

# Innovation and Research of Ethnic Art Elements in Contemporary Design

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**Abstract:** *With the accelerated development of globalization, ethnic art has gradually become an undeniable force in the field of contemporary design. The application of ethnic art elements not only reflects the characteristics of various ethnic cultures, but also endows design works with unique aesthetic value. By analyzing the expressions of ethnic art elements and their applications in different design fields, the paper aims to explore the innovative means of applying 3D printing technology, virtual reality technology and augmented reality technology to ethnic art elements in contemporary design; meanwhile, it is proposed to conduct in-depth research on local culture, inheriting the concept of sustainable development, and transforming ethnic art elements into modern design elements, which in order to provide reference value for the creation of modern design works with unique cultural styles.*

**Keywords:** *Ethnic art elements, Contemporary design, Forms of expression*

## 1. Introduction

The development of contemporary design is no longer limited to Western aesthetics and design concepts, and more and more designers are seeking cultural and regional characteristics. The excavation, understanding, application and reconstruction of art elements become the creative inspiration of artists. Artworks that focus on the connotation, form and expression of national elements are the contemporary pursuit of national aesthetics by designers from various countries, and works with strong national art elements are sought after in the global economy.

## 2. Characteristics of ethnic art elements

### 2.1 Definition of Ethnic Art Elements

Ethnic art elements refer to art forms, symbols, patterns, colors and other elements that are representative of the traditional culture of each nation, which reflects the cultural characteristics and historical heritage of the nation.

### 2.2 Characteristics of National Art Elements

#### 2.2.1 Distinctive ethnic characteristics

Ethnic art elements carry the unique culture, history and aesthetic concepts of each ethnic group, reflecting the spiritual outlook and cultural traditions of the nation. Such distinctive ethnic characteristics provide designers with rich creative inspiration and make design works uniquely attractive<sup>[1]</sup>.

#### 2.2.2 Rich cultural connotations

National artistic elements embody the wisdom and cultural heritage passed down from generation to generation, with a profound historical heritage. The use of these elements can endow design works with richer cultural connotations and stories, and the expressive power of the works.

#### 2.2.3 Unique aesthetic value

Ethnic art elements contain a variety of unique art forms, symbols, patterns and colors, which can provide diverse visual effects and expressions in contemporary design and bring designers a wider creative space.

### **2.2.4 Strong plasticity**

Ethnic art elements have high plasticity, and designers can adapt, refine and innovate these elements to meet the needs of different scenes according to design requirements. This flexibility makes ethnic art elements have strong practical value in design.

### **2.2.5 Inspire creativity**

Ethnic art elements originate from folklore and are rich in life and creativity. When applying ethnic art elements, designers draw creative inspiration from them, providing infinite possibilities and innovative space for creative design.

## **3. The Expressive Forms of Ethnic Art Elements in Contemporary Design**

Ethnic art elements have diverse forms of expression in contemporary design, covering the fields of graphic design, product design, spatial design, fashion design, visual communication design, digital media design, handicraft design, environmental art design, stage design, and transportation design. In contemporary design, there are five main forms of expression of ethnic art elements.

### **3.1 Patterns**

Patterns in ethnic art are an important element that can be used in fashion design, interior decoration, product design and other fields. Patterns from different ethnic groups have different cultural characteristics and artistic styles, and designers can select and creatively apply them according to the needs of the situation<sup>[2]</sup>.

### **3.2 Colour**

The colour in ethnic art can be used in fashion design and interior decoration. Different ethnic colour have different cultural characteristics and artistic styles, and designers can create more visually striking and contemporary designs through blending and innovative use.

### **3.3 Materials**

Material is an important carrier of the soul of art and endows the work with strength. The selection of art materials is an expression of artistic emotions, and the integration of emotions and craftsmanship can better show the aesthetic and charm of art, and display people's emotions.

### **3.4 Form**

The forms and thickness, lightness, rigidity and softness of the volumes in ethnic art activate the visual effect, making the architectural artwork more vital of appearance and showing local characteristics and culture. In the process of creating architectural design artworks, appearance design is included in the key design scope to maximize aesthetic and artistic satisfaction, while emphasizing scientific nature to ensure that the building's appearance is compatible with the city.

### **3.5 Combination**

In contemporary design, designers can also combine and apply artistic elements from different ethnic groups to create design works with diverse cultural characteristics. Designers can creatively combine artistic elements from different ethnic groups through in-depth cultural capital and technological innovation<sup>[3]</sup>, creating design works with more unique charm and cultural value.

## **4. The Application of Ethnic Art Elements in Different Design Fields**

### **4.1 Fashion design**

Fashion designers from various countries have a strong sense of innovation and diverse styles. Combining cultural symbols and modern aesthetic concepts, incorporating ethnic elements into clothing is a major highlight. For example, on the basis of the Indian lotus pattern, designers can apply

it to dresses, evening wear and other occasions; based on Chinese dragon pattern, designers can apply it to the clothing such as Chinese costumes and Tang dresses.

#### **4.2 Interior decoration**

In the field of interior decoration, designers can apply different elements of ethnic art to walls, carpets, furniture and other decorative items to create interior environments with regional characteristics. For example, based on the Bolivian rainbow pattern, designers can apply it to home decoration such as walls and curtains, creating a vibrant and colorful indoor environment; based on the Maasai pattern in Kenya, designers can apply it to furniture decoration such as sofas and carpets to create a natural indoor environment.

#### **4.3 Graphic design**

In the field of graphic design, the reorganization of ethnic art elements not only enhances the artistic conception and connotation of graphic design works, but also has significance for the continuation and innovation of local culture. For example, applying Arabic style geometric patterns to trademark design can create designs full of mystery; applying the traditional red and yellow color elements from the surrounding areas of the Sahara Desert to poster design can create passionate and dynamic design works. At the same time, designers can also integrate artistic elements from different ethnic groups to create graphic design works with diverse cultural characteristics, reflecting the charm of human cultural diversity<sup>[4]</sup>.

#### **4.4 Jewelry Design**

Jewelry design cannot be separated from the traditional culture of the region, and ethnic cultural elements are integrated into jewelry design. The main patterns and decorations include: decorative patterns, totems, filigree craftsmanship, etc. For example, extracting geometric elements in the Sahel region of Africa and incorporating them into necklace design can create work full of primitive power and wildness; incorporating traditional Japanese cherry blossom elements into ring design can create beautiful and feminine designs. In addition, designers can also integrate artistic elements from different ethnic groups to create jewelry design works with diverse cultural characteristics, reflecting the diversity and fusion of world culture.

#### **4.5 Architectural design**

In architectural design, designers can apply different ethnic art elements to the design of building facades and decorations, creating architectural works with unique cultural styles. In Peru, South America, pattern elements from Inca culture are often applied to local architectural design. For example, geometric patterns in Inca culture can be applied to the design of walls and floors, as well as the decoration of columns, doors and windows. The application of these elements can help designers create architectural works with South American characteristics, while also making these works closer to local culture and traditions<sup>[5]</sup>.

### **5. Innovation of Ethnic Art Elements in Contemporary Design**

#### **5.1 Innovation in technological means**

##### **5.1.1 3D printing technology and ethnic art elements in fashion design**

Fashion design often reflects the inherent genes of a nation in contemporary fashion life<sup>[6]</sup>, and more and more designers are using 3D printing technology to apply ethnic art elements to fashion design. Designer Jenny Wu reassembled elements such as butterflies, flowers, and birds from classical Chinese elements, and used 3D printing technology to present the pattern in a three-dimensional effect, which creating a magnificent fashion with ethnic artistic elements. This design not only highlights the unique charm of national culture, but also injects more technological elements into fashion design.

##### **5.1.2 Augmented reality technology and ethnic art elements in decoration design**

Designer Yang Zhao utilizes augmented reality technology to incorporate elements elements of traditional Chinese calligraphy art features in the interior decorative works he designs, outputting them

to a dynamic virtual space through 3D image AR augmented reality technology, close to the concept of modern life<sup>[7]</sup>, where digital image technology, AR and VR technology are combined to create a decorative art space with a sense of three-dimensionality and immersion. Similarly, designer David Benjamin utilized virtual reality technology to combine elements of Native American tribal patterns with architectural forms, which creating architectural designs with a sense of modernity and technology.

## **5.2 Deepening cultural research**

In order to make better use of ethnic art elements for design innovation, designers need to conduct more in-depth cultural research.

### **5.2.1 Studying the Origin of Ethnic Art Elements**

Designers should pay attention to the origin and development history of ethnic art elements and their evolution in the historical context, which will help designers better understand the connotation of ethnic art elements and the spiritual values they contain, so that they can apply these elements more appropriately in design.

### **5.2.2 Interdisciplinary cooperation**

Designers can collaborate with interdisciplinary experts such as anthropologists, historians, and art historians to explore the application of ethnic art elements in contemporary design. Cross disciplinary research and cooperation can help enhance designers' understanding of ethnic art elements and promote design innovation.

### **5.2.3 Refine creative elements**

Designers should have the courage to explore the unknown and creative elements of national culture while respecting its traditions. Such excavation will help designers condense cultural symbols in the profound national culture, utilize innovative thinking, transform them into artistic achievements, and inject new vitality into their design works.

### **5.2.4 Emphasize local characteristics**

Designers should fully consider regional characteristics, understand the characteristics of ethnic cultures in each region, and study the application of ethnic art elements from different regions in design, which helps designers better enhance the uniqueness and value of artworks, pays tribute to local culture, and triggers resonance and emotional response.

### **5.2.5 Integrating a global perspective**

The traditional culture of a nation is the spiritual lifeline of a nation, and national identity is also a form of cultural identity to a certain extent. To cater to the development of new industries, new types of business, and new business models, an acceptable discourse system and expression should be adopted, which emphasizing harmony but not sameness, integration and symbiosis, tolerance and pluralism of thought to create artworks with international perspective.

Ethnic customs are an important part of the culture of all ethnic groups, which reflecting their habits, social customs and values. The dissemination of folk art should highlight its cultural ecology connotation and aesthetic ecological characteristics<sup>[8]</sup>. The origin of folk art is the internal foundation of its dissemination and development. First, it supports the cultural connotation of the full image of folk art, and second, it is the true manifestation of emotional thoughts in folk art symbols<sup>[9]</sup>. Designers can use traditional customs and festivals to extract creative elements and create works of art with more ethnic characteristics.

## **5.3 Exploration of integrated innovation**

In contemporary design, designers are constantly exploring the integration and innovation of Chinese and Western cultural elements.

### **5.3.1 Cultural Symbiosis Theory**

Cultural symbiosis theory emphasizes the complementation and interdependence between cultures. Designers can take advantage of differentiation to achieve complementary between different cultural elements. For example, the color matching and form design in a certain culture can be combined with

the materials and techniques commonly used by two or more different ethnic groups in the production process, thereby creating artworks with a sense of novelty and unique aesthetic value.

### ***5.3.2 Innovation driven theory***

In contrast to traditional creative approaches, innovation driven theory focuses on the challenges of current popular technologies, raw materials and artistic ideas. Designers can use emerging design platforms, digital technology and new friendly materials to achieve innovative transformation of traditional cultural elements. In addition, designers can also draw inspiration and learn skills from ethnic art elements among nations, achieving cultural integration and cross-border innovation.

### ***5.3.3 Aesthetic Theory of Art***

Art appreciation requires a unique aesthetic ability to perceive and experience, and artistic aesthetic theory emphasizes the diversity and variability of aesthetic concepts. In the design process, designers should pay attention to contemporary aesthetic trends and concepts to meet the aesthetic needs of different audiences. In addition, designers can also try to integrate concepts, achieving the inheritance and innovation of aesthetic values.

### ***5.3.4 Intercultural communication theories***

Everyone has its own unique philosophical thoughts and artistic aesthetic experiences, and artists create before their own cultural values, cross cultural communication is actually more like a vision, alertness, and consciousness. People tend to dilute the boundaries of the original culture, and gradually add new ethnic art elements. Designers should strengthen cultural exchange activities, link the global cultural diversity, and make artworks rich in cultural connotations.

Designer Chris Ran Lin presented a series of fashion pieces featuring cultural fusion innovations at London Fashion Week 2022. He integrated Chinese and Western cultural elements, and in one of his works, combining traditional embroidery, Western fabrics and tailoring to create fashion designs with a unique flavour and a more cultural elements into the fashion industry.

## ***5.4 Concern sustainable development***

As people's attention to sustainable development continues to increase, designers have also begun to integrate the concept of green and sustainable development into the application of ethnic art elements<sup>[10-11]</sup>. For example, designers focus on the Earth's living environment and living quality, incorporating energy conservation, emission reduction, and environmental protection concepts into their architectural designs, and then utilizing local renewable resources and architectural techniques to create architectural works that are more in line with local culture and climate.

## **6. Conclusion**

The handmade nature, physicality and face-to-face group interaction of ethnic art have led people to look back to tradition, and a return to tradition and vernacular art is a way of rebuilding cultural values to some extent. As cultural heritage and spiritual wealth, ethnic art elements have an important significance in terms of protection and heritage. When creating with ethnic art elements, designers should respect their historical and cultural background and incorporate the awareness of protection and inheritance. Secondly, as sustainable development has become a global consensus, designers should focus on environmental protection and sustainable design concepts, creating green, low-carbon and environmentally friendly artworks through the use of renewable materials and processes, and showcasing the characteristics and cultural values of ethnic art elements. In the future, it can be seen that the application and innovation of ethnic art elements in contemporary design will become more extensive and deeper in the context of global cultural diversity and cross-border integration. Designers should continue to delve into cultural research and combine technology and sustainable design concepts to create more distinctive and innovative design works.

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