Research Article

Textile designs based on Kashmiri wood work motifs identified and collected from the traditional buildings located at Muzaffarabad and Neelum Valley, Azad Kashmir.

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Abstract

Various patterns of wood works were investigated from the traditional old buildings located primarily from Muzaffarabad City and Neelum Nalley. These newly created patterns were produced in the form of interior decorations including curtains and bed sheets. These patterns appeared as an fantastically excellent addition to the field of textile designing which may be exploited commercially in the textile industry. It is also a best way to conserve the culture.

Keywords: Kashmir, handicraft, culture.

INTRODUCTION

Azad Jammu and Kashmir is rich in glorious Art and Craft, with cultural and architectural heritage. Its beauty and cultural heritage is its living expression and fine art is the best way of this expression.

One aspect of current study is the description of artistic handicrafts, which is the reflection of aesthetic sense of human beings. Man has the inherent capacity to think creatively. It is the distinguishing quality of human beings to develop culture. Culture is the combination of strategies developed by man for effective survival. In addition to the development of strategies for survival, man also wants to satisfy his aesthetic sense. Aesthetic sense is a major force behind the development of art. The present research is devoted to creating new textile designs derived from Kashmiri wood work motifs.

Wood is a major raw material source, be it for heating or for the production of requisite furniture with intricate inlay work, the influences on Kashmiri handicrafts appear to be multi-directional. This enchanted valley has been a centre of attraction for many civilizations and subsequently the different influences have been managed, either by force or by trade, to find its way to Kashmir (Afaqi, 1990).

The topographical features of Kashmir are basically mountainous with a minimum elevation of 15000 ft and on the higher side the peaks range between 12000 to 18000 ft. In prehistoric times the valley was submerged in water as marine fossils have been discovered here. The resources of high grade Deodar and Pine wood are easily available in the Neelum Valley (Azad Kashmir).

The cultural confluence between Iranian and Kashmiri art culminated in a new art of handicrafts. The Kashmiri handicrafts gained momentum when Mughal Emperor Akbar annexed Kashmir into this vast and prosperous empire in late 16th century.

This conversion of motifs from one surface to another will propagate the traditional designs more as it is far easier to handle printed cloth as compared to the wood work.

The traditional motifs have also been changed to make them more appealing to the public and to conform to acceptable color palette (Anonymous, 1999)
WOOD CARVING & WALNUT WOOD CARVING

Carved walnut wood work is among the most important crafts of Kashmir. Kashmir is now one of few places in the world where walnut is still available. The wood is hard and durable, its close grains and even texture facilitates fine detailed work. It also presents visually interesting effects with mere plain polished surfaces. In fact in contemporary products, a work box of walnut wood with plain surfaces and small carvings becomes attractive along with the trays, tables, bowls, dishes and similar items. The Kashmiri craftsman, however, rejoices in carving intricate and varied designs based on lively natural forms. A variety of carved products bear recurrent motifs of the rose lotus and iris, bunches of grapes or pears and Platanus orientalis leaves. Lhasa dragon motifs and patterns taken from kani and embroidered shawls all find their place in wooden objects with deep relief carving. A variety of articles, both decorative and utilitarian, ranging from smaller items like bowls, trays, cigarette boxes, wall plaques and table lamps to screens, bedsteads and larger items of furniture are carved in walnut wood and cater to contemporary demand. Four main types of carving are popular in Azad Kashmir, with its dense forests and wide variety of walnut trees, it has a rich tradition of wood carving and architecture. The strong, rich, dark and grainy wood of the walnut tree, (Juglans regia), known as dun in Azad Kashmir, is considered ideal for this carved work. The fame of Kashmiri wood crafts and wood carving rests on the use of walnut wood as raw material. Due to its durability and natural color, it is regarded as most suitable both for carving and wood work. The carving is done skillfully in a variety like "padri" where it is not deep. There is another interesting historical fact. The carved gate and facade at the Coronation Durbar of King George V at Delhi, which was presented to him as a monument of Kashmir art by Maharaja Pratab Singh, was instrumental in popularizing Kashmir wood carving outside India, besides attracting the Indian, princely society (Anonymous 2000).

MATERIALS & METHODS

PHOTOGRAPHY

The primary task during the field work was the selection of wood carved material in the emporiums located at Muzaffarabad along with the survey of the areas in the Neelum Valley to trace the traditional houses where the wood work motifs were too prominent to be photographed. The major areas visited in this context were Kutton, Jagran, Auutchmuqam, Keran, Dawarian, Dudnial, Khawaja Seree, Sharda, Kel, Janawai, Phalawai, Sardari, Halmat, Nikru & Taobut. Prior to this exploration visited Rawalpindi & Lahore twice. Firstly for the preliminary survey of the markets and later on practically to purchase the requisite chemicals, mesh, wooden screens, screen colors, cloths and so on. Especially the scanner and Sony digital camera for this unique photography. Photography was followed by the preparation of conventional research boards (story board and mood board.)

RESEARCH BOARD

This consists of photography which plays a vital role in creation of all the requisite designs. These boards provide a constant source of constructive information.

STORY BOARD

This furnishes the valuable information about the patterns in detail. I created one story board with fifteen designs emphasizing the original patterns including the major motifs of chinnar leaves, lotus leaves & flowers, almond shape in stylized form. Further designs were created from these story boards.

MOOD BOARDS

These are inspirational boards that keep in touch with the colors influencing one's mood during the initial research.

DIGITAL DESIGNING

The next step was digital designing for screen printing. All the curtain and bed sheets were analyzed through digital textile design. The printouts of the digital design were taken to a professional shop located at Dubai Plaza Rawalpindi after negotiation. This was quite a laborious and tedious job and it took several days to do well.
SCREEN PRINTING

The process of screen printing is an important step and one should be aware of the process which is described here with profound details. For this purpose, visited many textile factories and then selected Al Mezan Textile Mills after comparative study that was located at an approachable site in Rawalpindi. This was also an exhaustive task because many trained personnel were involved in the process and we had to stay for one month to complete the screen printing procedure during the summer vacations in 2009.

BACKGROUND

As in all forms of silk screening a stencil is used to print the pattern. To make a silk screen the stencil is adhered to a fine and porous silk or synthetic cloth tightly stretched over a wooden frame. With the stencil placed on top of the cloth to be printed, the wooden frame, facing upwards, becomes the receptacle for the dye. Then the dye, added to a thick creamy base, is poured at the edge of the frame and evenly spread over the entire screen with a squeegee, a rubber edged wooden implement. The cloth is printed as the dye penetrates through the silk and the pattern of the stencil. The process is repeated to print the entire cloth. Separate screens are used for each additional pattern and colour.

A photo silk screen is made with a stencil prepared from a photo-sensitive film. In this process the stencil is made the film is adhered to the screen. A black or opaque contour pattern on translucent acetate or a black image on high contrast line-film is then placed on top of the photo-sensitive film. After being exposed to light and chemical processing the unexposed areas under the black image are washed away to create the stenciled silk screen.

Although photo silk screening is international, the local workshops and their patterns are unique. Tile printing is outdoor padded tables where hundreds of yards of cloth are stretched be printed and dried. Some of the prints contain as many as five colors which are registered with separate screens. It is astonishing to see the line quality, which can be produced with such simple facilities.

PREPARATION OF SCREEN:

For each color a separate screen was prepared. The traced design on the butter paper was filled in with pelican ink A wooden frame measuring 50” X 24” inches from outside and 44” X 18 inches from inside was prepared a silk mesh was stretched on the wooden frame be using glue and nails to fasten the silk mesh. The stretching of silk mesh should be tight. Finally the screen mesh was washed with detergent The chemicals, cavasol emulsion and sensitizer were mixed with the ratio of one table spoon and four drops respectively in total darkness. The prepared chemicals were smeared on the silk mesh evenly on both sides the screen was left to dry in darkness Then the traced design on the butter paper was placed on the exposing plant, keeping the inked portion on the top side. Then the screen was placed on top of the tracing in perfect alignment. Pressure was added by placing sand bags on the screen. Then the screen was exposed by switching on the tube-lights for four minutes. The exposed screen was immediately washed with pressure by using a hose pipe. Now the frame was placed in sun light to dry. The screen was ready for printing.

PRINTING PROCEDURE:

Before printing masking tape was stretched on the outer side edges so as to control any accidental paint leak. Then emulsion paint was applied on the negative areas leaving the design clear and then left to dry

PREPARATION OF COLOURS:

Three grams of Alka was mixed in one hundred grams of water and was left to fluff. The prepared fluffy amalgam was divided for different colors and was placed in a air tight jar. The required Alka amalgam was taken and acramine pigment dye was added, finally binder was added to permanently preserve the color.

PRINTING PROCEDURE:

Cloth was fixed on the printing table. A screen was placed for printing keeping in mind that light color is to be applied first. Color was applied by pouring it with a spoon and spreading with a wiper, the procedure was repeated till the entire length of the cloth was covered. The same procedure was repeated for subsequent color screens. The cloth was spread to dry under the sun.
CURTAIN DESIGN

Executing the technique of screen printing in the textile factory at Rawalpindi, we designed ten curtains with four colours of the size 2.5 x 114 cm. These were designed with quite different color schemes.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION:

Being a professional textile designer, for the first time we got the idea that the fantastic wood work motifs which are really traditional historic cultural heritage items rather than sacred relics, could disappear with the passage of time and gradually with the change in the construction pattern of the houses according to climatic conditions and economic setup of the people. Therefore these wood work motifs must be preserved in the manner of transferring to the cloth surface. Definitely this was a progressive and remarkable addition in the prevailing designs and commercially these designs appeared to be more attractive and appealing for the people.

If the higher authorities encourage this work in the future, more designs can be made from the tremendous wood work motifs at home, from the Indian held part of Kashmir and from the other parts of the country, these designs can be made patent and also exploited commercially later on.

With the execution of this project we were absolutely and perfectly successful:

1. To develop and create skill while producing new designs in our profession.
2. To achieve formal training in textile designing with modern techniques.
3. To provide practical training with the aim of independent handling of printing techniques, transfer of designs and screen printing in the factories.
4. To recognize by the students, the importance and interdependence of the technical as well as aesthetic aspects, collectively qualifying the functional values of their creative endeavors.
5. To get the basic knowledge of existing textile in local as well as in the International market.
6. To evaluate the historic evolution of traditional and classical textile in Kashmiri culture.
7. To get acquaintance with the traditional crafts of the Sub continent especially Pakistan, India & Kashmir.
8. To accept the challenge of creating individual series of designs from any determined source.
9. To learn and acknowledge the traditional aspects with intended creation and thus honoring the technical skills involved in the completion of any textile product.

CONCLUSION

It must be realized that the current work is only one phase of this adventurous and enterprising task as there are an overwhelming number of wood work motifs found engraved in the houses which are normally unapproachable and situated in the remote areas of the Neelum Valley, Leepa Valley and other parts of the country. More interestingly, the traditional houses in the Indian held part of Kashmir still retain the matchless types of wood work motifs not found in the other parts of the world. This is really a challenging task. These wood work motifs may be converted into digital designs and subsequently transferred onto the cloth surface by screen printing with other techniques and mediums. These designs would be unique and unparalleled and quite a new addition to the textile history. For this purpose the task may be presented in the form of another large scale project to the Directorate of Advanced Studies and Research that must be sponsored financially by the institution and encouraged by the higher pertinent authorities. Their cooperation would be definitely acknowledged accordingly.

REFERENCES

KASHMIRI WOOD WORK RESEARCH BOARD

Carpainter (Neelum Valley AJK)

Wooden house (Neelum Valley AJK)  Wood carving box
STORY BOARD & MOOD BOARD
WOOD WORK KASHMIRI MOTIF

Wooden Platanus orientalis motif

NEW CREATIVE DIGITAL DESIGN
Curtain, bed sheets & Pillow Design
CLOTH WORK
Bed sheet & Parda Cloth