engage with Chinese culture through playful and accessible products. Today, 52TOYS offers a diverse product range, including static figures, articulated models, transformable mechas, wind-up toys and plush collectibles. Original IPs such as Panda Roll, NOOK and CiCiLu resonate strongly with young consumers worldwide through their distinctive personalities and comforting aesthetics. Together, these products demonstrate how traditional heritage and contemporary trends can successfully converge.

The global popularity of Chinese IPs reflects a broader shift in consumer

behaviour: a move away from pure functionality and practicality towards identity expression and social connection. With their "ugly-cute," "comforting," "rebellious" and highly individualised images, trendy toys have become a kind of social language through which a new generation expresses its identity and seeks a sense of belonging. Behind this phenomenon lies not only a rapidly expanding market, but also a clear reflection of evolving public tastes and changing consumption values, revealing how today's consumers increasingly prioritise emotional fulfilment, personal meaning and a stronger sense of connection.

Fuelled by this wave of creative consumption, Beijing, with its rich cultural resources and strong innovation ecosystem, continues to serve as fertile ground for original IPs and emerging enterprises. The result is a vibrant and distinctive cultural consumption landscape in which imagination flows freely and identity finds form in every collectible figure.

Tracing the Origins of Chinese Toys: The Childhood Code Transcending Time and Space

China's toy history is an epic of childhood, woven from generations of craftsmanship and wisdom. Whether exquisite playthings or lively games, they reflect a deep care for children, forming vivid childhood memories that continue to shine with innocence and ingenuity throughout Chinese culture.

Nijiaojiao (Clay Whistles)

Dating back to the Neolithic Age, clay whistles shaped like birds and animals produce crisp sounds with a gentle blow, blending the forms and sounds of nature in palm-sized playthings that rank among China's earliest toys.



Cloth Tiger

First appearing during the Han Dynasty (206 BC–AD 220), protective cloth dolls stuffed with mugwort or cotton served as both talismans and playmates for children. Tiger-shaped versions were especially popular, embodying wishes for healthy growth.



Luban Lock and Nine Linked Rings

These traditional puzzles vividly demonstrate the logical ingenuity of ancient Chinese thinkers. The Luban Lock, which originated during the Spring and Autumn Period (770–476 BC), consists of interlocking wooden pieces that challenge spatial reasoning through its assembly and disassembly. The Nine Linked Rings likely emerged as early as the Warring States Period (475–221 BC) and became widespread during the Song Dynasty (AD 960–1279). Featuring nine interwoven rings mounted on a looped rod, the puzzle requires all the rings to be removed, a task far more complex than it first appears and one that relies on subtle mathematical and mechanical principles. The classic novel *Dream of the Red Chamber* even records Lin Daiyu skilfully solving the Nine Linked Rings. Other well-known Chinese puzzles include the Tangram (Seven Pieces) and Huarong Road.



Pellet Drum

Originating in the ritual music traditions that predated the Qin Dynasty (221–206 BC), the pellet drum gradually evolved into a beloved toy for young children. Consisting of a small drum mounted on a long handle with two cords, each attached to a bead, it produces cheerful, rhythmic sounds when shaken. For centuries, this simple yet captivating instrument has remained one of China's most iconic children's toys.



Spinning Top

One of China's earliest folk toys, the traditional spinning top is typically cone-shaped and carved from wood. To play, a string is wound around its body and then sharply pulled, causing the top to spin upright. Simple in design yet full of dynamic motion, it remains a favourite toy across generations.



Diabolo

A traditional Chinese toy made of bamboo or wood, the diabolo produces a whirring sound when spun rapidly by pulling on attached strings. Originating from ancient Chinese tops, it gradually evolved into a distinctive folk toy and performance art, most famously in Beijing, where it is known as "Shaking the Diabolo."



Bamboo-copter

Composed of a bamboo shaft and two wing-like blades, the bamboo-copter is held between the palms, spun by rubbing the hands together and released into the air. This simple yet ingenious toy once fascinated Western missionaries, who referred to it as the "Chinese flying top" or "Chinese spiral," and it later helped inspire the design of modern helicopter rotors.



Playing House

Chinese children's games are deeply rooted in everyday life and the natural environment, simple in form yet rich in playful charm, and many remain popular today. Take "playing house," for example. Unlike modern cosplay, this role-playing game is an innocent imitation of the adult world. Children use miniature kitchenware and cloth dolls to assume different roles, playfully acting out the routines and relationships of daily life long before they experience them firsthand.

The City's Trendy Toy Map: Unlocking Urban Creativity

Text by Ma Kai, Zhang Jian

Photos courtesy of BOM Xi Fan Li and by Tong Tianyi, Zhang Xin, Dong Bo, Gong Yuexian, Liang Yue



More than an ancient capital with a millennium of history, Beijing functions as a dynamic and fertile ground for the flourishing of trendy toy culture. As one follows the city's arteries, a captivating pilgrimage centred on trendy toys is gradually emerging. This journey weaves together whimsical castles, fashionable commercial districts, distinctive themed streets and spaces dedicated to culture and creativity, bringing together a diverse range of fashionable experiences. Within this vibrant landscape, each notable destination cultivates its own distinct character.

Trendy Toys in the City's Theme Parks

POP LAND: a Joyous Base for Trendy Toy Enthusiasts

A five-minute walk from Zaoying Station on Beijing Subway Line 14 brings visitors into the verdant expanse of Chaoyang Park. Nestled within this urban sanctuary, POP LAND presents itself like a

colossal blind box. As China's pioneering immersive trendy toy IP (intellectual property) theme park, it underwent a year of refurbishment before celebrating its grand reopening on April 30, 2026. The park now features three newly unveiled themed zones. Spanning approximately 40,000 square metres, the destination offers a richer variety of settings and interactive experiences. Enhanced immersion and narrative depth imbue these trendy toy spaces with greater delight and creative possibilities.

Upon receiving a park passport and

entering, guests are welcomed to Bubble Street, where the theme park adventure begins with immediate intrigue. Here, visitors encounter an array of eye-catching displays perfect for posting on social media, featuring beloved characters such as MOLLY, LABUBU, DIMOO and SKULLPANDA. Every photograph taken here has the potential to go viral. Inside the shops, a wealth of MOLLY badges, LABUBU plush charms and DIMOO blind boxes are attractively displayed, encouraging visitors to select their favourite limited-edition treasures upon arrival. The street game house hosts a variety of engaging activities, with prizes awarded to all participants. Fortunate visitors may even secure coveted "trophies," allowing adults to rediscover their inner child. Bubble Street also serves as a principal location for meet-and-greet sessions with POP MART's popular characters, fostering a consistently relaxed and cheerful atmosphere.

When you turn the corner from Bubble Street, you will enter into LABUBU Adventure Forest. With its meandering path sheltered beneath the dense canopy of mature trees on either side, the forest invites exploration. The air within the forest carries a gentle, cooling breeze, while dappled sunlight filters through the leaves, casting shifting patterns across the ground. This year's newly unveiled



▲ The Wish Journey Immersive Theatre at MOLLY's Castle

Adventure Forest Market serves as a vibrant gathering place for The MONSTERS collective. Distinctively designed Nordic-inspired wooden dwellings are arranged irregularly throughout the space, their timber exteriors complemented by charming old-style roofs that evoke a simple yet distinctive character. More than 10 carnival-style games are interspersed among these structures, offering straightforward and enjoyable activities such as coin fishing and target practice. Participants can earn exclusive prizes by successfully completing challenges. Deeper within the woods stands a lifelike colossal tree adorned with climbing vines, from which a magical tree room

appears to have grown organically from the trunk itself. A spiralling wooden staircase ascends to the elevated platform, leading directly to LABUBU's dwelling. At scheduled times throughout the day, endearing LABUBU characters emerge onto the platform, warmly interacting with visitors and posing for photographs. Nearby, the enigmatic fishing village and warrior tribe settings each possess their own distinct character, meticulously recreating the immersive world of LABUBU. These small, round-faced, big-eyed and pointed-eared inhabitants, whether hidden amongst the foliage or



▼ Baifu Spring

▼ POP LAND in Chaoyang Park



▲ LABUBU series
▶ Hirono Creepy Clown

positioned beside bridge entrances, exude a playful spirit that perfectly captures youthful energy.

Beyond the woodland, LABUBU Warrior Fjord stands out as the most striking and exhilarating zone in the park. Its centrepiece, a LABUBU-themed pirate ship, immediately captures attention. The hull is embellished with rustic timber motifs and Nordic-inspired totems, while a courageous LABUBU warrior positioned at the prow appears to lead the voyage. The vessel seems to navigate turbulent waters, rising to the crest of a wave before plunging back into the rolling surf. The delighted shrieks of guests blend with the rhythmic chants of LABUBU and upbeat game soundtracks, creating an exceptionally lively atmosphere. Nearby, Surprise Monster Bouncing and the “Bang” Heart-Stirring Mini Free-Fall ride are equally popular. The bouncing attraction transforms the traditional ball-toss concept into a high-energy performance, as the cockpit rhythmically launches into the air before returning to the ground, with each ascent delivering a fresh burst of excitement. The mini free-fall ride slowly lifts passengers toward the treetops before pausing briefly and descending rapidly, creating an intense sensation of weightlessness that draws

gasps of excitement. Adorned with charming statues of LABUBU characters dressed as circus performers and lookouts, the attractions are imbued with the whimsical, spirited energy that defines this amusement zone.

Deeper within the park, the newly established Cloud Fountain provides a serene setting where the bashful and elegant mermaid DIMOO is gracefully

seated. The tranquil and ethereal surroundings offer a stark contrast to the energetic forest. Adding to the excitement, two new attractions have been introduced to this area, each bearing a poetic name: Waltz on the Clouds and Rondo in the Dream. The carousel, as light and airy as clouds, rotates gently, appearing to perform a delicate waltz with the sky. Ascending in a suspended chair and slowly rotating through the air, visitors may feel as though they are drifting amongst the stars and clouds, embarking on an airborne pursuit of romantic dreams. Nearby, the DIMOO Gourmet Explorer is peacefully docked beside the lake, its hull decorated in refreshing blue and white tones. The main deck serves as a DIMOO-themed dining space, offering a selection of exquisite desserts and beverages. Above, the second level features a simulated cockpit and an open-air viewing deck, ideal for taking memorable photographs and appreciating panoramic views.

Undoubtedly, the architectural jewel of the park is MOLLY’s Castle. This sophisticated three-storey, European-inspired edifice sits majestically beside the lake, finished in elegant, pristine

white. Its orderly colonnades, arched openings and intricate stonework create a harmonious aesthetic. MOLLY figurines in a multitude of guises are omnipresent, perched upon window ledges or waiting to be discovered along corridors, ensuring guests are constantly accompanied by these endearing characters. Within the MOLLY Toy House on the ground floor, tiered displays are filled with an array of trendy toys, ranging from iconic MOLLY designs to the popular Twinkle Twinkle and boutique CHAKA collections. Beyond sought-after blind boxes, dolls and charms, the shelves also feature a wealth of IP merchandise, much of it exclusive to the park. Consequently, this area remains a bustling hub, perpetually crowded with visitors eager to browse and snap photographs. The Wish Journey immersive theatre in the basement is an essential stop. Utilising 4D technology, the venue creates a layered, three-dimensional experience recounting the enchanting adventures of MOLLY and her companions. Through vivid audio-visual production and engaging interactive elements, the theatre invites guests to join the protagonists on a truly fantastical voyage.

The castle also serves as an ideal

Address:
By Chaoyang Park, Chaoyang District
Business hours:
10 a.m.–8 p.m.
Getting there:
Take Beijing Subway Line 14 to Zaoying Station and follow signs for Exit D; Take Bus nos. 419, 682 or 988 to Zaoying, then walk to Chaoyang Park’s West Gate Entrance 3; or Drive to the parking lot at West Gate Entrance 3 of Chaoyang Park and walk to the entrance.

Tip



venue for a culinary treat. On the ground floor, the Dessert House offers an indulgent selection, while the Food Court on the second floor presents a broad range of Western dishes and the Banquet Hall on the top floor provides a more formal dining experience. Together, they form the park’s “sweetest space.” Many of the pastries and drinks are decorated with imaginative MOLLY and Twinkle Twinkle designs, combining visual charm with delightful flavours. Ascending to the third-floor terrace rewards visitors with panoramic views across POP LAND’s lake and, in the distance, the sleek skyline

of Beijing’s CBD, creating a superb backdrop for photographs.

It may be getting late, but there is no need to head home just yet—the theme park’s night tour is about to begin. Neon lights and towering IP installations illuminate Bubble Street, while the LABUBU Adventure Forest sheds its daytime bustle, with twinkling lights hidden amongst the trees and the fairy tree house bathed in a soft, hazy glow. Beside the Cloud Fountain, the carousel radiates a distinctive brilliance; gentle, warm light envelops each seat, creating a romantic fairy-tale atmosphere unique to the evening as the illumination ripples and dances. Against the night sky, the castle takes on an ethereal quality, and at regular intervals, enchanting bubble rain cascades in front of it. Colourful bubbles drift through the air to a melodic soundtrack, transforming the entire area into a spellbound realm. Throughout the evening, the park offers a variety of interactive games and stage performances—starlit meet-and-greets, themed parties and energetic shows appear in succession. IP-centred activities continue from day into night, sustaining a constant sense of excitement.

With modest trendy toys now occupying a vast realm, the newly upgraded POP LAND blurs the boundary between the virtual and the physical, transforming these toys into a lifestyle that visitors can experience, immerse themselves in and socialise around.



▲ LABUBU Pirate Ship



▲ Foreign children pose with MOKOKO



▲ Foreign tourists enjoy activities at LABUBU Amusement Park



▲ A Robotech model

Within this environment, a gentle sense of healing and aesthetic pleasure quietly flourishes.

Weibo IN Interdimensional Gravitational Zone: a Convergence of Dimensional Cultures

A 10 minute walk east of POP LAND leads to a sleek silver structure whose simple yet refined design radiates a fresh sense of modernity. This building houses the Weibo IN Interdimensional

Gravitational Zone, commonly shortened to “Weibo IN” by younger visitors.

Opened to the public in October 2025, this newly reimagined two-dimensional cultural landmark was originally the beach volleyball venue for the 2008 Beijing Olympic Summer Games. Following extensive redesign and refurbishment, the structure now incorporates high-tech aesthetics and a range of multi-dimensional experience zones, transforming the former Olympic venue into a vibrant cultural hub that strongly resonates with younger generations.

Weibo IN positions itself as a hub for

cross-dimensional experiences. As Beijing’s largest comprehensive venue dedicated to two-dimensional culture and trendy toys, it brings together a broad selection of popular anime, toys and IP-based games from both domestic and international sources, naturally attracting large numbers of young people.

The venue’s interior feels expansive and light-filled. Dominated by crisp white tones, it features curved aluminium panels, irregularly shaped screens and dynamic light-and-shadow installations throughout the space. A subtle technological aesthetic permeates the details. The moment visitors step inside, they are greeted by a distinctly immersive atmosphere.

Weibo IN is a haven for trendy toy enthusiasts. A multitude of celebrated domestic brands and cultural-creative labels have established a presence here, with dedicated showcases for BLACKMYTH, BilibiliGoods, Almost Real and others. The exhibition space features iconic pieces such as Destined One character models and Genshin Impact merchandise, alongside a rotating selection of brand-new releases and limited-edition items that keep the retail experience fresh and exciting. The selection of international classic trendy toys is equally impressive: flagship stores from BANDAI SPIRITS, KOTOBUKIYA,

Megahouse and SOOTANG HOBBY are scattered throughout the complex. Shelves are filled with a diverse array of trendy toys, including anime figurines, mecha models and collectible cards, catering to both newcomers and seasoned collectors and ensuring that everyone leaves with something worth taking home.

Weibo IN extends beyond the retail of trendy toys to serve as an exclusive offline gathering place for fans of two-dimensional culture. On the second floor, purpose-built makeup and styling suites, together with complimentary cosplay preparation areas, provide comprehensive and thoughtful amenities. Weekends and holidays see the venue thronged with young people dressed in detailed costumes inspired by beloved IP characters such as Genshin Impact and Honkai, accompanied by meticulous makeup and styling. Some mingle and exchange ideas with kindred spirits, while others enthusiastically invite visitors to chat and take photographs. These recurring interactions dissolve social barriers, fostering a genuinely inclusive community.

The Three-Body Problem • Four-Dimensional Space Sci-Fi Experience Centre on the third floor stands out as a distinctive attraction and is notably the

nation’s first fully immersive VR venue dedicated to the novel *The Three-Body Problem*. Departing from conventional graphic and textual displays, it relies solely on VR headsets to create a lifelike environment. The moment visitors put on the equipment, they are transported into the novel’s universe. Within the experience, they witness the astonishing sight of three suns blazing simultaneously in the heavens, their searing light seemingly dissolving everything around them. Moments later, the setting shifts abruptly to numbing cold, with the frigid chaos of the era becoming so intense that visitors almost feel the chill in their bones.

The Diamond Centre e-sports arena ranks among the top attractions within Weibo IN. As one of Beijing’s largest professional e-sports venues, it meets top-tier competition standards, from battle-ready equipment and audiovisual systems to a fully illuminated stage. The spacious hall can accommodate up to 1,500 spectators for shared viewing experiences. Here, a regular programme of professional e-sports tournaments, two-dimensional culture-themed performances and anime concerts unfolds. These varied events create

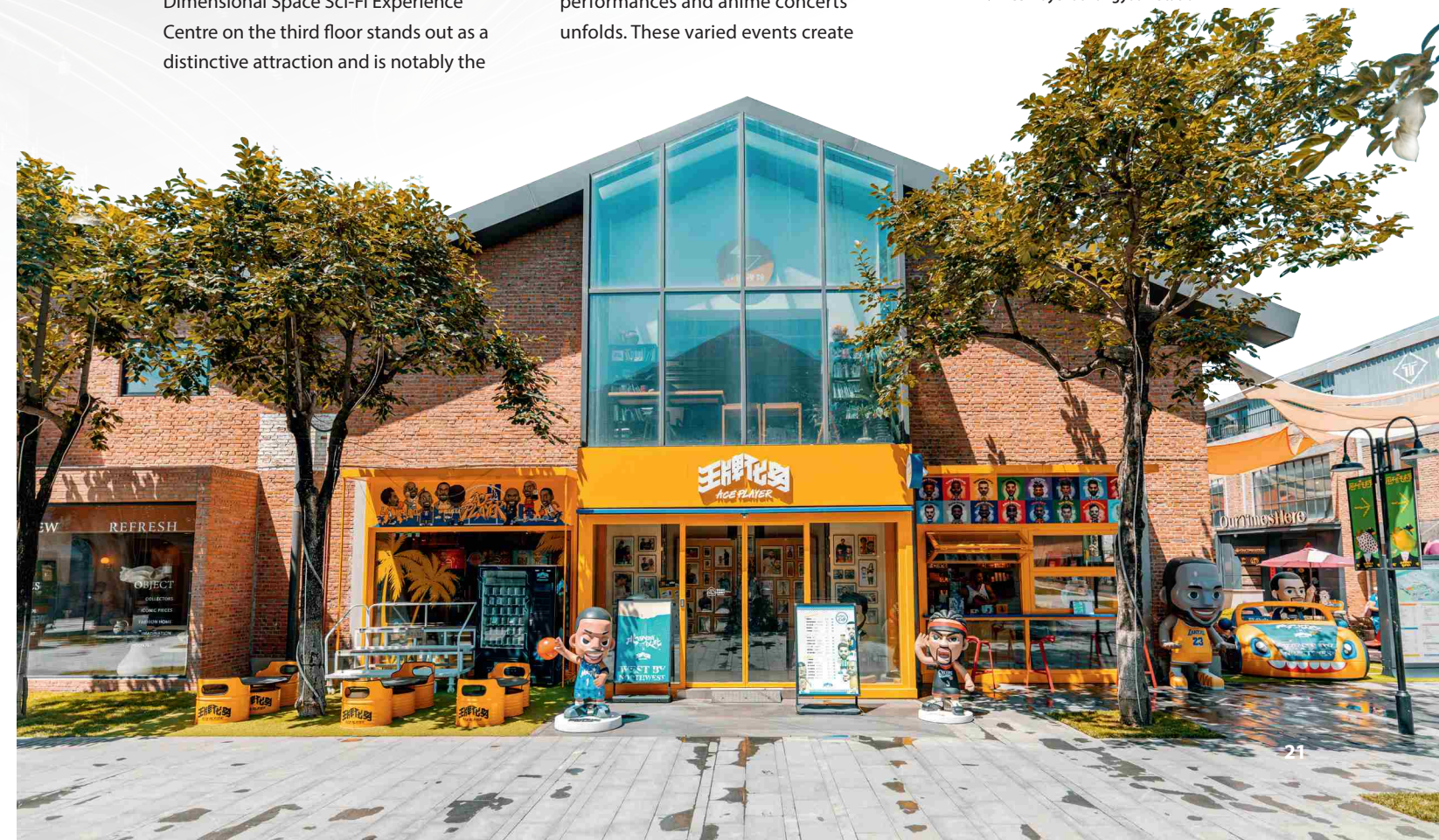
a consistently vibrant atmosphere, radiating the energy of two-dimensional culture throughout the open space.

The redevelopment of Weibo IN represents a vivid example of urban renewal in Beijing. Freed from the weight of historical legacy, the venue offers an open and inclusive atmosphere that welcomes a variety of subcultures, including trendy toys, anime, e-sports and cosplay. Within this newly reimagined setting, a constant flow of energy and vitality persists.

Langyuan Station: a Retro and Trendy Artistic Community

Proceeding northeast from Weibo IN brings visitors to 53 Banjieta Road in Chaoyang District, where Langyuan Station sits adjacent to Jiangfu Park. Langyuan, a cultural and creative park reborn from a 1960s Beijing textile warehouse complex, has preserved 30 red-brick warehouses, 2.23 kilometres of its original railway tracks and the

▼ Ace Player at Langyuan Station



Tips

Address:

In Chaoyang Park

Business hours:

10 a.m.–9 p.m. (weekdays); 10 a.m.–10 p.m. (weekends and statutory holidays)

Getting there:

Take Beijing Subway Line 14 to Zaoying Station, follow signs for Exit A, walk to west gate of Chaoyang Park and reach Weibo In by shuttle bus or on foot; Take Bus nos. 400, 451 or 657 to Dashanzhuang, walk to Weibo In via Chaoyang Park’s East Gate Entrance 5; or Drive to the parking lot at Chaoyang Park’s East Gate Entrance 5 and walk.



▲ Station Market at Langyuan Station

▲ A shop selling a variety of trendy items at Langyuan Station

old platforms. Here, industrial-style architecture mingles with contemporary cultural trends, forming a hub for retro collectibles, artistic youth and enthusiasts of niche cultures.

Stepping into the park and taking a closer look, visitors cannot help but sense the harmonious coexistence of old and new. The old reveals itself through weathered brick walls, exposed industrial trusses and winding railway tracks, while the new emerges through trendy toy boutiques, craft workshops, art spaces and distinctive coffee shops. Although these two forces appear clearly distinct, they intertwine and flourish together without any sense of discord.

Central Station Square stands as the park's principal landmark. The former railway platform and adjoining warehouse have been transformed into a cultural hub. Here, vintage black rails and time-worn clocks meet sleek transparent glass curtain walls, creating a striking visual contrast. Along the tracks, the Railway Track Market appears at irregular intervals. The platform

itself functions as the marketplace, hosting an eclectic assortment of vinyl records, vintage toys, handcrafted leather goods and specialised trendy toys. Most vendors are independent designers or curators of niche brands, and every item exudes individuality and warmth. Visitors may discover retro anime figurines, limited-edition blind boxes and obscure IP merchandise, encountering the unique appeal of retro-inspired trends.

Trendy toy and cultural-creative boutiques are scattered throughout the park's red-brick warehouses, each filled with delightful surprises.

For fans of sport and contemporary culture, Ace Player is an essential destination. The establishment exudes an atmosphere that is both vibrant and energetic. Its primary focus is merchandise derived from sports intellectual property, encompassing a diverse range of products. These include figurines, scale models and collectible statues celebrating renowned athletes from major global sporting events, alongside autographed

memorabilia, commemorative souvenirs from significant occasions and official team apparel. Numerous sports enthusiasts make a special pilgrimage to Ace Player specifically to acquire prized additions to their collections, take memorable photographs, share collecting experiences and immerse themselves in the enjoyment that defines sports fandom.

Within the park, the POP MART robot store presents a truly captivating spectacle. Despite its modest size, the establishment houses an impressive array of beloved and iconic IP blind boxes, featuring popular characters such as MOLLY, DIMOO and LABUBU. New releases, including regular series, special holiday editions and unique park-exclusive versions, are introduced continuously. As visitors unbox their purchases, they experience a delightful sense of anticipation and surprise, embracing the simple pleasure that fashionable collectible toys provide.

POP IN SWAG has firmly established itself as an extremely popular destination for trend enthusiasts within the park,

attracting a substantial following thanks to its eclectic merchandise and distinctive aesthetic. In addition to sought-after collectible figurines and exclusive limited-edition blind boxes, the store also curates a compelling selection of fashionable apparel, stylish accessories, artistic decorative pieces and innovative cultural and creative goods, among other categories. This extensive collection features numerous items seldom encountered elsewhere on the market. The interior layout is characterised by a relaxed atmosphere infused with a strong sense of design. Consequently, whether visitors are captivated by mainstream popular IPs or are trendsetters with a preference for more niche designs, they are certain to discover items that resonate with their personal tastes.

Nestled within the park, Lovely Things offers a delightful sanctuary dedicated to gentle rejuvenation. The establishment's distinctive emblem is a large, charming pink rabbit whose head emerges from the roof, its soft pink hue creating a remarkably captivating

sight. The store's interior atmosphere is warm and sophisticated. Its offerings encompass a range of soft and endearing IP-related products, engaging children's toys, artisanal accessories, distinctive decorative knick-knacks and a variety of miscellaneous items. The shelves are filled with an abundant selection of small goods, each characterised by exquisite craftsmanship and appealing, fresh colour palettes, collectively radiating a palpable sense of thoughtful creativity. Within this serene and welcoming environment, visitors are invited to browse at their leisure, whether searching for souvenirs or discovering unique treasures, all while enjoying moments of pleasant discovery and aesthetic delight.

The growing vibrancy of Langyuan Station's trendy cultural landscape has been significantly enriched by its array of art exhibitions and cultural activities. Avant-garde art shows, curated displays of niche collectible toys and celebratory art festivals have all helped elevate these toys from mere consumer products to objects

of artistic appreciation. Furthermore, the park incorporates an audio-visual innovation centre and cinema-themed dining venues, both subtly infused with cinematic narratives, unexpected delights and familiar IP elements. Film and television IP collectibles, animation-related merchandise and thematic decor are ubiquitous throughout the space, creating strong connections with enthusiasts of both cinema and two-dimensional culture.

Langyuan Station steadfastly avoids blindly following prevailing trends. Instead, it provides a platform for a diverse spectrum of niche interests, vintage aesthetics and original creative expression. It functions almost like a personal artistic sanctuary within the urban landscape, offering young people a space to discover and nurture hidden passions amidst its evocative industrial heritage.

Tips

Address:
53 Banjieta Road,
Chaoyang District
Business time:
Open daily
Getting there:
Drive to the parking lot at
the south gate of Langyuan
Station and walk to the park.



▲ A cultural and creative shop at Langyuan Station

Special Objects Showing Uniqueness on the Trendy Toy Market

Within the contemporary realm of trendy toys, various subcategories have established distinct positions through their unique aesthetics, structures and enthusiast communities. The eight primary categories are blind boxes, plush dolls, figurines, mechas, models, building blocks, cards and video games. Each operates within specialised niches to engage its specific audiences. Every segment demonstrates its own distinctive appeal, collectively fostering a comprehensive and vibrant ecosystem of trendy toys.

Blind Box

The blind box phenomenon is built on the excitement of unpredictability, collectability and social trends, characterised by endearing designs that make them ideal for desktop display. For countless individuals, they serve as the perfect entry point into the world of trendy toys. The primary appeal of blind boxes lies in the thrill of the unknown; the act of opening a box provides a profound sense of excitement and gratification.

Gameplay: Enthusiasts may choose to purchase individual items at random, buy an entire series, or acquire specific pieces through trading or purchasing within the blind box community.

Representative products: POP MART, 52TOYS, Funko, Tokidoki

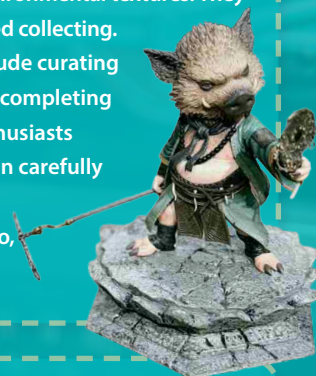


Figurines

Figurines represent a category within the trendy toy sphere that combines artistic merit with premium collectible value. Primarily consisting of scaled models based on iconic IP characters from anime, films, television series and video games, these items are celebrated for their superb craftsmanship, meticulous paintwork and exceptional attention to detail, faithfully recreating characters' expressions, attire and environmental textures. They represent a cornerstone of experienced collecting.

Gameplay: Primary pursuits include curating displays, showcasing collections and completing entire series. Furthermore, many enthusiasts enjoy photographing their figurines in carefully composed settings.

Representative products: miHoYo, Hot Toys, GSC, Alter, BANDAI



Models

Models represent a category of trendy toys that rigorously tests patience and technical skill. These items encompass a diverse range of themes, including military vehicles, racing motorcycles, architectural landmarks, anime environments and realistic machinery. Prized for their high fidelity, precision and realistic simulation, they are highly sought after by enthusiasts of handicrafts, military history and diorama collecting.

Gameplay: The essence of this hobby lies in the immersive process of manual construction and careful assembly. The journey of transforming a collection of individual components into a finished piece provides the greatest enjoyment for enthusiasts in this field.

Representative products: Almost Real, ROKR, Tamiya, Revell



Cards

Cards are the category that exhibits the strongest social and competitive elements within the world of trendy toys. These items consist of durable printed cards featuring an array of IP characters, ability descriptions and unique narrative designs derived from anime, video games, films and sports. Featuring sophisticated rarity systems, they serve as both prized collectables and important tools for social interaction and gameplay.

Gameplay: Combining the pleasures of collecting and competition, enthusiasts curate diverse sets to assemble unique collections and hunt for rare cards. Certain competitive formats are governed by well-established rules, allowing participants to enjoy the thrill of tactical gameplay.

Representative products: KAYOU, KAKAWOW, BANDAI, Wizards of the Coast



Plush Dolls

Plush toys are a segment of trendy toys designed to provide warmth and a soothing, therapeutic experience. Constructed from soft, skin-friendly fabrics filled with plush stuffing, they offer an exceptionally comfortable tactile sensation. These items are characterised by their charming, gentle aesthetics and diverse range of styles, primarily emphasising emotional companionship and sentimental value.

Gameplay: These items can serve as ornaments or pendants, offering comfort and helping relieve stress. Furthermore, enthusiasts may purchase custom outfits and accessories to dress, customise and style the dolls according to their personal tastes.

Representative products: POP MART, TOP TOY, JELLYCAT, Disney, Line Friends



Mechas

Mecha represents the mainstream category for dedicated enthusiasts, encompassing diverse themes such as science fiction, fantasy and Chinese-style mechas. It is characterised by precise mechanical structures, streamlined designs and a wide range of movable joints. Most are constructed from high-strength materials, providing a solid feel and extensive customisation potential.

Gameplay: Enthusiasts assemble entire mechas to appreciate the precision of their mechanical structures. Some transformable mechas can also change forms or combine with multiple units, greatly enhancing playability.

Representative products: 52TOYS, JOYTOY, BANDAI, McFarlane Toys



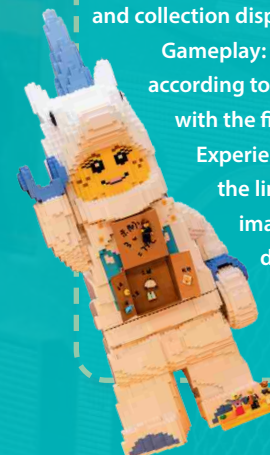
Building Blocks

Building blocks are a creative trendy toy category suitable for all age groups. By assembling and combining blocks piece by piece, enthusiasts can fully enjoy the fun and sense of achievement that come with hands-on construction. They are suitable for a variety of settings, including parent-child activities and collection displays, and appeal to a broad audience.

Gameplay: Building blocks are assembled step by step according to the accompanying manuals and instructions, with the finished products often displayed afterwards.

Experienced enthusiasts frequently move beyond the limitations of blueprints, fully exercising their imagination and creativity to create personalised designs.

Representative products: LEGO, BLOKEES, Hape, Mega Bloks



Video Games

Video games, currently a highly popular new category of cross-media trendy toys, encompass experiences ranging from retro arcade games and music titles to handheld consoles and VR. They offer both entertainment value and visual appeal. With strong gameplay quality and contemporary appeal, they have emerged as a premium category favoured by trend-conscious enthusiasts.

Gameplay: Participants engage with video game systems to immerse themselves in gameplay. Certain titles support group competition or cooperative progression, offering a wide variety of play styles and experiences.

Representative products: MSI, Switch, PlayStation, STEAM





Trendy Toys in the City's Business Circles

Whether at HOPSON ONE or Joy City in Chaoyang, or perhaps at THE BOX Chaowai and BOM XI FAN LI in Wudaokou, throngs of people can be found waiting in lines for hours to secure limited-edition toys. Others may be seen carrying *tongbao* bags in search of fellow enthusiasts, or simply wandering between anime merchandise boutiques and themed pop-up shops, revelling in their own personal "happy planet." These once-niche hobbies have evolved into a contemporary lifestyle for young people, subtly transforming Beijing's retail landscape.

From HOPSON ONE to Wudaokou: The Universe of Trendy Toys is Growing within the City's Vibrant Shopping Malls

Commuters arriving at Jiulongshan Station on Beijing Subway Line 14 enjoy direct access to the B1 and B2 levels of HOPSON ONE in Chaoyang. Upon entering this underground space, visitors are immediately immersed in the vibrant energy associated with youth culture. Glass display cases are filled with rows of plush charms, capsule toy machines whirl incessantly, and crowds pose for photographs with LABUBU and WAKUKU figures. Rather than resembling a conventional shopping centre, the space feels more like an expansive physical hub for interest communities.

Situated on the B1 level, the Qimengdao (Here) store serves as the first national flagship location for this emerging Beijing-based brand for trendy toys. Since opening, the store has consistently appeared on social media trend lists. Its main attraction lies in its carefully constructed intellectual property (IP) ecosystem. Designed around the concept of an "island," the interior resembles a space inhabited by various characters. Whether WAKUKU, SIINONO, the Chinese Princess ZIYULI, or IMPOPO PIX, more than 10 original licensed characters appear across diverse settings. With displays arranged as miniature islands, cosy lofts and immersive window installations, the venue feels more like an exhibition space than a retail store.

Beyond this flagship boutique, the B1 level hosts an array of popular toy brands from across Beijing. At the POP MART counters, young shoppers can be seen carefully calculating the odds of obtaining elusive hidden figures. KULOOP functions as a sprawling hub for IP merchandise, offering an extensive selection ranging from blind boxes to animation-inspired collectables. Nearby, the Jellycat displays are constantly crowded as shoppers pick up and cradle soft toys while deciding

which to take home. Together with numerous *guzi* stores, these retailers have transformed this underground commercial space into a vibrant sanctuary for younger generations.

HOPSON ONE is not only a shopping mall but also a public space where young people across the city come together to share good vibes.

Like HOPSON ONE, Joy City in Chaoyang is also one of the city's most important gathering places for young people.

Major retailers including POP MART, TOP TOY, KULOOP and KAYOU have established a strong presence in these spaces, while a rotating selection of temporary pop-up shops ensures a constant sense of novelty for visitors.

Popular franchises such as *Genshin Impact*, *Spy x Family* and *Detective Conan* have all hosted themed events on-site. During these occasions, the shopping centre's atrium is invariably transformed into a vast photography zone. Such IP-led initiatives are typically comprehensive, encompassing everything from decorative installations and bespoke dining experiences to exclusive merchandise, interactive games and character parades.

In recent years, THE BOX Chaowai has risen to prominence by catering almost exclusively to the tastes of Generation Z. Its appeal is anchored by a curated selection of favourites, including the innovative concept store Bad Market and the streetwear label Boneless, along with Old Order, which helped ignite

Where are Beijing's "guzi" stores?



The term "*guzi*" is a phonetic adaptation of the English word "goods." It serves as an umbrella term for a wide range of collectables, including badges, acrylic standees, decorative prints, trading cards, plushies, figurines and blind boxes, all of which are derivative products based on intellectual property from comics, animation, video games and pop culture icons.

"*Chigu*" describes the act of purchasing merchandise inspired by two-dimensional culture, such as animation and video games. According to available data, there are at least 220 such specialist shops scattered across Beijing. These outlets are strategically located within the city's major commercial hubs, including Wangfujing, Chongwenmen, Xidan, the Central Business District (CBD) and the Wudaokou area, spanning the districts of Dongcheng, Xicheng, Chaoyang and Haidian.



▲ Kulechaowan Shop

the domestic craze for “bread shoes.” Furthermore, the venue serves as an important hub for two-dimensional culture and live music performances.

Among the most popular shops within the venue is LUCKY LOOP. Characterised by a minimalist aesthetic, the storefront is instantly recognisable from afar due to the oversized figurines positioned at the entrance beneath its prominent signage. The shop curates a selection of popular intellectual properties, including TNT’s Zoraa and Qimengdao’s WAKUKU. It also stocks products from emerging labels such as PlzDot, alongside the British brand Fuggler, which has developed a cult following for its distinctively “ugly-cute” charm. What sets the boutique apart is its commitment to original design; exclusive characters such as Nooobit, Penny and Hoya are displayed along its walls. The life-sized Nooobit figure, in particular, deftly blends a futuristic edge with a playful sensibility, perfectly capturing the essence of modern designer toys. Beyond the merchandise, the space offers a dedicated photo wall, comfortable seating and a decorative “wishing fountain,” creating an inviting atmosphere where customers can capture memories with Nooobit or try their luck at “unboxing” for good fortune.

Another highly-visited outlet within THE BOX Chaowai is MINISO LAND Number One, Beijing. The moment visitors cross the threshold, they are struck by the sheer scale of the two-storey space, with more than 1,000 square metres packed with an array of popular licensed merchandise. Selections span everything from the Harry Potter saga and Disney classics to *Zootopia* and *Identity V*, representing more than 40 internationally recognised IPs. The abundance of choices immediately places shoppers in a delightful dilemma as they navigate the sea of collectables and novelty items on display.

It is unlikely that any Harry Potter enthusiast would leave empty handed. The shelves overflow with love-potion keychains, Hogwarts-style house bears, card-shaped ornaments, headphone cases and a host of other co-branded items, creating the sensation that one might step onto Platform Nine-and-Three-Quarters at any moment. Not far away, rows of Chiikawa’s charming companions sit so adorably still that shoppers instinctively reach for their phones to capture them. Across the aisle, the Hello Kitty corner radiates a burst of pink energy; dolls, cups, mirrors and keychains line the displays, effortlessly capturing the imaginations of

countless young girls.

For gamers, the *Black Myth: Wukong* collaborative boutique is the undeniable highlight. Shelves display gourd-shaped cross-body bags, matching badges, pendants featuring Wukong and Zhu Bajie dolls, a Tiger Pioneer tufted carpet and a host of other carefully designed merchandise. The display itself faithfully recreates the game’s Eastern mythological landscape. Standing amidst the installation, visitors are instantly transported into the narrative, as though the next step might be to accompany the Destined One on his legendary westward pilgrimage.

Unlike many trendy toy venues that concentrate on limited-edition releases, hidden-item hunts and strict collector value, MINISO LAND feels more like a sanctuary of happiness. Soft plushes form gentle hills, while stress-relief toys and brightly coloured trinkets are scattered throughout the shop. Young visitors often arrive not to complete shopping lists but simply to admire beloved characters, cuddle plush toys or pick up an inexpensive pendant for a few yuan. The atmosphere seems to lift spirits almost automatically, revealing the underlying appeal of trendy contemporary toys.

Compared with HOPSON ONE



▲ Visitors enjoy board games at HOPSON ONE
◀ XUMI Goods Shop

and THE BOX, BOM XI FAN LI centres on immersive trend-toy experiences, functioning more like a spiritual sanctuary for *guzi* enthusiasts.

It is difficult to imagine that the predecessor of today’s cyber-centric BOM XI FAN LI was the Wudaokou Clothing Market, a venue with a 30-year history. Following extensive renovation, the space has been completely transformed into a two-dimensional culture zone comprising *guzi* shops, comic stores, areas for *zhaiwu* dances complete with enthusiastic gestures and chant-filled slogans, arcade halls, cafes and market stalls. The atmosphere is both lively and relaxed, radiating youthful energy. What makes the venue particularly distinctive is its concentration of *guzi*—derivative products associated with domestic IPs. In recent years, homegrown franchises such as *Love in the Deep Space*, *Arknights* and *For All Time* have experienced rapid growth,

attracting an ever-greater number of young enthusiasts.

XI FAN LI organises its own brand-led gathering, the “*Chigu* Conference.” During the event, the entire mall transforms into a sprawling offline carnival. Young visitors weave through the space, each carrying a *tongbao* bag covered with *baji* (badges), small cards and plush pendants, as though transporting their own mobile exhibition. Participants exchange *wuliao* (items free of charge), take cosplay photographs and queue to purchase limited-edition merchandise, creating an atmosphere that buzzes with festival-like energy.

Many young people invest in *guzi* not for the items themselves but for the emotional resonance these characters hold within their personal experiences. Fans of *Haikyuu!!* often find comfort in the series’ passion during difficult periods, while others turn to *Sorcery Battle* because its characters accompanied them through

Tips

HOPSON ONE in Chaoyang

Address: Jia 22 Xidawang Lu, Chaoyang District, Beijing
Business hours: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.
Getting There: Take Beijing Subway Line 7 or 14 to Jiulongshan Station and follow signs for Exit B or Exit E.

Joy City in Chaoyang

Address: 101 Chaoyang Beilu, Chaoyang District, Beijing
Business hours: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.
Getting there: Take Beijing Subway Line 6 to Qingnian Lu Station and follow signs for Exit B.

THE BOX

Address: 12 Chaoyangmenwai Dajie, Chaoyang District, Beijing
Business hours: 10:30 a.m.–10 p.m.
Getting there: Take Beijing Subway Line 2 or 6 to Chaoyangmen Station and follow signs for Exit A.

BOM XI FAN LI

Address: Jia 38 Xueqing Lu, Haidian District, Beijing
Business hours: 10:30 a.m.–9:30 p.m. (Monday–Friday); 10 a.m.–10 p.m. (Saturday–Sunday)
Getting there: Take Beijing Subway Line 15 or Changping to Liudaokou Station and follow signs for Exit B.



▲ Stalls at HOPSON ONE’s underground market

Tongbao

The *tongbao* bag originated as a niche fashion trend among anime enthusiasts, created as a way to express affection for favourite characters or series. Over time, it expanded beyond this specialised community into mainstream youth culture, evolving into a medium through which young people showcase their personalities and interests. In recent years, as two-dimensional culture has grown increasingly popular, more young people have become interested in creating their own *tongbao* bags.

Baji

Baji is the playful transliteration of the English word “badge” within two-dimensional culture, specifically referring to metal merchandise featuring anime and video game characters. Typically fitted with pins on the reverse, these items can be attached to bags or clothing. Within the *guzi* sphere, *baji* is among the most widespread and popular categories. Enthusiasts often collect designs featuring various characters and frequently purchase *tongbao* bags specifically to display their collections.

Wuliao

In two-dimensional culture, the term refers to small items given away as gifts at animation-related events. Typical examples include postcards, cards and stickers.



▲ A badge of Harry Potter





▲ Lucky Loop MINISO Land at the BOX Chaowai



▲ Gundam Base



▲ Model vehicles



Jiaolao

Jiaolao refers to a group of hobbyists deeply committed to assembling plastic models, particularly Gundam models. These enthusiasts derive great satisfaction from the technical production process, including sanding, polishing, assembling and even painting individual components. The term originated from the early days of the hobby, when most kits were made of plastic and required adhesive to secure the pieces; as a result, practitioners humorously began referring to themselves as *jiaolao* (literally, “glue guys”).



▲ Tourists enjoy shopping at POP LAND

the pressures of Grade 12. Ultimately, what they treasure is the emotional value conveyed through these characters and their associated merchandise, a shift that is also reshaping how Beijing’s shopping centres operate. Today, the city’s *chigu* map continues to expand; from Wangfujing to Chongwenmen, long-established commercial districts are increasingly embracing two-dimensional culture.

From Wangfujing to Chongwenmen: Traditional Commercial Districts Embrace the New World of Trendy Toys and Guzi Culture

It takes approximately five minutes on foot from Exit 3 of Wangfujing Station on Beijing Subway Line 1 or Line 8 to reach the “Welcome to the Lunar Surface” exhibition themed around Twinkle Twinkle, presented by POP MART. The enormous Twinkle Twinkle installation suspended overhead, together with ice cream cone-shaped sculptures and

interactive lunar-themed displays, is currently available for free viewing in the first-floor atrium of WF Central’s East Tower and the outdoor area of its West Tower along Wangfujing Pedestrian Street. Together, they provide a delightful surprise for Twinkle Twinkle enthusiasts.

Wangfujing is becoming increasingly appealing. Large numbers of young people now head directly to Beijing APM, WFJ XIYUE, In88 and other shopping centres simply to hunt for newly released blind boxes or take photographs with their favourite IP characters.

The most emblematic example is undoubtedly the POP MART flagship store within Beijing APM. The shop’s curvilinear facade is complemented by a colossal dynamic LED screen. Celebrated POP MART IPs, including MOLLY, LABUBU and DIMOO, frequently shimmer against the kaleidoscopic moving backdrop, appearing almost to beckon passers-by.

The primary draw here is the exceptionally immersive atmosphere. The outdoor exhibition space features Rocket Boy from the DIMOO space travel collection, establishing a futuristic cosmic aesthetic. The shop incorporates popular motifs inspired by imperial heritage, including the princess and golden lion figures from MOLLY’s imperial auspicious beast series. These are further blended with local Beijing iconography, such as the Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests at the Temple of Heaven. By fusing traditional culture with contemporary trends, the space conveys the prosperity symbolised by these auspicious beasts, which are deeply rooted in classical Chinese culture.

At present, there are more than 50 POP MART branches across Beijing, yet its flagship store at Beijing APM continues to be the most iconic. The venue not only offers the most comprehensive selection of merchandise but also serves as the primary destination for new releases and exclusive collaborations. Many enthusiasts make a point of travelling there to join the

queue on the evening before a product launch. By the time the store opens its doors, the line has often already stretched beyond 100 metres.

Nevertheless, the phenomenon of trendy toys in Wangfujing extends far beyond this. The GUNDAM BASE within In88 functions almost as a “pilgrimage site” for scale model enthusiasts. Inside its glass display cabinets, visitors can find Gundam models spanning multiple eras, ranging from the earliest generations of mecha to rare limited-edition releases. Countless hobbyists can be seen crouching in front of the shelves, carefully examining individual components and finishes. For many *jiaolao*, or devoted Gundam modellers, this venue represents far more than a place of commerce; it serves as a true sanctuary for the soul.

Enthusiasts of model cars may find themselves drawn to XCAR TOYS. Here, 1:64 scale replicas of classic vehicles are meticulously arranged, presenting everything from vintage automobiles to rugged off-road vehicles, effectively

creating a miniature automotive universe. It is not uncommon for customers to spend a considerable amount of time carefully examining a limited-edition Porsche model displayed in the shop.

By comparison, BoonHub, a boutique dedicated to popular national toys within Dong’an Market, presents a more distinctly Chinese aesthetic. Traditional techniques including tie-dyeing, textile craftsmanship and intricate embroidery are transformed into creative dolls and accessories. This fusion of national cultural trends with traditional craftsmanship ensures that these trendy toys transcend simple displays of cuteness or futuristic digital aesthetics, instead embodying the sophistication and creativity rooted in Eastern aesthetics.

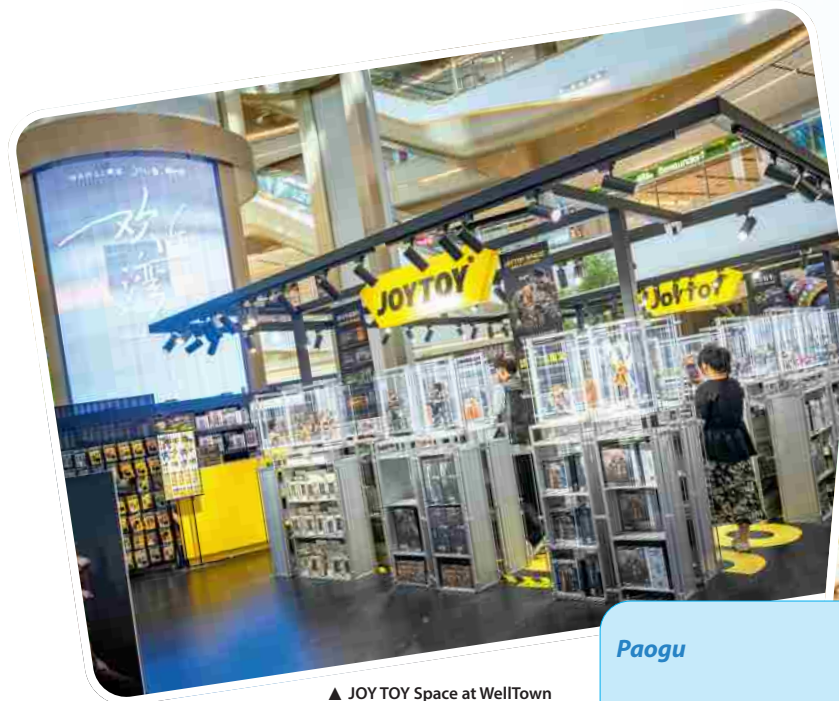
The B2 floor of WFJ XIYUE Shopping Centre functions almost like a hidden headquarters for young people in Beijing. More than 20 *guzi*-oriented shops, including Mancool, IPSTAR, CUCKOO SHOP, Ganle House and Ciyuan Go, are arranged side by side,

effectively transforming the entire level into a pedestrian arcade dedicated to two-dimensional culture. Arguably the most emblematic of these is the first Beijing branch of Sakura Comic Bookshop. The outlet not only sells authentic comics and light novels but also offers a wide range of sought-after IP-related merchandise. Its selection spans *guzi*, colourful paper goods, acrylic pendants and even a limited-edition signature wall, with each element carefully curated to appeal to anime and manga fans. As a result, the shop has quickly become a well-known landmark on social media, attracting countless enthusiasts who regard it as a must-visit destination within the city’s thriving pop culture scene.

This space brings together a vast array of sought-after IP merchandise, featuring titles such as *Naruto*, *One Piece* and *Blue Lock*, which have long dominated the best-selling shelves. Among domestic IPs, *Arknights* and *Wuthering Waves* enjoy the greatest popularity. Groups of young enthusiasts can be seen crouching in front of displays, carefully selecting *Haikyuu!!* laser tickets, while others open hidden editions in the blind box section. Still others proudly hold up newly acquired badges, snapping selfies beside signboards featuring their favourite characters.

Laser Tickets

Laser tickets are a highly sought-after form of collectible merchandise among enthusiasts of two-dimensional culture. Typically made from plastic or paper, each ticket features a metallic laser-etched finish in silver or gold. When tilted, the surface refracts light to create a radiant glow. Collectors use them as decorative symbols of support for favourite characters and as part of broader anime collections, valuing them for their striking visual appeal and the ceremonial feeling they evoke.



▲ JOY TOY Space at WellTown



▲ Cat figures in a shop stall

For many young people in Beijing, *chigu* has turned into a way of life. Some make a habit of visiting *guzi* shops (*paogu*) on weekends, while others deliberately bring their *tongbao* bags so they can pose for photographs with favourite cosplayers inside shopping centres. Many also regard a trip to a *guzi* shop as a way to relieve stress. The real pleasure of *chigu* lies in the experience itself: queuing with friends, exchanging duplicate items, hunting for “My recommendation” (*wotui*) and encountering like-minded strangers (*tongdan*). In this way, participants become excited and ultimately feel far more relaxed.

Many genuine enthusiasts of two-dimensional culture in Beijing regard SoShow as a nostalgic reminder of their younger days. More than a decade ago, the shopping centre was renowned for its anime boutiques and arcade halls. Today, it has experienced a revival, driven by the abundance of *guzi* shops that now occupy the venue.

During weekends, the fifth and sixth floors of SoShow remain bustling with young visitors. They weave through the aisles, browsing merchandise linked to two-dimensional culture. Products featuring IPs such as *Pokemon*, *Bungo Stray*

Paogu

Within two-dimensional and trend toy communities, *paogu* refers to the pursuit of *guzi* or IP merchandise, often involving the collection of badges or acrylic standees through online running challenges on platforms such as Keep, including medal events.

Wotui

Wotui, literally meaning “my recommendation,” refers to the icons, characters or figures that receive the greatest support and affection from fans. The expression is widely used within two-dimensional culture and conveys a warm, affectionate sense of endorsement.

Tongdan

Tongdan refers to a group of fans who share an interest in the same icons or characters.



Dogs and *The King's Avatar* occupy the most prominent display areas.

Young people frequently queue outside outlets such as Goods Universe, Chitu, 007 Chaowan Yifan and Erciyuan GO to try their luck at *yifanshang*. A popular pastime within the *guzi* community, *yifanshang* functions as a lottery for sought-after anime merchandise linked to *One Piece*, *Demon Slayer* and *Dragon Ball*. The prizes range from badges and pendants to large-scale figurines, with Award A and Last Award prizes tied to the most popular IPs proving especially enticing. As a result, many young people repeatedly purchase sets of blind boxes in the hope of securing these coveted rewards.

Not far from SoShow, the Chongwenmen Branch of New World Department Store (Youth Complex) is likewise experiencing a resurgence of young visitors. On the B1 level, an area that once felt dated now houses a considerable number of *guzi* outlets, including Duomo Wanshiwu, IPSTAR, GUFANTIAN and Ciyuan Xiagu. While the venue continues to preserve the distinctive character of an older shopping mall, its atmosphere has undergone a graceful transformation.

At its busiest, the subterranean passage resembles a modest comic convention. Some people perform *zhaiwu* dances, while others pose for cosplay photographs. Characters from different IPs converge in the same space, spanning multiple dimensions of popular culture and creating a delightful, expansive network of familiar faces. In this setting, the quickest way for strangers to become acquainted is often not through formal introductions, but with the question: “Do you also recommend this character?”

This area also hosts a considerable number of *guzi* stalls. Many young people spontaneously set up stalls to trade small cards, badges and limited-edition souvenirs. The entire space resembles a semi-open club for like-minded enthusiasts. Some sit cross-legged on the floor arranging cards and books, while others display their collections in transparent folders. Duplicate items are exchanged on the spot, and many participants have formed lasting *guzi* friendships. Together, they visit *guzi* shops, pursue bulk purchases, enter raffles and exchange merchandise related to two-dimensional culture.

For many young people, the importance of *chigu* has long extended beyond simply purchasing items. It resembles an emerging urban lifestyle. Within this environment, young people seek like-minded companions, build social connections and express their emotions. In doing so, they also reshape their understanding of Beijing through these ever-expanding “two-dimensional culture spaces.”

Beijing’s commercial districts are increasingly becoming “emotional paradises” for young people. Many do not purchase trendy toys solely to expand their collections; rather, they seek a small measure of joy amid their busy daily routines.

Today, the city’s trendy toy communities are redefining not only shopping malls but also the relationship between people and the city.

Tips

WFJ XIYUE Shopping Centre

Address: 301 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Business hours: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.

Getting there: Take Beijing Subway Line 1 or 8 to Wangfujing Station and follow signs for Exit E1.

IN 88 (Wangfujing)

Address: 88 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Business hours: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.

Getting there: Take Beijing Subway Line 8 to Jinyu Hutong Station.

Beijing APM

Address: 138 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Business hours: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.

Getting there: Take Beijing Subway Line 5 to Dengshikou Station.

Dong'an Market

Address: 138 Wangfujing Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Business hours: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.

Getting there: Take Beijing Subway Line 1 to Wangfujing Station, or Beijing Subway Line 5 to Dengshikou Station.

SoShow

Address: 40 Chongwenmenwai Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Business hours: 10 a.m.–9:30 p.m.

Getting there: Take Beijing Subway Line 2 or 5 to Chongwenmen Station.

Chongwenmen Branch of New World Department Store (Youth Complex)

Address: 3–5 Chongwenmenwai Dajie, Dongcheng District, Beijing

Business hours: 10 a.m.–10 p.m.

Getting there: Take Beijing Subway Line 2 or 5 to Chongwenmen Station and follow signs for Exit H.



▲ Figurines at JOY TOY Space



▲ A LEGO vehicle

A collage of various collectible toys. In the foreground, a large, detailed Monkey King figure with a long tail and ornate armor is prominent. To its left is a large, green and gold Transformer figure. In the background, there are shelves filled with other toys, including Iron Man figures, a pink Care Bear, and a green Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtle figure. The background also features a poster of Iron Man and a framed photo of a group of people.

Trendy IP Toys: From Pop Culture to a Lifestyle

Text by Zhang Yan Photos courtesy of BOM Xi Fan Li and by Zhang Xin, Tong Tianyi, Dong Bo, Gong Yuexian

In contemporary Beijing, the scope of intellectual property (IP) protection has expanded to encompass digital content, collectible figures and collaborative merchandise. IP is increasingly woven into the everyday lives of younger generations through subtler and more integrated channels. It appears in badges fastened to bags, mechas displayed on office desks, unboxing videos shared across social media and even as a silent code through which like-minded individuals recognise one another.

In the past, acquiring toys was primarily about possessing a plaything. Today, a growing number of young people seek deeper emotional connections and avenues for self-expression through their purchases. Whether they are enthusiasts of animated universes, collectors of two-dimensional merchandise (*chigu*), mecha builders or *wama* ("doll moms") who create outfits and narratives for cotton dolls, they construct their own worlds through trendy toys. At the same time, the culture surrounding these toys continues to transcend established circles, becoming increasingly visible in urban life and shaping social interactions and lifestyles.

As the culture of trendy toys evolves into a source of emotional support, a means of social connection and an expression of identity, the city is witnessing the emergence of a new urban way of life.

Trendy Toys Reshape the Urban Landscape

In Beijing, the reach of trendy toys continues to expand. Figures, models, fabric dolls, badges and animation-related merchandise are coalescing into lifestyles centred on intellectual property. These fashionable toys are no longer merely display pieces. They appear on mobile phone cases, keyrings, backpacks and office desks, becoming integrated into everyday routines. Younger consumers are purchasing not only physical objects but also emotional resonance, a sense of belonging rooted in shared interests and a means of expressing their identities.

On the streets of Beijing today, one frequently encounters young people whose clothing reflects their passions. Their jackets may feature beloved IP characters, while their backpacks often include transparent compartments displaying carefully arranged *baji* (badges) and pendants. Many proudly wear thoughtfully selected badges as part of their attire. These seemingly modest accessories collectively form the visual language of two-dimensional culture enthusiasts. For those engaged in *chigu*, such items are not merely keepsakes but public expressions of affiliation and identity. Indeed, a single badge or pendant can be enough for strangers to recognise one another in a crowd.

Among the diverse range of products

associated with two-dimensional culture, *tongbao* are particularly emblematic. Essentially backpacks decorated with badges, pendants and other merchandise displayed within transparent compartments, many enthusiasts take great pleasure in customising them by hand. They carefully select each badge and pendant before arranging and combining them according to their own aesthetic preferences and creative instincts. The process resembles a creative ritual. Every detail is thoughtfully considered, and each composition becomes an expression of devotion to a particular character.

Young people also create *tongbao* that reflect the distinctive traits of their favourite characters. Among the most celebrated animated productions in recent years are *Bungo Stray Dogs*, *Link Click*, *Heaven Official's Blessing* and *Free!* Enthusiasts of *Link Click*, for example, decorate their themed *tongbao* with badges and pendants featuring the two central protagonists, Cheng Xiaoshi and Lu Guang. Fans of *Heaven Official's Blessing* often choose the iconic "silver butterfly" motif to evoke the character of Huacheng. Adorning the bag, these lifelike silver butterflies appear poised to take flight at any moment.

Contrary to the outdated perception that toys are solely for children, contemporary trendy toys have transcended age boundaries, allowing enthusiasts of all ages to indulge their interests. In Beijing's

many trendy toy stores and pop-up shops, customers span a wide range of age groups, from curious children and energetic young adults to middle-aged individuals who may not consider themselves trend followers. What unites them is a shared appreciation for trendy toy culture, leading them to select figurines, models and blind boxes while exchanging stories about their collections and personal experiences.

As the blind box phenomenon gathers momentum, toy vending machines have become a familiar feature of Beijing's urban landscape. They appear in subway stations, shopping malls, office towers and cinemas, catering to collectors eager to satisfy the impulse to purchase at any moment. Each compact, meticulously crafted blind box contains an enticing mystery. Opening one triggers a surge of dopamine, leaving the unboxer alternately delighted, disappointed or wistful. This emotional roller coaster has fuelled the rapid growth of the blind box market. The range of offerings now extends far beyond early favourites such as Molly and SKULLPANDA to encompass animation, film and television licences, as well as wider cultural and creative sectors. Once the hidden figure is revealed, many enthusiasts proudly attach it to their *tongbao*, transforming a hard-won prize into a personal marker of identity. In this way, trendy toys have become a source of good-mood nourishment, offering both joy and comfort to their owners.

If incorporating trendy toy elements into one's attire and collections brings IPs into the tangible world, some enthusiasts take this immersion a step further by entering the worlds of those IPs by becoming cosplayers.

To recreate a character's appearance, cosplayers devote considerable time and effort. From designing makeup and constructing costumes to trimming wigs and refining props, every detail is crafted to resemble the original character as faithfully as possible. This demand has fuelled the rise of professional two-dimensional photo studios throughout Beijing. Inside, rows of wigs, costumes and accessories line the walls. The "makeup girls" responsible for cosmetics and the "hair girls" who style the wigs develop tailored looks for each character. Once their meticulous preparations are complete, clients emerge fully transformed, as though they have stepped directly out of the two-dimensional world, moving through themed backdrops of forests, oceans and other settings in preparation for photography.

IP pop-up events in shopping centres provide some of the most popular gathering places for cosplayers. During these occasions, anime theme songs and contemporary pop tracks play on a continuous loop. As familiar melodies drift through the venue, cosplayers instinctively break into dance, often drawing cheers and applause from the crowd and creating a convivial, relaxed atmosphere. For many enthusiasts of two-dimensional culture, these events are more than simple showcases; they are reunions of kindred spirits. Amidst familiar melodies and shared passions, participants find emotional release and forge authentic social connections.

In recent years, the influence of domestic animation and video games has continued to grow, with Chinese-style characters increasingly embraced by cosplayers. Following its release, the video game *Black Myth: Wukong* swiftly captured public attention through its exceptional production values and distinctive Chinese aesthetic, achieving phenomenon-level popularity. At comic conventions and flash-mob gatherings, portrayals of Wukong

appear time and again, clad in golden armour and a purple-gold crown adorned with phoenix-wing motifs. These iconic figures from Chinese mythology step beyond the screen, offering young people a fresh way to rediscover the enduring appeal of traditional culture.

Beyond influencing apparel, makeup and everyday habits, the story of trendy toys continues to extend into new territory. In recent years, a succession of large-scale events dedicated to trendy toys has emerged. The recently concluded First China New Cultural and Creative Market & Trendy Toy Carnival showcased distinctive products from across the country, bringing together ancient heritage and contemporary lifestyles. The long-running IJOY Beijing International Animation and Game Carnival attracts tens of thousands of cosplayers and two-dimensional culture enthusiasts with programmes such as the Zhaiwu Dance Competition, the Domestic Yinü Fan Carnival and the Two-Dimensional Music Festival. Meanwhile, the newly opened Weibo IN Interdimensional Gravitational Zone brings together *guzi* shops, markets and two-dimensional-themed restaurants, creating a vibrant hub where young people can gather and celebrate their shared passions.

In Beijing, trendy toys have become embedded in the city's cultural landscape, while these IP-driven passions continue to shape the lifestyles of younger generations.



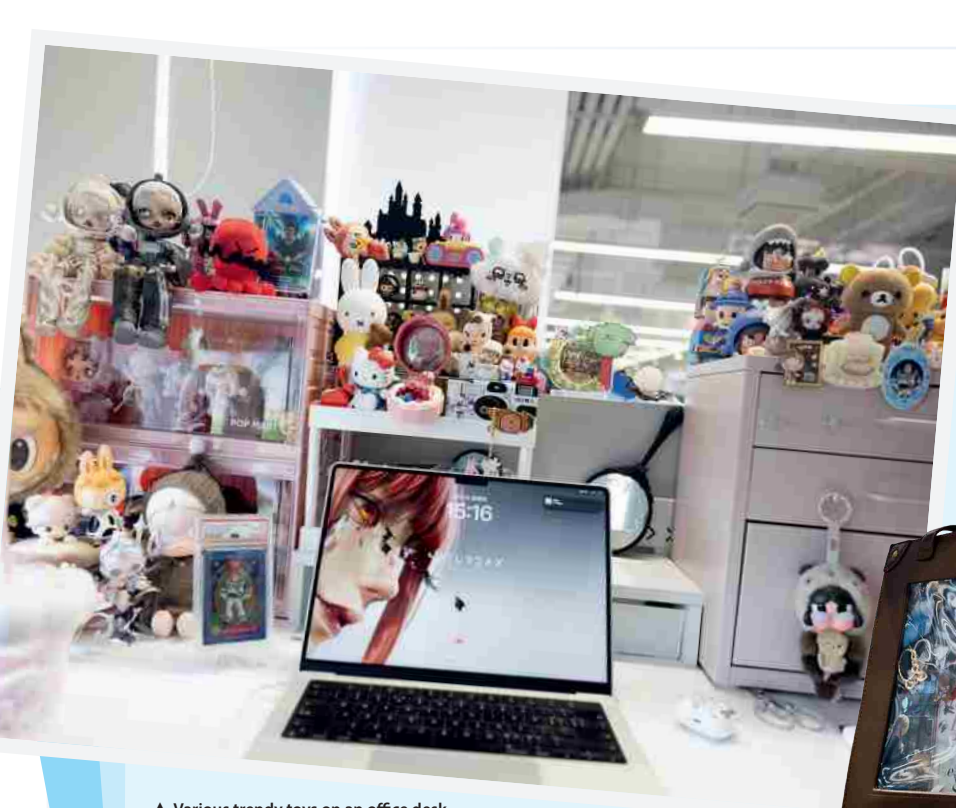
▲ A two-dimensional drama competition at Xi Fan Li in Beijing



▲ Badges at a shop in Xi Fan Li

▼ GUANGZHI from *Black Myth: Wukong*





▲ Various trendy toys on an office desk

Trendy Toys Occupy Workspaces

Most office workers spend roughly a third of their hours in the workplace, with the few square metres they occupy becoming a kind of second home. Consequently, many young people personalise their desks with potted plants, framed photographs and trendy toys. In today's fast-paced environment, these small objects provide a sense of companionship and bring a touch of warmth to everyday working life.

Beyond bags and clothing, trendy toys have made their way into the workplace, occupying desks and shelves. The idea of a thoughtfully arranged workspace has evolved into a distinctive office culture. More young professionals in Beijing are transforming their work areas into spaces that inspire creativity and cultivate a sense of happiness.

People with different interests have transformed their workspaces into settings inspired by "childhood castles," "tropical rainforests," "figurine style" and "cyber style." Through this process, each workspace takes on a distinctive character, reflecting its owner's tastes and outlook on life. Trendy toys have emerged as mascots within these environments, offering young people a sense of spiritual companionship

and emotional comfort throughout the working day.

Apart from arranging colourful blind-box figurines on their desks, another prominent trend in workspace transformation is the tech-nerd aesthetic, which emphasises advanced technological and industrial elements. Enthusiasts of this style favour mecha models, two-dimensional figures, ball-jointed dolls, soldier figurines and industrial design pieces. Their workspaces resemble both compact exhibition halls and private living rooms for geeks.

In recent years, the rise of Chinese-style mechas has injected fresh vitality into two-dimensional culture. Domestic brands such as Motor Nuclear have introduced a range of mechas infused with Chinese cultural elements, drawing inspiration from the generals of *Romance of the Three Kingdoms* as well as figures from mythology and legend. These distinctive creations have attracted a substantial following among mecha enthusiasts.

The debut Chinese-style mecha merchandise from the fantasy animation *Legend of Star Generals* draws inspiration from China's 108 constellations. Each character design is derived from constellation names found in Taoist classics, imbuing renowned constellations,

legendary generals and mythological figures with renewed spiritual depth and an imaginative worldview. Lü Bu, gripping a halberd and mounted upon the steed Red Flame Dragon, stands ready to hold the pass against ten thousand foes. This awe-inspiring mecha leaves a lasting impression on all who encounter it. Guan Yu, crimson-faced and long-bearded, wears dragon-adorned armour, bears a formidable dragon head upon his left shoulder and wields the iconic Green Dragon Crescent Blade. Together, these figures create a universe that blends traditional Eastern culture with rich emotional resonance.

Beyond the unrestrained mechas, the BEASTBOX series by 52TOYS embraces a more introverted aesthetic. A ferocious Tyrannosaurus, for instance, can fold into a neat square, embodying the Eastern principle of "concealing and revealing in moderation." Within just a few centimetres of space, the toys achieve a balance between restraint and expansion. Guided by this aesthetic philosophy, BEASTBOX has evolved to include diverse forms of play, such as its hand-shaking transformation series in which a gentle shake completes the transformation in a single second, reducing what once took over 10 minutes to an instant, inviting newcomers to engage with the toy.

► A bag with pendant decorations



▲ Trendy toys occupy desk space in an office area
◀ Tongbao



Guided by this design philosophy, BEASTBOX extends beyond real animals to encompass mythical creatures revered as rulers of all beasts. The National Museum of China Innovative series, co-created by 52TOYS and the National Museum of China, showcases the Azure Dragon, Qilin, White Tiger and Phoenix, each transformed into compact squares measuring just a few centimetres across. The Azure Dragon, for instance, retains its Eastern charm through the curvature of its whiskers, the arrangement of its scales and the articulation of its limbs, while remaining faithful to the principles of modern mechanical design.

At the workspaces of Beijing's tech enthusiasts, alongside foreign IP mechas such as Transformers, Neon Genesis Evangelion and Gundam, are designs that blend cyber fantasy with traditional Chinese culture. Geeks outfit their computers with carefully selected mechanical keyboards, choosing or customising switches, keycaps and backlighting to achieve ergonomic comfort, high performance and a satisfying tactile feel. The crisp click of typing heightens this sense of professionalism. Many also invest in high-end graphics cards, premium headphones and RGB light strips. When illuminated, gradients of colour ripple across the keyboard while a warm yellow

glow softly lights the headphone stand. Together, mechas and technology create a futuristic tableau, a tech-nerd aesthetic now flourishing in offices across the city.

Making Friends Online through Trendy Toys

As like-minded enthusiasts come together, trendy toys evolve into a new social medium in which emotional connections outweigh the objects themselves. Collectors often treasure the memories, passions and sense of identity these items embody more than the dolls, badges or models. This strong sense of community has made trendy toy culture a powerful shared experience.

Young people have built online communities on platforms such as Xiaohongshu, Douban, Tieba and Goofish around specific IPs, works and shared interests. Within these spaces, they share unboxing experiences, exchange collecting tips, discuss character settings and develop distinctive circle cultures and social vocabularies. Members often address one another as "teacher," a title that acknowledges aesthetic sensibilities, collecting experience and long-standing enthusiasm rather than age or profession. Through conversations about *guzi* and the

sharing of collections, strangers gradually form connections, weaving interest-driven social networks.

For Generation Z, displaying trendy toys has become an expression of lifestyle. Unboxing videos, collection photographs and carefully arranged *tongbao* transcend simple product sharing, evolving into reflections of personal aesthetics and emotional states.

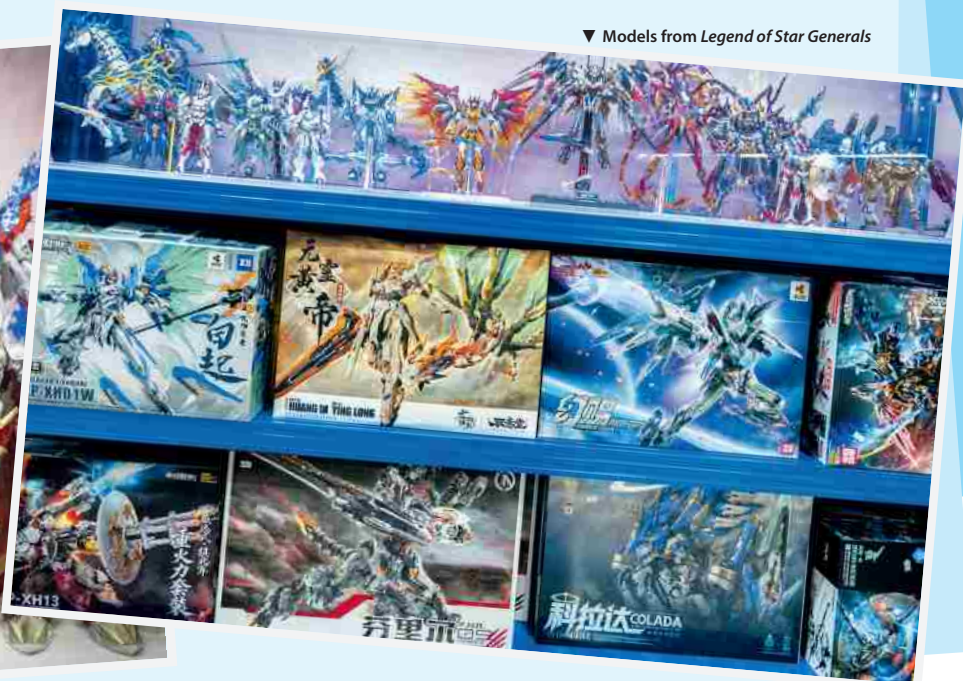
Cotton doll culture has deepened this emotional bond. In recent years, these dolls have captivated young people with their soft textures, customisable appearances and strong sense of companionship. Through buying, designing and caring for them, enthusiasts experience a form of nurturing that provides meaningful emotional support in their lives.

Seeking individuality, many enthusiasts reject off-the-shelf products in favour of co-creation. In online groups, they debate every detail—from detachable ears and tail designs to clothing and accessory combinations—through a process known as a "data survey." Collective opinions help shape the final blueprint. From initial concept to eventual release, players participate deeply in a doll's creation. This collaborative journey offers far greater engagement and a stronger sense of

▼ Model of Lü Bu



▼ Models from Legend of Star Generals





▲ Selling unused items to recoup funds

belonging than simply purchasing a finished product.

Upon acquiring their dolls, owners give them names and complete a “name reservation” on relevant platforms to ensure their uniqueness. Adopting the title *wama*, or “doll moms,” many photograph their companions, purchase outfits, document their daily routines and even create detailed personalities and backstories for them. These dolls have become important vessels for emotional projection.

Meanwhile, the rise of trendy toy culture has fostered a thriving second-hand market. As interests shift and trends evolve, enthusiasts often cycle through phases of “getting hooked” and “quitting.” They list idle collectibles on resale platforms and use the proceeds to acquire new favourites, a practice known within the community as “toy playing supports toy playing.” In recent years, transaction volumes on sites such as Goofish have continued to rise, while trendy toys have increasingly come to function as a form of social currency among peers.

On platforms like Goofish, artisans now provide a range of tailored services for trendy toys. These include trimming, bone setting and orthodontic styling for LABUBU, custom outfits for cotton dolls and bespoke display scenes for figurines. Even seemingly niche demands can find dedicated providers. From online communities to second-hand marketplaces, and from customised creations to interest-based exchanges, trendy toy culture continues to generate new forms of connection and participation.

In Beijing, IP culture has transcended store display cases to permeate streets, offices and online communities, forging meaningful connections between individuals and the city itself. When badges adorn backpacks, mechas occupy workspaces and dolls acquire unique names and stories, these seemingly modest acts of consumption help shape a generation’s lifestyle. Passions become visible, interests find common ground and identities are expressed. Through this shared language of enthusiasm, the city grows more vivid, diverse and vibrant, becoming an urban space where connection flourishes in the rhythms of daily life.

Glossary of Jargon in the Trendy Toy Community

Jargon in Trendy Toy Circles

Duanhe: Buyers purchase an entire set of blind boxes at once to maximise their chances of obtaining hidden items, as probabilities rely on collecting a complete set rather than individual boxes.

Yincang: Rare items found in blind boxes.

Ouhuang: Exceptionally lucky individuals. The opposite is “*feiqiu*,” referring to those who repeatedly fail to obtain their desired item.

Haijingfang: A highly sought-after hidden item whose resale price has been driven so high that, jokingly, it is said to cost enough to buy a seaside home.

Chixian: Rather than opening blind boxes themselves, collectors purchase specific pre-selected items directly from second-hand platforms.

Dun: To wait patiently for a particular item to appear or become available, as in: “Waiting for a hidden Labubu.”

Shouwa: Purchasing a specific doll from another collector.

Chuwa: Selling dolls from one’s own collection.

Zhahe: Opening blind boxes only to discover duplicates or unwanted items, often resulting in a moment of frustration for the collector.

Yaohe: Attempting to judge a blind box’s contents by its weight or the sounds it makes when shaken, a practice regarded as a form of “mystical technique” within the blind box community.



Jargon in Guzi Circles

Guzi: Derived from the English word “goods,” this term refers to merchandise related to two-dimensional culture.

Chigu: Purchasing IP merchandise connected to animation or video games.

Tongbao: Bags decorated with badges, dolls and pendants. “*Tong*” derives from a Japanese term that implies an overwhelming presence.

Baji: A transliteration of “badge,” referring to one of the most common forms of merchandise within *guzi* circles.

Lipai: Acrylic character standees that many enthusiasts carry while travelling and photographing.

Sezhi: Small autograph boards or card stock printed with character illustrations.

Gumei: An abbreviation of “*guzi henmei*,” commonly used to praise the elegant craftsmanship of merchandise.

Wuliao: Free small giveaways commonly distributed at comic conventions and hobbyist gatherings.

Zitui: One’s favourite or primary character.

Guangu: Officially licensed merchandise released by rights holders.

Tongrengu: Unofficial merchandise designed and produced by fans.

Jargon in Doll Circles

Mianhua Wawa: Cotton dolls generally fall into two categories: attribute dolls, modelled on celebrities, anime, film and television figures, or game characters; and attributeless dolls, which have no fixed prototype and are designed for dressing up. Recently, attributeless dolls have surged in popularity and increasingly entered the mainstream among young people.

Wama: Doll owners who care for their dolls and enjoy dressing them in different outfits over the long term.

Wayi: Miniature clothing made for dolls, now supported by a well-developed industry chain.

Wawu: Miniature rooms or scenes created for dolls.

Yangwa: The practice of regularly photographing dolls, changing their outfits and taking them out, fostering a form of emotional companionship.

Shaiwa: Sharing photographs of one’s dolls on social media platforms.

Daiwa chumen: Taking dolls out to travel, dine and pose for photographs, a practice that has become common content on platforms such as Xiaohongshu.

Jargon in Goofish and Trading Circles

Huixue: Selling unused items to recoup funds.

Jichu: An urgent sale, usually indicating that the price is negotiable.

Budao: “No bargaining accepted.”

Luoji: Shipped without original packaging.

Quanxin weichai: Products that have never been opened, a highly valued condition among collectors.

Moren weixia: Minor imperfections are assumed to be normal, functioning as a standard disclaimer in second-hand transactions.

Kunchu: Selling multiple items together as a bundle.

Pai: Queuing in the comments section to purchase highly sought-after items.

Jargon in Model Circles (Gundam, mechas)

Pinjiao: Assembling plastic models, including Gundam kits.

Suzu: Completing a model straight from the kit without painting or modifications.

Pentu: Painting models and adding detailed finishing touches.

Baojia: Models featuring openable armour structures, a highly popular feature in mecha circles.

MG / RG / PG: Different grades of Gundam kits: MG (Master Grade), RG (Real Grade) and PG (Perfect Grade). The higher the grade, the greater the detail and complexity.

Lanwei: Abandoning a model build halfway through. Many enthusiasts have unfinished “projects” at home.

Jiaolao: A self-deprecating term for people who are deeply obsessed with assembling models.

Jargon in Comic Conventions and Cosplayer Circles

Chu Cos: Dressing up and preparing for cosplay.

Zhengpian: Finished cosplay works produced through formal shoots and post-production.

Jiyou: Taking photographs with multiple cosplayers, much like “collecting” characters.

Changzhao: Photographs taken at comic exhibitions.

Zhuangniang/Maoniang: Dedicated makeup artists and wig stylists who help create cosplay looks.

Paozhan: Attending multiple comic exhibitions in succession.

Shekong Coser: Cosplayers who prefer taking photographs to actively socialising, a type that has become increasingly common today.

Supporting Timeless Craftsmanship to Share Chinese Culture with the World

Text by Ma Kai Photos by Tong Tianyi



▲ Lü Hailing

Within her office at Trends Tower, Beijing, Lü Hailing's desk resembles a compact exhibition space, its surface crowded with cultural and creative samples supplied by intangible cultural heritage artisans from across the nation. She introduces each piece in turn, explaining its origins and the craftsmanship involved. In this single space, exemplary works from every corner of the country are brought together.

As the executive vice president of Zhongchuan Cultural and Creative Investment Co., Ltd. and head of China Handicraft Online (wodsy.com), Lü is less concerned with grand narratives than with the fleeting moments that genuinely move her.

Lü has spent more than 10 years in

the cultural and tourism sector, initially focusing on cultivating urban intellectual property (IP) assets and developing cultural and creative merchandise for scenic attractions. During this period, she travelled extensively for research, meeting numerous custodians of intangible cultural heritage. "Their craftsmanship is truly exquisite, yet they repeatedly tell me that young people are unwilling to learn the trade and that few outside their communities are aware of it. As a result, such fine works are reduced to little more than display pieces sitting behind glass." She recalled a visit to Fuyuan, where clusters of Hezhe communities reside. There, she encountered two heritage

inheritors, one specialising in birch-bark paintings and another working with fish skin. "These works feature distinctive designs and a pronounced three-dimensional quality, yet they remain restricted by circumstances. Their sales are confined to local markets, and even expanding beyond the three north-eastern provinces proves difficult." Scarce raw materials and labour-intensive production processes make large-scale circulation unrealistic. They encounter a shared reality. Although the obstacle is clearly visible, the appropriate solution remains elusive. Consequently, they continue their persistent endeavours to discover a viable path forward today. Lü explained, "Since then, I have realised that wodsy.



▲ Cultural and creative products

com cannot simply be an information platform. It carries the hopes of hundreds of thousands of artisans. What they need is a trustworthy, national-level bridge capable of transforming their creations into market-ready products and bringing these handicrafts back into everyday life."

As Lü stated, wodsy.com, a national-level handicraft e-commerce platform overseen by the Ministry of Culture and Tourism and operated by China Culture Media Group, has the vital task of driving the creative transformation and innovative development of outstanding traditional culture. When Lü took charge of wodsy.com, she quickly identified three principal challenges. First, many artisans were unfamiliar with commercial channels and lacked experience in branding and market positioning. Second, traditional products often failed to align with the aesthetic preferences of younger consumers. Third, entering overseas markets was hindered by language barriers, cross-border logistics and international payment obstacles. She assembled her team to combine their expertise, and the solution soon became clear: focus on three strategic priorities. The first is to provide a comprehensive, one-stop service covering copyright certification, design refinement, channel connections and market promotion. As she explained, "Artisans need only to perfect their craft, leaving everything else to us." The second is to collaborate with emerging designers, popular IPs and digital collectibles to inject contemporary

expression into traditional craftsmanship while preserving its core techniques. "Only by holding onto the roots can new branches and leaves flourish," she said. The third is to leverage Alibaba's cross-border resources to launch an international version of China Handicraft Online. Within a short period, the platform featured more than 350 items across 16 categories, attracted enquiries from over 30 countries and regions, and achieved a repurchase intention exceeding 40 percent.

An inheritor of Nanjing Yun Brocade hand-weaving received an order from the United States just three months later after Lü listed his work on the international website for a trial sale. Recalling his reaction, she said softly, "He told me he never imagined his craftsmanship could cross oceans and reach a foreign land." That moment reinforced her conviction: "Intangible cultural heritage truly possesses the potential to serve as a 'light cavalry' for Chinese culture going global." Yet she consistently emphasised, "Venturing overseas is not simply about selling products; it is about enabling the world to understand Chinese aesthetics."

Intangible cultural heritage, once hidden away in remote mountains, now faces the crucial challenge of appealing to a younger, more trend-conscious generation. Lü offers distinctive insights into bridging this divide. "It is not that young people dislike intangible cultural heritage; rather, they simply have not yet discovered the right approach," she

explained. She rejects lengthy textual explanations, instead favouring visual and social media formats capable of capturing attention instantly. A short video lasting only a dozen seconds often proves more effective than lengthy written content. The strategy centres on extracting iconic heritage elements and reinterpreting them through contemporary aesthetics while preserving the integrity of core craftsmanship. By adapting product formats to align with youthful preferences, the platform maintains cultural relevance.

Regarding the growing fusion of intangible cultural heritage and trendy toys, Lü offers a simple formula: cultural soul plus trendy carrier. She notes that while ordinary toys attract through design and entertainment, heritage-infused products offer something deeper. Buyers acquire not merely an object, but an accessible story. Lü identifies embroidery, carving, rope weaving, paper-cutting, shadow puppetry, clay figurines and dough figurines as particularly suitable for this transformation.

An intangible cultural heritage piece is like a portable Chinese storybook. Lü opens these stories one by one, allowing the world to witness the warmth and value embedded within Chinese craftsmanship.

▼ Cultural and creative bracelets



Designer Toys Meet Cloisonné

Text by Gao Yuan Photos by Zhang Xin

In early June, Zhu Jingyou, a Beijing Municipal Master of Arts and Crafts and an Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) inheritor from Chaoyang District, unveiled his cloisonné interpretation of WAKUKU at the inaugural China New Cultural and Creative Market. The enthusiastic reception it received filled him with both deep satisfaction and a quiet sense of pressure.

What moved him most was the immediate fascination the piece inspired. Nearly every visitor was drawn to the exquisitely crafted, luminous blue figure,

instinctively raising their phones to take photos of it. One middle-aged tourist lingered before the doll for several minutes, studying its intricate details before remarking, “This is cloisonné, isn’t it? Not easy to make.” That simple acknowledgement struck Zhu deeply. A surge of warmth washed over him, as though he had encountered a kindred spirit who truly understood the labour, precision and soul embedded in every layer of enamel.

When it comes to WAKUKU, it is impossible not to mention Letsvan. The brand was founded with the vision of creating a joyful, sincere, curious and co-creative spiritual home for enthusiasts around the world. At its core lies a rebellious yet endearing philosophy: everyone has, at some point, dreamed of “recklessly testing the edge of danger,” but few truly dare to

cross that line. WAKUKU exists to do what we hesitate to do—to embody the instinct to break the rules, play without restraint and defy expectations. Thus emerged this naïve, untamed little wild child, whose mischievous charm and irrepressible spirit invite us to rediscover the simple joy of “running wild.” If that spirit of adventure includes crossing artistic and cultural boundaries, why not unite streetwise pop culture with imperial-era craftsmanship? This bold ethos paved the way for WAKUKU’s unprecedented collaboration with cloisonné, an audacious fusion of traditional Chinese artistry and contemporary designer toy culture. By reimagining a trendy collectible through the radiant, time-honoured technique of cloisonné, the project not only introduces younger audiences to the dazzling beauty and painstaking discipline of this ancient craft, but also adds a fresh, culturally resonant dimension to WAKUKU’s evolving identity.

Yet this crossover was not without creative tension. Integrating avant-garde design with artisanal tradition required careful negotiation and compromise. Zhu initially envisioned the cloisonné doll standing upright with a carefree, almost dreamy expression, a visual reflection of his own treasured childhood memories. However, as this was a custom WAKUKU commission, the design had to faithfully adhere to the IP’s official “Monster Student” prototype from the Hairy Party blind box series: a seated figure dressed in an orange plush coat and wearing a detachable blue cow-head hat adorned with two raised round eyes and contrasting black-and-white horns.

After extensive discussions with Letsvan’s creative team, the two sides arrived at a hybrid solution: the face, hands and boots would retain their original soft-sculpted appearance, while the torso, limbs

▲ Gluing thin wires into place

and headwear would be reimagined entirely through the cloisonné technique.

This decision, unprecedented in either field, posed formidable technical challenges. The greatest obstacle lay in shaping the metal base.

Traditional cloisonné begins with red copper sheets that are hammered by hand into simple forms such as vases or bowls before being welded into complete bases. WAKUKU’s organic, asymmetrical silhouette, however, defied these conventional methods. Its body had to be divided into separate components—the head, arms, legs and torso—with each piece individually shaped before being painstakingly assembled. To achieve millimetre-level precision, Zhu employed 3D scanning to digitally capture the original toy’s geometry, used design software to model the underlying structure and then produced an exact plastic mould using 3D printing. During our interview, he proudly showed us this translucent prototype, the essential framework that ensured the final metal form faithfully preserved WAKUKU’s whimsical posture.

From a technical standpoint, figurative forms such as animals and humans are exponentially more complex than traditional vessels. Every curve demands meticulous hammering, while every joint requires flawless welding. Mass production is virtually impossible. Paradoxically, however, this rarity enhances their artistic and collectible value. Each piece stands as a one-of-a-kind

testament to human patience, craftsmanship and skill.

The hat presented another intricate challenge. The original detachable cow-head design featured horns, eyes, tasselled straps and other expressive details, elements that were difficult to recreate in cloisonné within the project’s timeframe and risked compromising the toy’s playful appeal. After careful consideration, Zhu arrived at an ingenious solution: he integrated the hat into the upper garment, using a subtle groove to imply separation. He then replaced certain metallic details with supple leather, crafting the horns, eyes, mouth, teeth and rosy cheeks from dyed hide. The contrast between warm, tactile leather and gleaming enamel created a harmonious balance in which the rigidity of metal and glass met the softness of character, allowing tradition and cuteness to coexist without conflict.

The entire figure is grounded in celestial blue enamel, overlaid with traditional motifs including interlaced lotus scrolls symbolising purity, Baoxiang flowers representing auspiciousness and *ruyi* patterns evoking good fortune, all rendered in vivid yellows, greens, blues, reds and whites. Every wire is bent by hand and every pigment fired in precise sequence. The result transcends mere merchandise; it is a handcrafted work of art, imbued with human warmth and intended to be displayed, admired and passed down. “Cloisonné is a cornerstone

▲ Polishing the enamel

of Chinese decorative arts,” Zhu said, “and WAKUKU is one of today’s most beloved designer toy IPs. When these two worlds collide, they create something that speaks to both heritage and the future.”

This collaboration has not only infused traditional craftsmanship with contemporary creativity but also reinvigorated Zhu’s own artistic journey. For decades, he has believed that cloisonné can survive only by becoming more accessible and relevant to younger generations. Through his partnership with Letsvan, that long-held aspiration has finally taken tangible form in the cloisonné WAKUKU. The experience feels both surreal and deeply rewarding. Likewise, Letsvan has gained fresh confidence in incorporating more elements of Chinese culture and intangible cultural heritage into its designs, demonstrating that tradition need not remain confined to museums or ceremonial settings. Instead, it can flourish in everyday life as a living, evolving language of style, identity and shared joy. In this blending of past and present, Beijing continues to pioneer new models of cultural innovation.

▲ Zhu Jingyou



Creating Trendy Toys with Beauty in Mind

Text by Zhang Yan Photos by Tong Tianyi

What does the office of a trendy toy company look like? When you step into Suplay's workspace, the first thing to greet your eyes is an explosion of collectible figures densely arranged across every workstation. This is the now-famous "I'm-not-leaving-my-job-anytime-soon" aesthetic trending on Chinese social media: desktops completely taken over by action figures, mecha models and ball-jointed dolls (BJDs), all carefully arranged around computer monitors. Each employee's desk has been "luxuriously renovated" into a miniature designer toy boutique, reflecting not only personal taste but also a deep emotional connection to the very products they help bring to life.

Nowhere is this passion more vividly embodied than in the office of Suplay co-founder Zhang Qingyu. Here, the style reaches its fullest expression. Desks, sofas, floors and corners of the room—every inch of visible space is lovingly occupied by an ever-growing menagerie of dolls and figurines. One glance at this vibrant, toy-filled sanctuary makes it easy to imagine what her home might look like. "If you ever visit my place," she says with a smile, "I can tell you the story and significance behind every single piece." For Zhang, these are not merely objects of plastic and resin; through her affection and direct involvement in their creation, they are imbued with warmth, memory and meaning.

Zhang's journey with collectibles began

in childhood, sparked by her fondness for Sonny Angel—a tiny, whimsical figure that ignited a lifelong fascination. That early spark never faded; instead, it grew into a guiding force that led her into the world of trendy toys. Today, after a decade in the industry, she stands not only as a passionate collector but also as a creative force helping shape China's flourishing landscape of pop-culture merchandise.

When Zhang began her career at Suplay in marketing, her role was to craft promotional campaigns once a product had been developed, strategising how to maximise visibility and drive sales. Over time, however, she found herself drawn to the genesis of creation. Transitioning into product development, she took charge of the entire process, from initial concepts and creative ideation to design refinement and final production. She often compares the two roles using the metaphor of problem-solving: marketing is like being given a fixed exam question, requiring the best possible answer within set boundaries. Product design, by contrast, is far more open-ended; it involves inventing the question before attempting the solution. For Zhang, it is precisely this ambiguity, this exhilarating unknown, that makes creating products so deeply fulfilling.

"Designing toys is inherently paradoxical," she explains thoughtfully. "It demands both wildly imaginative thinking and meticulous, disciplined execution." In

team brainstorming sessions, Zhang never stifles ideas. Instead, she encourages her designers to dream big, push boundaries and explore the impossible. Yet when concepts drift too far from practicality, she steps in—not to reject them, but to refine them. Drawing on years of experience, she helps strike a balance between creative vision and production realities, ensuring that imagination and feasibility go hand in hand.

For Zhang, the ultimate benchmark for any design is whether it passes her own test. As a seasoned collector with refined tastes—what she describes as a "high-end player"—if a prototype excites her enough to make her want to buy it herself, it is likely ready for the market. Reaching that point, however, is rarely swift. It requires a painstaking process of iteration, debate, prototyping and emotional calibration, one that can stretch over months.

Many of Suplay's most celebrated releases are collaborative projects. Beyond securing the right intellectual property (IP) and assessing commercial potential, Zhang emphasises fidelity to the spirit of the original work. "Suplay is a design-driven company," she says. "We obsess over how best to capture an IP's core identity and satisfy its devoted fanbase." This commitment is reflected in astonishingly subtle details: the precise pile length of plush fabric, the exact curve of a bow and the tactile weight of a tiny accessory all undergo rounds of discussion, sampling and

testing before receiving final approval.

One of Zhang's greatest joys is witnessing customers' genuine reactions. During pop-up events in bustling shopping districts, she often slips into a nearby café, orders a coffee and quietly observes as people open a blind box or hold a new figure for the first time. She knows that the care poured into every seam, paint stroke and fold of packaging is not lost on attentive collectors.

At a recent appreciation event for Suplay's most loyal fans, one long-time customer spoke about her deep connection to the brand's Disney collection. "It doesn't simply reproduce Disney—it reinterprets it through Suplay's own creative lens," she said. The pieces meant so much to her that she intended to pass the entire collection on to her children, regarding it not as merchandise but as an inheritance more precious than gold or property. For Zhang, this moment distilled the true significance of designer toys. They have long outgrown their identity as playthings, becoming vessels of memory, cultural resonance and personal identity.

Outside of work, Zhang leads a richly textured life. She enjoys anime, visits art exhibitions and listens to music, yet nothing rivals her enduring passion for collectibles.

Beyond mainstream releases, she actively seeks out limited-edition designer toys and handcrafted artisanal pieces, each discovery carrying its own significance. Her home doubles as a private gallery, filled with original artworks created especially for her—many bearing personal inscriptions and signatures. She has even devoted an entire wall to guest artists, inviting them to "freely express themselves" without restraint.

Though she describes herself as introverted, preferring solitude in her spare time, Zhang finds profound joy in focused, meditative pursuits. A modular building kit can occupy her for an entire afternoon, especially when accompanied by a carefully curated playlist. She treasures the gradual immersion into a "flow state," where time seems to dissolve and creativity takes over. Even when socialising, she is drawn to outings with friends to explore toy shops and pop-up markets. Yet her professional instincts are never entirely switched off: she studies competitors' products not with a critical eye, but with genuine curiosity, constantly seeking inspiration and insights to bring back to her own work.

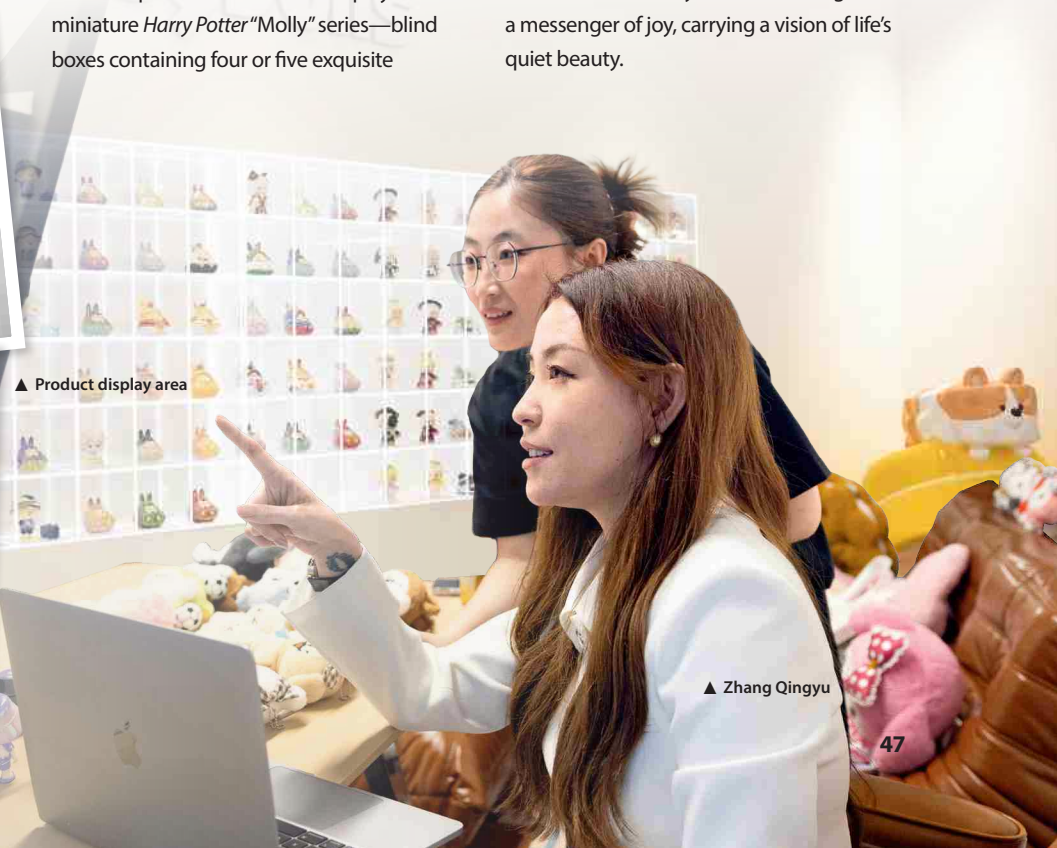
Her keen observations of everyday life directly inform her designs. Noticing that many enthusiasts hesitate to collect because of limited living space or oversized products, she championed the launch of Suplay's miniature *Harry Potter* "Molly" series—blind boxes containing four or five exquisite

figures, each only a few centimetres tall. Compact yet full of personality, they address storage concerns without diminishing the pleasure of collecting. She also co-designed the RABBIT KIKI plush tote, a functional yet stylish bag shaped like a beloved character, allowing fans to take their cherished companions out into the world rather than leaving them to gather dust at home.

Back at the office, every meeting room bears a name drawn from beloved fictional worlds: "The Order of the Phoenix" or "The Room of Requirement" from *Harry Potter*, or "Asgard," Thor's mythical homeland in the Marvel universe. These are more than playful decorations—they help shape the rhythm and culture of daily work. To Zhang, whether someone loves wizards, superheroes or original characters imagined by independent artists, they are all searching for the same essential things: emotional comfort, joy and a sense of belonging. She firmly believes that designer toys are never merely toys. They can become anchors of memory, silent companions through life's ups and downs, expressions of personal aesthetics or bridges connecting individuals to larger stories and communities. Her mission is to transform intangible emotions—love, nostalgia, wonder and hope—into tangible objects that people can hold, display and treasure for decades. In her eyes, each small figure is a messenger of joy, carrying a vision of life's quiet beauty.



▲ An office desk with various trendy toys



▲ Product display area

▲ Zhang Qingyu



The Little Galaxy Illuminates the Capital:

MOLLY's 20th Anniversary Special Exhibition in the 798 Art District

Text by Ma Kai Photos by Zhang Xin



June 6, 2026 marked a significant occasion for collectors of trendy toys. MOLLY, the young girl with large lake-blue eyes and short golden hair, often depicted biting her lip with an expression of mild arrogance and stubbornness, celebrated her 20th anniversary. At the height of summer, POP MART partnered with artist KENNY WONG to present a special exhibition marking two decades of MOLLY at B06 Space in Beijing's 798 Art District.

Following exhibitions in Hong Kong and Shanghai, this event marks the third stop on MOLLY's global tour. It is also the largest and most comprehensive offline exhibition devoted to the character ever held in Beijing. Titled "The Little Galaxy," the exhibition suggests that MOLLY is like a shimmering star in the night sky, accompanying a generation through its growth with enduring innocence and unwavering passion.

Entering the exhibition hall feels like stepping into a time tunnel. The display traces MOLLY's 20-year journey through six thematic sections. The opening hall showcases the debut "Little Painter MOLLY" figure from 2006 alongside the evolution of its original artwork. Artist KENNY WONG's studio has been recreated, complete with an L-shaped desk, a green sofa and an old piano, all transported from Hong Kong. A wooden cabinet displays a treasured photograph of WONG and POP MART founder Wang Ning signing their contract in 2016.

A key highlight is the innovative fusion of trendy toy intellectual property (IP) with traditional Chinese intangible cultural heritage. The "Me and MOLLY" section presents new works created by

artists and heritage artisans, all centred on MOLLY. Visitors can explore classic MOLLY designs alongside fresh creations that blend her image with over 10 traditional Chinese crafts, including Sichuan embroidery, stone carving, paper-cutting, shadow puppetry, cloisonné and Peking Opera masks.

Beyond the static exhibits, the venue also offers interactive experiences. Visitors can challenge ANGRY MOLLY in a playful boxing match or unwind beside the puffy MOLLY to escape the pressures of urban life. More than photo spots, these installations provide moments of comfort, helping visitors recharge for the journeys ahead.

The celebrations extend well beyond the 798 Art District, linking different corners of the capital. A colossal ANGRY MOLLY installation has graced Beijing's Central Business District, offering a

whimsical emotional escape amongst the skyscrapers of Guomao. Meanwhile, POP LAND in Chaoyang Park has embraced the festivities with birthday-themed decor and the exclusive MOLLY's *Inspiration Etude*, carrying the celebratory spirit from the art district to some of the city's best-known landmarks.

Over the course of its 20-year journey, MOLLY has evolved into far more than a toy. It has witnessed a generation coming of age, making the remarkable leap from a niche designer creation to a globally recognised classic IP. Its influence even reached the stars, with MOLLY becoming the first trendy toy to travel into space and return.

The exhibition runs through July 19, and this two-decade artistic journey offers a rewarding experience for anyone who is willing to immerse themselves in its world.



▲ Colourful World (acrylic on canvas)