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THE ART OF FOLD EMBROIDERY IN THE MIAO PEOPLE: TRADITION AND INNOVATION IN CONTEMPORARY DESIGN

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This research analyzes the characteristics of Fold Embroidery within the Miao embroidery tradition of Southeastern Guizhou, China, and explores its contemporary design applications. Examining Fold Embroidery's intricacy, three-dimensional geometric patterns, and distinctive color palette reveals its unique artistic value. The study further analyzes design cases featuring stylistic simplification, material, and craft innovation, integrating Fold Embroidery into modern design. This highlights the potential for combining traditional crafts with modern design practices. Findings indicate innovative Fold Embroidery applications inspire modern design, promote preservation, and enhance market viability. This research offers a new perspective on applying traditional crafts in modern design.

Key words: Miao Embroidery; Fold Embroidery; Product Design; Material Innovation; Craft Innovation

INTRODUCTION

Fold Embroidery, a unique Miao textile art from Southeastern Guizhou, China, uses fabric as its primary medium. Starched, colored silk is cut into small rectangles, folded into geometric shapes, and meticulously layered to create intricate designs. This precise craftsmanship, vibrant colors, and complex layering produce a kaleidoscopic, relief-like effect, inspiring contemporary art and design. However, its survival is threatened by modern manufacturing and changing consumer tastes, as its intricacy clashes with efficiency, its structure with lightweight products, and its colors with minimalist aesthetics. This study examines Fold Embroidery's traditional characteristics, explores its modern value, and analyzes innovative design directions.

PURPOSE

Building upon Fold Embroidery's unique characteristics, this study explores innovative strategies to integrate this intangible cultural heritage into contemporary design. The objective is to investigate methods for modernizing the craft through stylistic simplification, material, and process innovations, creating products that meet modern aesthetics while preserving Miao cultural heritage.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

(1) Characteristics of Fold Embroidery Technique

Fold Embroidery patterns are precise, compact, layered, and composed of numerous individual triangular units, creating a myriad of forms. The fundamental unit is the triangle, and during the layering process, these units arranged around a central rhombus, expanding outwards to create a stepped structure [1]. This utilizes fabric overlap and positioning, giving a three-dimensional, relief-like quality. Fold Embroidery transcends traditional flat embroidery, which relies on line stitches [1], extending the work into three-dimensional space, and creating spatial depth and ordered beauty. The four primary layering and combination methods in Fold Embroidery are: tile-style, triangle-square combination style, fish-scale style, and sawtooth style (Fig.1) [2].

The pattern structure is based on a rectangular outer frame, with two-direction continuous patterns composed of individual or interlocking motifs serving as the basic structural characteristic. A rhombus often forms the centripetal main structure, with a central motif of either figurative animal patterns (birds, fish, dragons) or abstract geometric patterns (octagonal flowers, "卐") [3]. Like other Miao embroidery, Fold Embroidery employs bold, contrasting colors, creating harmony through contrast and variation. The primary palette consists of reds and blues, with contrasting colors as accents, enriching the visual effect while maintaining unity. The overall pattern resembles a pointillist painting, conveying freedom and vibrancy.

(2) Directions for Innovative Design Application

Integrating Fold Embroidery into modern life and achieving its sustainable development requires considering contemporary aesthetics, available materials, and current manufacturing technologies. This study, through practical example analysis, identifies the following innovative design directions:

The first is stylistic simplification. Traditional Fold Embroidery, used in elaborate Miao ceremonial attire, emphasizes vibrant colors and intricate layering – a complex, labor-intensive process. This intricacy conflicts with modern practicality, simplicity, and convenience. For contemporary adoption, Fold Embroidery must undergo refinement, retaining its original essence. This includes techniques like simplifying complex motifs, deconstructing and reconstructing existing patterns, and reducing color intensity. For example, designers are experimenting with deconstructing and reconstructing traditional Fold Embroidery colors and fish motifs, using denim as a material, and flattening, exaggerating, and enlarging the patterns to create a striking graphic effect (Fig.2).

The second is Material and Craft Innovation. Traditional Miao Fold Embroidery is concentrated in mountainous Guizhou, China. Limited transportation and resources mean local embroiderers have less exposure to modern production. Fold Embroidery materials often consist of square woven fabric and techniques mainly involve folding, tacking, and layering – all time-consuming and labor-intensive. Modern manufacturing offers diverse materials and techniques, providing extensive creative options. Designers are experimenting with dyeing cotton and linen in blue-yellow/blue-purple gradients, using triangular folded forms for



repeating, combined, layered patterns on handbags, creating a fish-scale effect (Fig.3). Others replace traditional silk with leather, deconstructing/recombining octagonal flower and "卍" patterns into new motifs for garment necklines, cuffs, and other areas, creating minimalist, fashionable collections that retain the cultural essence (Fig. 4). Existing research has explored deconstructing and integrating Fold Embroidery with jewelry packaging (Fig.5), and combining triangular elements with qipao edging and evening gown beading. Combining quilting and Fold Embroidery, manipulating stitch length, spacing, and weight creates diverse visual rhythms (Fig. 6).

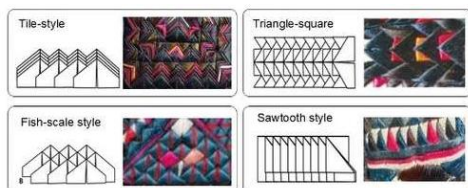


Fig. 1. Primary layering and combination methods in Fold Embroidery



Fig. 2 "Pile· Stack" series works designed by Yang Huihan [4]



Fig. 3. The application of piling embroidery in the bags[5]



Fig.4 . 'Dog's Teeth' - series works designed by Zhao Wei[6]



Fig. 5. 'Die Meng' -Series works designed by Gao Yan [7]



Fig. 6. Series works designed by Chen Pu [8]

CONCLUSIONS

Increased national emphasis on intangible cultural heritage and deeper research into Miao Fold Embroidery have led to significant conservation progress. A key challenge is unifying ethnic product design with production feasibility.



Modernizing Fold Embroidery requires aligning with contemporary aesthetics and integrating modern technologies and materials. True preservation involves appropriately integrating this craft into modern life, fostering wider recognition and appreciation. By refining elements, materials, and processes, Fold Embroidery can be incorporated into modern product design. Its application offers commercial value and cultural significance, preserving traditional culture while enriching modern design diversity.

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МИСТЕЦТВО ВИШИВКИ СКЛАДКАМИ НАРОДУ МЯО: ТРАДИЦІЯ ТА ІННОВАЦІЯ В СУЧАСНОМУ ДИЗАЙНІ

У цьому дослідженні проаналізовано особливості вишивки складками в традиції вишивки Мяо з південно-східної провінції Гуйчжоу, Китай, а також досліджено її сучасне застосування в дизайні. Вивчення складності, тривимірних геометричних візерунків і характерної кольорової палітри вишивки розкриває її унікальну мистецьку цінність. У дослідженні також проаналізовано дизайнерські кейси, що демонструють стилістичне спрощення, інновації в матеріалах і ремеслах, які інтегрують вишивку в сучасний дизайн. Результати показують, що інноваційні застосування вишивки накладають відбиток на сучасний дизайн, сприяють збереженню та підвищують життєздатність ринку. Це дослідження пропонує новий погляд на застосування традиційних ремесел у сучасному дизайні.

Ключові слова: вишивка Мяо; вишивка складками; дизайн продукту; матеріальні інновації; ремісничі інновації.