



China's blind-box toy market is flourishing as collectors sweep up the newly released. — Ti Gong

and traditional costumes are obviously an inspiration to designers.

Some artistic figurines feature distinctive elements from *hanfu*, or traditional Han-style clothing, and from the murals in the 1,600-year-old Mogao Grottoes in Dunhuang.

"It has turned out to be an effective model to build emotional connections between

audiences and timeless series and films," Qu explained. "The vitality of classic culture is retained in these collections. At the same time, eye-catching spin-offs can also help take Chinese TV series and movies to people around the world. It is a virtuous circle."

In addition to movie and TV shows, the industry is tapping the ancient Chinese

literary classic "Journey to the West," the mythical monsters of "Classic of Mountains and Seas," the 12 zodiac animals and traditional festivals in the development of blind boxes.

Blind-box producer Pop Mart reports that its revenue from overseas business in the first half of 2022 soared 162 percent to 157 million yuan, or 6.6 percent of total earnings. The

latter figure is expected to rise to 10 percent by year's end.

As the Year of the Rabbit approaches, Pop Mart's culture-themed sets include a cute bunny series mixed with animals of the Chinese Zodiac and sweet treats.

A netizen called Dani said on Twitter, "Since discovering Pop Mart, I am worried about my wallet because there are so many cute blind-box figurines that I want to buy."

Blind boxes are also promoting China's achievements in science and technology.

Drawing on the nation's progress in space exploration, Pop Mart has released several "Space Molly" sets in partnership with Shanghai ASES Spaceflight Technology Co.

Some limited-edition astronaut Molly dolls are embedded with rocket materials and are among the best-selling figurines worldwide. Part of the proceeds go toward supporting China's space research and youth education programs.

Pop Mart plans to have 40

offshore stores by the end of 2022.

Serious collectors often specialize. Jessie Wu, a local blind-box toy collector in her 30s, said she is interested in series inspired by the cultural relics of history museums across the country.

In the past four years, Wu has spent several thousand yuan on figurines drawn from the Palace Museum in Beijing and the Sanxingdui Ruins in southwest China's Sichuan Province.

Although some super blind-box fans may queue overnight for new releases or spend tens of thousands of yuan on hidden editions, Wu said she is very rational in her approach, building a collection strong on Chinese culture and history.

"Some museums in China are also releasing their own blind-box series based relics and artworks in their collections," Wu added. "It's a good way to spread culture to the world and make history more accessible to ordinary people."



Pop idols and dance teams from the hit variety show "Street Dancing in China" have inspired collectible figurines. — Ti Gong