

'Dooro Bear,' the cultural emissary of Jiading

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Zhang Yao, a post-80s animator, created the original IP "Dooro Bear," which sparked a global cultural craze.

The little green bear with a tiny sprout growing on its head was created in 2017. A succulent plant on Zhang's windowsill served as the inspiration for Dooro Bear.

Zhang, who was then experiencing a challenging period in the advertising industry, noticed the neglected plant. It hadn't been watered or cared for in a long time, yet it was still alive, albeit it had grown crooked, stretching half its body out of the balcony just to chase a little bit of sunlight.

He was moved by the sight of the plant "stretching out from the balcony, chasing the sunlight." He felt a strong connection to it: like him, it was straining to follow the light no matter how harsh the circumstances. He wanted to share the idea with more people.

It inspired him to conceive the Dooro Bear. He transformed the succulent, known as the Bear's Paw, into a cartoon character, which was meant to mend hearts and Zhang and his team worked toward that purpose.

The short video, "A Little Raindrop," follows a small droplet longing for the ocean. With the help of Dooro Bear, it stays in a drought-stricken desert to convey the message that "even a single drop of water can nourish a seed." When the little raindrop stays in the desert at the end of the short film, a timely rainstorm reinforces the story's theme.

Zhang said they want this narrative to inspire people to stand up for their beliefs. "After making that decision, you'll discover the universe will back you."

The short film won first prize in the animation category at the China Short Video Competition and the Best Animated Character Award at the Fourth China Cultural and Arts Government Awards.

In recent years, Zhang and his team have increasingly incorporated an understanding of children's mental health into their content creation.

In 2024, with the assistance of Jiading Publicity Department, Dooro Bear partnered with Jiading Liyun Middle School affiliated to Shanghai University to create projects such as the Dooro Bear Healing Room and the Dooro Bear Psychological Therapy Course Package.

These school programs use Dooro Bear stories, films, picture books, and plush toys to help teenagers overcome emotional boundaries and heal psychologically.

In Liyun Middle School, one can see the adorable and comforting presence of Dooro Bear everywhere. The Five-Minute Mood Hourglass Wall, the Colorful Mood Card Blind Box, the Sandbox Room and the Music Relaxation Room have Dooro

Bear installations, cuddly toys, novels and other merchandise.

School psychologist Yin Ting says Dooro Bear has helped kids express their feelings more openly, improving mental health education. She mentioned that in the past, students rarely wrote to their psychological mailboxes. However, after setting up the Dooro Bear Mailbox, children have been eager to share their worries and joys with it.

Zhang noticed that many children struggle to express themselves and find a space to share their feelings. He hopes that the cartoon character's warm stories and experiences may plant a seed in the hearts of children. This seed will one day grow into a big tree that supports their inner world.

The little Dooro Bear, with its fresh green image, is benevolent.

When Shanghai implemented waste sorting in 2019, it became a public ambassador for the initiative,



Since its creation in 2017, Dooro Bear has participated in many social projects and youth education programs to heal hearts and inspire hope. — Photos by Xi Rou



visiting manufacturing workshops and classrooms to promote the project. The character was used in dozens of unique promotional activities to promote waste sorting.

As it continues to grow, Dooro Bear has "broken boundaries" and become a popular emoji in people's conversations. As a startup, Zhang claimed it is thanks to the care and support of the local government that Dooro Bear has been able to thrive in this fertile ground and showcase its unique cultural charm.

