



УДК 7.012

## REINTERPRETING TRADITION: THE APPLICATION OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL EMBROIDERY IN CONTEMPORARY FASHION DESIGN

CHEN Shuangshuang<sup>1,2</sup>, PASHKEVYCH Kalyna<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Kyiv National University of Technologies and Design, Kyiv, Ukraine

<sup>2</sup> Shaoxing University Yuanpei College, Shaoxing, People's Republic of China  
**1309098852@qq.com**

*This study explores the application of traditional Chinese embroidery in modern fashion by analyzing case studies of fashion brands, examining how this heritage craft is incorporated into contemporary clothing design. As an intangible cultural heritage, traditional Chinese embroidery has demonstrated a trend of integration and innovation in contemporary fashion design.*

**Key words:** Chinese embroidery, fashion design, traditional craftsmanship, innovation.

### INTRODUCTION

As an essential component of China's traditional textile craftsmanship, traditional Chinese embroidery embodies profound cultural heritage and exquisite craftsmanship, making it a significant representative of intangible cultural heritage. The four major embroidery styles – Suzhou embroidery, Hunan embroidery, Sichuan embroidery, and Guangdong embroidery – along with ethnic embroidery traditions such as Miao embroidery and Zhuang embroidery, each exhibit unique artistic styles and cultural meanings, collectively showcasing the diversity of Chinese fashion art. With the increasing global attention to traditional cultural elements in the fashion industry, traditional Chinese embroidery has gradually transitioned from a handcrafted heritage to a presence on the international fashion stage [1]. In recent years, numerous fashion brands have incorporated traditional Chinese embroidery into modern apparel through innovative design approaches, promoting its contemporary adaptation and application within the global fashion system.

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to explore the application strategies of traditional Chinese embroidery in modern fashion design, with a focus on analyzing how designers can effectively use embroidery elements to enhance the creativity of designs and the cultural value of clothing.

### RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

1. Inheritance of Traditional Techniques and Cultural Narratives – Embroidery as a Visual Symbol



Embroidery is not merely a decorative craft but also a medium for cultural transmission, with its patterns, colors, and techniques embodying deep cultural meanings. Traditional Chinese embroidery encompasses a diverse range of techniques, including random stitch embroidery, mesh embroidery, full-ground embroidery, couched gold embroidery, piled velvet embroidery, and cutwork embroidery. Each technique showcases unique craftsmanship and aesthetic value. These methods utilize intricate stitching and subtle color transitions to vividly depict floral, landscape, and figurative motifs, imbuing them with symbolic meanings of prosperity, beauty, and happiness, reflecting a unique interpretation of nature and life [2].

Contemporary fashion designers integrate traditional Chinese embroidery techniques into modern clothing, ensuring their preservation while fostering innovation. For example, designer Guo Pei incorporates couched gold embroidery and appliqué embroidery into haute couture gowns, reinforcing the cultural significance of traditional Chinese garments [3].

Similarly, Shiatzy Chen blends Chinese embroidery with modern fashion by collaborating with traditional artisans, applying silk gauze embroidery, seed embroidery, appliqué embroidery, and cutwork embroidery to garments. This approach enhances the intricate decorative aesthetics of fashion pieces, highlighting embroidery's role in cultural expression. In the 2024 Fall/Winter “Mo Mo” collection (Fig. 1, a), the designer employed freehand-style embroidery, using delicate gold and silver threads to outline bamboo branches and flying birds, creating an ink-wash-like artistic effect. The metallic threads add a refined sheen to the garments, contrasting elegantly with the soft and luxurious white wool fabric, presenting a sense of serenity and sophistication inherent in Eastern aesthetics.



a



b



c

**Fig. 1.** Model of collection: a – Shiatzy Chen FW 2024 [<https://www.shiatzychen.com/#/lookbook?id=21>]; b – Heaven Gaia SS 2022 [<http://xhslink.com/a/TNCfMNZsnYt6j>]; c – Zhuchonhyun FW 2023 [[https://news.sohu.com/a/776674259\\_12118715](https://news.sohu.com/a/776674259_12118715)]



## 2. Integration of Embroidery with Contemporary Design – Expanding Beyond Traditional Boundaries

Chinese traditional embroidery encompasses a diverse range of techniques, and designers are revitalizing these practices through innovative applications in contemporary fashion. Techniques such as cutwork embroidery and 3D embroidery enhance the layering and dimensionality of garments, while appliqué embroidery amplifies the visual impact of embroidered motifs, making garments more expressive and fashion-forward. Additionally, the integration of embroidery with various materials has expanded its expressive potential. The fusion of techniques such as kesi, feather painting, beading, weaving, and inlay embroidery allows embroidery to transition between two-dimensional and three-dimensional applications, creating depth and texture in textile designs. The incorporation of new materials – such as beads, sequins, and crystals – through weaving, linking, or hand-sewing techniques further enhances the three-dimensional quality and luminosity of embroidered garments, elevating their aesthetic appeal and contemporary relevance [4].

In today's fashion landscape, embroidery is no longer confined to traditional techniques but is continuously evolving through the integration of new technologies and innovative materials. For example, HWAVEREN GAIA's 2022 Spring/Summer "Qiankun Fangyi" collection integrates Su embroidery with kesi, painting, and dyeing techniques, enriching both the textural depth and cultural significance of the garments [5]. In the design showcased in Fig. 1, b, the designer skillfully combines Su embroidery, bead embroidery, gold and silver thread embroidery, and seed embroidery, further enhanced with crystals and seed pearls to create dynamic contrasts in texture, gloss, and three-dimensionality. These innovations not only lend embroidery a more contemporary fashion appeal but also underscore the irreplaceable role of traditional craftsmanship in modern fashion design.

Furthermore, ZHUCHONHYUN's 2023 Fall/Winter collection (Fig. 1, c) explores a novel approach to embroidery by transforming Miao embroidery motifs into embossed leather patterns, subtly integrating traditional elements into a minimalist black oversized silhouette. This design approach represents a more diverse and modernized interpretation of traditional craftsmanship, bridging heritage embroidery with contemporary aesthetics.

## 3. Embroidery as a Decorative Element – Enhancing the Visual Impact of Fashion

In contemporary fashion design, embroidery serves as a decorative craft that amplifies the visual impact of garments, adding depth and artistic expression. Designers strategically employ embroidery by manipulating color layering, motif arrangement, and material combinations, making garments more ornate and distinctive [6]. For instance, DRIES VAN NOTEN's 2012 Fall/Winter collection (Fig. 2, a) concentrates embroidered elements on the shoulders, using golden threads to outline abstract patterns, creating a focal point within the garment's composition. Similarly, MARINI's 2021 "MIAO" collection (Fig. 2, b) integrates Miao embroidery techniques with appliqué and localized embroidery accents, introducing multilayered textures. The embroidered motifs – featuring floral and avian elements



– utilize vibrant colors that contrast sharply with the base fabric, enhancing the garment's visual appeal. Additionally, the fusion of embroidery with geometric paneling pushes beyond traditional embroidery applications, positioning it as a modern, expressive design language.



**Fig. 2.** Model of collection: a – Dries Van Noten FW 2012

[<https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/Dries-Van-Noten/2012-aw-RTW/>]; b – Marni 2021 “MIAO” [[https://k.sina.cn/article\\_5876897687\\_p15e4a579700100x3of.html](https://k.sina.cn/article_5876897687_p15e4a579700100x3of.html)]; c – Hui FW 2024 [<https://www.vogue.com.cn/shows/hui/2024-aw-RTW/>]

Furthermore, the HUI 2024 Fall/Winter collection (Fig. 2, c) skillfully merges Miao embroidery craftsmanship with contemporary fashion aesthetics. By combining the traditional “Changjiao Miao” patterns with striped elements, and embellishing garments with sequins, fringes, pearls, and metal studs, the collection achieves a harmonious blend of cultural heritage and contemporary style. The strategic placement of embroidery enhances the layering and structural complexity of the garments, reinforcing their visual impact while simultaneously imparting an elegant, avant-garde aesthetic. Through these innovative embroidery applications, the collection exemplifies the brand's commitment to modernizing Chinese intangible cultural heritage and presenting it on an international fashion stage.

### CONCLUSIONS

Chinese traditional embroidery has demonstrated a dynamic integration of cultural heritage and modern innovation in contemporary fashion design. While preserving traditional embroidery techniques, designers have reinterpreted them as cultural symbols within modern garments, enhancing their narrative depth and artistic expression. With advancements in new techniques and materials, embroidery applications continue to expand, fostering a closer fusion with modern design principles and increasing the creative diversity of contemporary fashion. As a decorative element, embroidery utilizes color, texture, and composition to



reinforce the visual impact of garments, adding layers of artistic sophistication and fashion-forward appeal. Looking ahead, with the rise of sustainable fashion and digital technologies, Chinese traditional embroidery will unlock even more innovative possibilities in fashion design. Not only will it serve as a vehicle for cultural preservation, but it will also evolve to meet contemporary fashion demands, ensuring its relevance and creative reinvention in the global industry.

## REFERENCES

1. Lin, Yanping et al. (2024) Application of Gan Embroidery (Yuzhang Embroidery) in Neo-Chinese-style Woolen Clothing with the Inheritance of Intangible Cultural Heritage. *Fibres & Textiles in Eastern Europe*. Vol. 32, Iss. 5. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.2478/ftee-2024-0028>.
2. Gao, Hongjie. (2024) Fashionable Expression and Application of Traditional Embroidery in Fashion Design. *Textile Report*, Vol. 43, Iss. 5, pp. 54-56.
3. Lu, Chang. (2023). Research on the Innovative Application of Manchu Traditional Embroidery in Modern Fashion Design. Master's Thesis, Northeast Electric Power University. DOI: 10.27008/d.cnki.gdbdc.2023.000044.
4. Jiang, Jianming. (2024) Analysis of the Application of Embroidery Art in Fashion Design. *Western Leather*, Vol. 46, Iss. 17, pp. 107-109. DOI: 10.20143/j.1671-1602.2024.17.107.
5. Wei, Jiamin & Zhang, Kangfu. (2022) Application of Suzhou Embroidery Elements in the 'Heaven Gaia' Brand Fashion. *Art Education Research*, Iss. 24, pp. 95-99.
6. Sun, Mingjie & Wang, Xiaohui. (2024) Integration of Traditional Embroidery Techniques and Modern Fashion Design from the Perspective of Cultural Heritage. *Printing and Dyeing*, Vol. 50, Iss. 3, pp. 102-105.

**ЧЕНЬ Шуаншуан, ПАШКЕВИЧ К.**

## **ПЕРЕОСМИСЛЕННЯ ТРАДИЦІЇ: ЗАСТОСУВАННЯ КИТАЙСЬКОЇ ТРАДИЦІЙНОЇ ВИШИВКИ В СУЧАСНОМУ ДИЗАЙНІ МОДИ**

*В роботі досліджено застосування традиційної китайської вишивки в сучасній моді, проаналізовано тематичні кейси модних брендів, досліджуючи, як це ремесло традиційної спадщини інтегровано в сучасний дизайн одягу. Як нематеріальна культурна спадщина, традиційна китайська вишивка продемонструвала тенденцію до інтеграції та інновацій у сучасному дизайні одягу.*

**Ключові слова:** китайська вишивка, дизайн одягу, традиційна майстерність, інновації.