

A Study on the Inspiration of "Chinoiserie" Clothing in Western Fashion to Contemporary Chinese Fashion Design

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Abstract: The "Chinoiserie" clothing in Western fashion is a mirror image of Chinese clothing. The analysis of the design methods of "Chinoiserie" clothing in Western fashion not only has historical research value, but also has great significance for the construction of design methods and communication methods of contemporary Chinese style clothing design. The study concludes that in the context of the exchange and development of Western and Chinese fashion in the 21st century, the contemporary Chinese fashion design can be improved internally and "catered" externally to create a new era of design thinking.

1. Introduction

The "Chinoiserie" clothing in Western fashion largely reflects the Western audience's understanding of Chinese style clothing, and at the same time, the design approaches of "Chinoiserie" clothing in Western fashion magazines directly or indirectly play a certain role in guiding today's Chinese design. Based on this, this study will analyze the design approaches of "Chinoiserie" clothing in Western fashion magazines, and explore its inspiration for contemporary Chinese clothing design in conjunction with the content of Western fashion magazines' comments on "Chinoiserie" clothing.

2. The Significance of the Study of "Chinoiserie" Clothing in Western Fashion

The "Chinoiserie" clothing in Western fashion is based on the theme of traditional Chinese elements, and the nature of its merchandise dictates that its design ideas must be consumer-oriented. The "Chinoiserie" clothing and their design methods in Western fashion magazines have been recognized by the Western market at different times, and the analysis of their characteristics and the influencing factors behind their causes can provide a direction for thinking about how Chinese style clothes design and even Chinese fashion can spread their own values while being based in the local area and then gaining recognition in the world market.

3. The Design Method of "Chinoiserie" Clothing in Western Fashion

3.1 Combining Traditional Chinese Clothing Structure with Modern Fashion Elements

In Western fashion magazines from 1912 to 1920, deconstruction was one of the typical means by which Western designers interpreted "Chinoiserie" designs. For example, in Figure 1^[1], Lucile, a London fashion house, deconstructed the 1918 tunic design with wide sleeves and slits as Chinese style elements and combined them with translucent silk fabrics to form the most "dangerously glamorous" Chinese design in the 1910s season from the perspective of Western fashion magazines. The slit was deconstructed as a Chinese style element and combined with semi-transparent silk fabrics to form the most "dangerously glamorous" Chinese design in the Western fashion magazines of the 1910s. In contemporary Chinese fashion design, it is also possible to learn from this approach, using traditional Chinese design elements as a base and combining them with current fashion trends to create innovative clothing forms that are in line with current trends.

Such a design approach has also been reflected in contemporary Chinese and Western clothing design, such as in Figure 2^[2], where Italian brand Gucci combined Chinese style coiffure and stand-up collar designs with Western 70s silhouettes in its spring/summer 2017 design, with an embroidered "Hollywood Forever Cemetery" design. The design was accompanied by a belt embroidered with "Hollywood Forever Cemetery" characters, creating a gorgeous, retro, visually striking Chinese design for the new era. In Figure 3^[3], designer Zhang Zhaoda extracted the right overlapping structure of the traditional Chinese robe and summarized it with contemporary design techniques, presenting the Chinese style in a more comfortable, fashionable and simple way.



Fig.1 Lucile's "Chinoiserie" Design



Fig.2 Gucci s/s 2017 Designs with Chinese Collars and Frog Buttons



Fig.3 Chinese Collar in Zhang Zhaoda's 2019m13 Series

To sum up, deconstructing traditional Chinese costume elements symbolically and then combining them with current fashion elements to make Chinese style a prominent artistic style in the new era of costume design is a prerequisite for establishing its market recognition and social influence.

3.2 Shaping the Image of Chinese Style Clothing for Others to Understand

The image of Chinese clothing from the perspective of Western fashion magazines is always a derivative of Western social fashion, and the resulting clothing image is far from the real Chinese one, and is more the result of self-development of Western fashion aesthetics and design methods. Therefore, it is particularly important to grasp the psychology of Western audiences, combine the existing symbolic perception of Chinese style clothing in Western fashion, and use modern media and other means of multi-channel communication to create a Chinese clothing image that Western audiences can understand and easily accept.

In the article "The Romance behind the Fan" in the September 1923 issue of *VOGUE*, a Western writer attributed the invention of the Chinese fan to a beautiful Chinese lady, writing that "One evening, the beautiful daughter of a Chinese mandarin, who was attending a grand feast of lanterns, was so overcome with the heat that it became necessary to remove her mask. The law forbade a woman of nobility to expose her face to the common gaze, so, holding the mask as close as possible, she fluttered it to give air, relying on the rapidity of the movement to conceal her." The other young women, observing the hazardous, but charming, innovation, followed suit, thus originate the flirtatious and fascinating fan, which the author also said, "The beauty of a pair of alluring eyes is never more enhanced than when peeping coquettishly over a fan."^[4]

It is clear from the above that Westerners find Chinese costumes fascinating not only for their novelty and ornamentation, but also for the romantic stories associated with ancient China that are conveyed behind the Chinese costumes, which can help Western readers to increase their interest in Chinese style clothing, even if these stories are fictional.

To address this situation, in the process of shaping the image of contemporary Chinese dress, the artistic genesis behind the appearance of traditional Chinese dress, the classic and romantic mythology, and the historical origin of traditional dress elements can be used as the packaging and communication elements of modern Chinese dress design. In fact, the most fundamental purpose of drawing on traditional Chinese images in Western memory is to enhance the acceptance and

reputation of modern Chinese design,so it is not only necessary to emphasize and express the beauty of traditional Chinese costumes,but also to find the connection between traditional Chinese images and modern design.



Figure 4 Judy Zhang's S/S 2020 "Broken Bridge Encounter" theme

For the Spring/Summer 2020 collection,New York-based designer Judy Zhang created a collection based on the "Broken Bridge Encounter" chapter of the traditional Chinese mythology *The Legend of the White Snake*.The designer depicted the first encounter between the White Snake and her husband Xu Xian in the form of a print,and in the details of the pattern(Figures 2-4)^[5],the "White Snake"of the traditional Chinese story was portrayed as an independent woman wearing sunglasses,while Xu Xian greets the woman with a friendly Italian "Ciao"and wears American AirPods in his ears.The designer combines the romantic Chinese traditional story with the modern lifestyle,and presents it in the form of a funny comic in the clothing design,showing her understanding of the interplay between Chinese and Western cultures.

This also suggests that Western cultural images can be used in the process of shaping the image of Chinese apparel,because Western consumers cannot have a systematic and comprehensive understanding or completely correct interpretation of Chinese style design concepts in a short period of time,but with the help of image elements that they are familiar with or already know in depth can greatly shorten their interpretation time of the meaning expressed in Chinese apparel design.Moreover,from the perspective of social psychology of clothing,the appearance of a familiar concept from an unfamiliar image can improve the intimacy of the clothing image.^[6]

4. Conclusion

In the 21st century,the exchange between Eastern and Western fashion is becoming more and more frequent.Under the historical impact of global integration and cultural pluralism,Chinese and Western fashion are exchanging and developing with each other,complementing each other and coexisting.For contemporary Chinese style design,the continuous innovation of Chinese local fashion is the inner motivation to help Chinese design spread in the West,while shaping the image of Chinese clothing that is easily understood by the West and changing the stereotype of the West in a subtle way is an effective way to spread Chinese style clothing design in the new era to gain a foothold in the world.

References

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