

# RESEARCH ON THE APPLICATION OF CHINESE PAINTING ELEMENTS IN CONTEMPORARY FASHION DESIGN

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**Abstract:** *Clothing is a direct reflection of production level, an external expression of thoughts and emotions, and an important part of national culture. In recent years, with the improvement of the cultural confidence of the whole nation, the development trend of globalization and diversification, and the increasingly popular trend of oriental aesthetics, Chinese painting is quietly infiltrating into various design fields in various novel forms, and it also allows domestic and foreign designers to constantly consider the application of Chinese style elements in clothing design. Incorporating Chinese painting elements into clothing design can create a clothing design brand with Chinese characteristics, which is more conducive to promoting cultural inheritance and exchange. First, the significance of applying Chinese painting elements in modern clothing design is briefly outlined, and then the application of Chinese painting elements in modern clothing design is discussed from the constituent elements of clothing design. Finally, the theory is put into practice by designing and producing a series of clothing for display.*

**Keywords:** *Chinese painting, Modern fashion design, Composition elements, Traditional culture, Cultural integration*

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## Introduction

As more and more brands join the Chinese concept, Chinese style has gradually developed into a trend. In particular, Western designers prefer to use this way of expression to express their yearning and impression of Eastern culture. "Chinese style" has become a common word in the Western fashion dictionary. At present, the most common phenomenon in our design is that when it comes to design with national characteristics, everyone is accustomed to starting with Chinese elements. Under this way of thinking, there is a blind stacking and use of element symbols. The so-called national design is limited to expression and the pursuit of formal sense. Therefore, when element symbols are reused in large quantities, our national design has encountered a bottleneck in development. The reason why Chinese traditional culture has a strong vitality is that its cultural symbols are a perfect combination of form and connotation. In traditional Chinese culture, "expressing meaning" is far more important than "drawing shape". The key is to figure out what is eternal in the context of Chinese traditional culture, and more importantly, to uphold the essence of the Chinese traditional spirit that can be truly reflected behind the symbols.

Chinese painting has a long history. As a highly representative and national painting form in Chinese traditional culture, it reflects China's profound cultural heritage from spiritual connotation to expression. In-depth exploration of this Chinese cultural spirit can find a direction and starting point for designing clothing with Chinese charm from the inner fundamentals. Starting from the spirit of traditional culture rather than focusing on the superficial Chinese elements is not only a way to solve the stereotyped and formalized Chinese-style clothing caused by the blind abuse of Chinese elements in current clothing design, but also, using Chinese painting as a representative carrier, the intangible spiritual concept is summarized in a tangible form through the study of the spirit, techniques, and color of Chinese painting, and the laws and methods that can be applied to guide practice, providing reference and new thinking methods for the future Chinese-style clothing design.

## Problem statement

In contemporary fashion design, "Chinese style" is often approached through a superficial application of Chinese cultural symbols, resulting in a loss of the deeper meaning and authentic heritage these elements represent. This trend is characterized by an over-reliance on formalized motifs without a comprehensive understanding of their cultural significance, leading to a disconnect between traditional Chinese culture and modern interpretations. This lack of authenticity and depth, exacerbated by the popularization of Chinese motifs in Western design, has created a bottleneck in the development of meaningful, culturally resonant Chinese fashion. Chinese painting, an art form deeply rooted in expressing both spirit and meaning, offers a path forward. Unlike mere decorative symbols, Chinese painting focuses on capturing the essence behind visual forms, thus presenting an opportunity for fashion design to transcend superficiality. This research aims to explore how the principles of Chinese painting, including its symbolic, technical, and color-based elements, can guide the development of an authentic "Chinese style" in modern fashion. By focusing on the core cultural spirit rather than just visual aesthetics, this study seeks to create a method for fashion design that respects and preserves the cultural depth and enduring significance of Chinese heritage.

## Literature Review

### **Combination of blank space technique in Chinese painting and modern fashion design**

Researchers have extensively explored the application of traditional Chinese painting techniques in modern clothing design, especially the application of the "white space" technique. Literature shows that traditional aesthetics can not only enhance the visual effect in modern design, but also give clothing a deeper cultural connotation. In their research, researchers pointed out that the "white space" technique has been innovatively applied in modern clothing design through clothing cutting and layout (Zhou, 2020). In their research, researchers pointed out that design and art complement each other. The unique "white space" art technique of Chinese painting adds a valuable form of expression to the unique conception of clothing design, and provides novel creative thinking and expression techniques for clothing design (Mao, 2019). The essence of Chinese painting, "white space", accommodated the aesthetic psychology of many ethnic groups thousands of years ago, and used unique modeling techniques to show the deeper connotation of Chinese painting. Applying the "white space" art technique of Chinese painting to modern clothing design can not only create a kind of artistic conception for clothing, add more artistic charm to it, but also highlight the deep meaning of traditional Chinese aesthetics (Cai, 2024). There is no complete boundary between design and art. The two are interlinked and can complement each other. The "white space" technique of Chinese painting is the soul of Chinese painting. It embodies the unique aesthetic taste of the Chinese nation. Inheriting and innovating this artistic technique and applying it to modern textile and clothing design can add the unique imprint of the Chinese nation to textile and clothing design, create the artistic conception of textile and clothing, and enhance the market competitiveness of clothing products (Zhang Feng, 2019).

### **Application and innovation of Chinese elements in clothing design**

Many papers have explored the specific application of Chinese cultural elements, especially traditional patterns and colors, in modern clothing design. Such studies usually focus on how these elements can adapt to the needs of contemporary fashion while retaining cultural symbolic meanings. Researchers have proposed that by incorporating traditional Chinese elements into design, the cultural expression and market appeal of clothing can be effectively enhanced. Although clothing is an essential basic material in people's daily lives, clothing design is essentially a form of art design, because clothing not only has the function of covering the body and keeping warm, but is also a visual art that conveys the wearer's aesthetics and style through vision, and can even reflect the wearer's cultural charm and personality characteristics (Wang, 2022). Therefore, when designing clothing, relevant designers should pay attention to the reasonable application of Chinese painting elements, compare the composition, color, pattern and artistic conception of Chinese painting elements, and reflect the elements of Chinese painting in clothing through hand-painting and embroidery, so as to enhance the artistic expression and cultural connotation of clothing design (Hou, 2022b).

my country's modern fashion design started relatively late, lacking both design theory and design experience, and fashion design works remain at the stage of imitation and reference. In this case, it is very important to make full use of the traditional culture of the Chinese nation to shape a unique Chinese modern clothing style. By exploring the traditional culture to establish the relationship between traditional art forms and fashion design, fashion design works can be full of Chinese artistic charm (Wang, 2023). Chinese painting is a treasure of the traditional culture of the Chinese nation, with a wide range of themes, rich content, and very diverse forms

of expression. At the same time, it reveals profound oriental artistic characteristics, which cannot be replaced by other painting forms. The application of Chinese painting elements in fashion design uses modern design language to show traditional art forms, so that clothing can have traditional cultural characteristics and modern aesthetic forms, and use clothing as a carrier to spread the traditional art culture of the Chinese nation, while also providing a source of inspiration for modern fashion design(Ren, 2022).

### **Research and analysis of specific application cases**

Specific case studies explore the application of Chinese cultural and artistic elements in modern clothing projects. Analyze the effects of these integrations in the fashion industry and market feedback. The study and analysis of specific application cases occupy an important position in the relevant literature. These studies usually use detailed case analysis to deeply explore the actual application effects of Chinese cultural elements in specific clothing design projects. Such studies not only focus on how traditional art elements are integrated into modern clothing design, but also examine the comprehensive impact of these elements on design aesthetics, brand value and market response(Liang, 2023). By analyzing Chinese painting elements in custom clothing design, Li Yang reveals the application potential of traditional art in modern high-end fashion and emphasizes how this cross-cultural integration enhances the uniqueness and competitiveness of clothing. In addition, these studies often involve consumers' acceptance of traditional cultural elements in fashion products, and how to improve market recognition through design innovation, thereby promoting the influence of traditional Chinese art on the global fashion stage(Li, 2012).

The photo album released by TFBOYS for its tenth anniversary some time ago borrowed traditional ink painting. The three of them stood in front of a white wall, and the traces of ink on the wall stretched out, blurring the outline of time, triggering everyone's memories of ten years of youth. Among them, Wang Yuan wore a black and white tie-dyed suit, which seemed to be made by splashing ink, further highlighting the theme of the blockbuster.



**Figure 1: TF boys**

Source: Marie Claire Magazine

At the China International Fashion Week, many domestic designer brands have emerged, and designers are also exploring how to integrate traditional ink art into modern clothing design. They use ink printing and dyeing to present ethnic scenes on fabrics; or use ink splashing techniques to create a highly tense visual impact; or borrow the roundness and elegance of "Wu Dai Dang Feng" in ink painting to reconstruct clothing tailoring and create a vivid charm unique to the East, allowing us to see the various possibilities of integrating ink into fashion.



**Figure 2: Liang Yunxia SS22 Series**

Source: China Fashion Week

## Elements

### Style

Ink painting, only when the spirit and charm are combined can it be vivid. Clothing design is both practical and artistic, and it must also show the beauty of spirit and charm. When designing clothing, the first thing to do is to determine the style: determine the style and charm of the clothing according to the different identities, preferences or personalities of the wearers, whether it is gorgeous or noble, sweet or cold, mature or lively; then determine the style, color, fabric, craftsmanship, decoration, etc. according to the set style (Liu Xin, 2016). Only by accurately positioning can the style and charm of clothing be determined, so that the clothing conforms to its due artistry and the temperament of the wearer. At the same time, the vitality and creativity of the designer are also reflected in the style positioning of the clothing, which also represents the designer's taste and charm.

### Structure

The manipulation of lines has led to the evolution of clothing structure. "Lines" have important value in clothing modeling. They can form a variety of forms, and can also serve as decoration and segmentation forms; they can be flexibly shaped according to people's structures, and can also change the general modeling characteristics of the human body; they play a leading role in clothing modeling and structure. Just like ink painting pays attention to the use of bones. From ancient times to the present, different clothing styles in different eras, with different segmentation and craftsmanship of "lines", show completely different decorative styles and colorful aesthetic tastes and artistic rhythms. In modern clothing, due to the obvious personality

of structural lines and dividing lines and good wearing effects, their use in clothing design and craftsmanship is unique(Tong, 2022).

### **Contour modeling**

The original meaning of silhouette is image, silhouette, silhouette, outline, and in clothing design, it is extended to mean appearance, outer contour line, and overall shape. In ink painting, the shape of an object is depicted in a general way. Similarly, clothing silhouette is the first element to reflect the subject and is people's first impression of clothing. Clothing silhouettes are of a wide variety and the most common four basic shapes are A, H, X, and Y. Different silhouettes indicate the fashion trend of clothing, and also determine the choice of clothing materials and the level of production technology(Hou, 2022a).

### **Color**

Ink painting pays attention to the techniques of using ink and changing the ink color. The rich and varied ink colors, whether thick or thin, sparse or dense, produce a colorful picture effect on the drawing paper. Color has its own hue, brightness, and purity(Bai, 2023). Various colors form tones and color properties with each other, giving people different sensory tendencies. The color of clothing is the most appealing artistic factor in design, which is not only reflected in the color pattern of the clothing material itself, but also in its unique color function, color matching basis, color matching organization rules, color imagery, etc.

### **Clothing material application**

In the theory of ink painting, black ink and colored ink belong to "color", and the whiteness of white drawing paper itself also belongs to "color". Therefore, painters pay special attention to the treatment of blank spaces in the painting. The painter uses the image correspondence generated by the psychological resonance of the viewer to make the blank space tangible. Clothing also has the effect of "leaving blank space". In addition to the patterns of the fabric itself, the hollow patterns on the fabric, the splicing effects of different fabrics and the partial exposure of the style and shape all reflect the "business position" in the clothing, thus giving people unlimited imagination space, winning more with less, and being concise and concise. Through this virtual and real treatment, the artistic conception and taste of the clothing are deepened(Cai Xiaosi, 2022).

### **Design techniques**

Clothing belongs to both the field of material culture and the category of spiritual culture. It is a combination of art and technology, a fusion of science and art, and a unity of practicality and aesthetics. In order to make the clothing effect more perfect, the design techniques in clothing are becoming more and more diverse(Lei, 2013). A simple classification includes research method, exaggeration method, reverse method, transfer method, change method, addition and deletion method, combination method, association method, pursuit method, overall method, local method, limitation method, transfer method, derivation method, fun method, etc. No matter which method is used, it is necessary to study the excellent functions, forms, structures, colors and other characteristics of existing things, use generalization or typical methods to sublimate and artistically process the forms of existing things, and selectively use these principles and characteristics in the design process for design.

### **Process Technology**

Ink art, as the name implies, is created with water and ink. In addition to traditional hand-painting on fabrics, the ink elements reflected in clothing design can also be completed by tie-

dyeing, batik, hanging dyeing, computer printing and dyeing, laser, fabric compounding, weaving and embroidery, etc., so that clothing fabrics have the hazy beauty of ink charm, with both the thick feeling of ink and the characteristics of modern beauty of change and flow (Cheng Xinyue, 2023). It is based on the tradition of national culture and conforms to the aesthetic image of modern clothing design. In addition, the use of digital technology reorganizes and designs the traditional ink painting from the perspective of shape, structure, color, texture and the decorative patterns formed, so that the embodiment of ink elements in clothing design breaks through the limitations of traditional, classic craftsmanship and materials, and carries out modern pattern design, which can be said to be "keeping pace with the times", with certain theoretical research value and strong practical application.

### **Practice**

In the design practice part of this study, by actually making a series of clothes, we deeply explore and verify the feasibility of applying Chinese painting elements in contemporary clothing design and the artistic effects they can show. The design inspiration comes from the unique aesthetics of traditional Chinese ink painting, especially the classic techniques of "white space" and "black and white contrast". This practice aims to show the unique aesthetic value of Chinese painting by integrating these traditional art elements into modern clothing design, and to find new ways of expression in the fashion industry.

### **Design Concept**

The core concept of this design is to combine the essence of Chinese painting with modern fashion design, and to convey the profound connotation of Chinese traditional culture through the formal language of clothing. In the design, we focus on the depiction of natural landscapes in Chinese paintings, as well as the philosophical ideas derived from them, such as the unity of man and nature, and the harmonious coexistence of nature and humanity. These ideas are expressed through simple and expressive clothing design, allowing the wearer to feel the inner spirit of Chinese traditional culture in daily life.

### **Design and production process**

The design and production process of this series of clothing revolves around the following key elements:

**Material selection:** In order to faithfully reproduce the texture and style of ink painting, natural cotton and linen materials were selected. This material not only conveys the concept of advocating nature and returning to nature in traditional Chinese culture, but also gives the clothing a profound cultural heritage through its unique texture and texture. At the same time, the selection of cotton and linen materials also takes into account the comfort and practicality of the clothing, which meets the wearing needs of modern consumers.

**Pattern design:** In pattern design, we selected natural landscape elements such as mountains, rivers, and trees in Chinese paintings, and through innovative printing and dyeing technology, we finely integrated these patterns into various parts of the clothing to form a layered visual effect. This design not only presents the art of leaving blank space in Chinese paintings, but also reflects the ductility of space and the harmonious beauty of nature through the arrangement of patterns.

**Color application:** In terms of color design, the entire series is dominated by black, white, and gray, supplemented by a small amount of off-white. This simple color combination not only

retains the traditional charm of Chinese paintings, but also fits the pursuit of simple aesthetics in modern clothing design. Through the changes in the depth of colors, the design also cleverly expresses the artistic effect of appropriate shades in Chinese paintings, making the overall clothing present a quiet and elegant temperament. Zhuangzi advocates "simple and mysterious" for colors and opposes gorgeous splendor. "Laozi" said: "Tao gives birth to one, one gives birth to two, two gives birth to three, and three gives birth to all things. All things bear yin and embrace yang, and the rush of qi is for harmony." Reflected in the painting, the black and white colors left on the paper have infinite charm. The combination of black and white can produce extremely rich changes, which is impossible with other colors.

**Clothing structure:** In the design of clothing structure, we combine the loose silhouette of traditional Chinese clothing with modern tailoring techniques. The loose design not only meets the comfort requirements of traditional clothing, but also enhances the layering and three-dimensional sense of clothing. At the same time, the use of modern tailoring technology ensures the fashion sense and functionality of clothing, so that it can not only inherit traditions, but also adapt to the current trend needs.

### Design effect and display

After the design was completed and carefully made, we actually displayed this series of clothing. During the display, these clothes successfully combined the profound aesthetics of Chinese painting elements with the simple style of modern fashion through their unique structural design and pattern processing. The positive feedback from the audience showed that this design series not only has a strong cultural recognition visually, but also excels in the practicality and comfort of clothing. Through the display, we verified the application potential of Chinese painting elements in modern clothing design and accumulated valuable practical experience for future creation.



**Figure 3: Practice products**

Source: Author



### Practice Summary

This design practice fully verifies the feasibility and innovation of Chinese painting elements in modern fashion design. Through the cross-border integration of Chinese painting techniques and modern fashion design, it not only enriches the cultural connotation of contemporary clothing, but also opens up a new path for the modern expression of traditional art. This practical achievement shows that traditional cultural elements still have strong vitality and innovation potential in the context of globalization. In future design exploration, it is still necessary to further study and expand the diversified application of different Chinese painting techniques in fashion design, and promote the widespread dissemination and sustainable development of Chinese traditional culture on the international fashion stage.

### Conclusion

The unique expression of ink painting is first reflected in the simple formal language unique to ink painting, that is, the simple image of "counting white as black". The simple picture of ink painting does not mean simplicity, but the image is simple and the meaning is rich. The beauty lies in expressing the most information with very few elements. The richness and diversity of ink language, whether from the superficial ink traces or the deeper ink artistic conception, there are many elements worth using in clothing design. With the deepening of understanding of ink painting and the appreciation of the works of ink painting masters such as Wu Guanzhong, Gu Wenda, and Xu Bing, I realize that the value of ink painting lies in its charm. Ink painting pays attention to "the elephant is invisible", "similar and dissimilar", and magnificent momentum, giving people a poetic artistic conception, showing the elegant taste and humanistic feelings of traditional Chinese culture. Indeed, the beauty of ink painting is varied and accumulated. The use of ink is clean and neat, free and easy. However, this is only the most superficial element of ink painting. Try to express a deeper understanding of ink elements on clothing.

As an art form, ink painting has its own informal style and all-embracing openness. The design abandons the choice of fabric patterns for traditional ink painting clothing, and only uses black and white. By changing the texture and contrast of the fabric, it pursues the eternal charm of ink painting elements in the design. Strive to show the sense of space, the relationship between the virtual and the real, and the relationship between yin and yang.

The ink painting elements have their unique, concise, implicit, and transcendent forms of expression, full of dialectical philosophy, reflecting a thinking interest that extends "meaning" with "form", and also confirms the inherent cultivation, character and integrity of the Chinese nation. The harmonious unity of "form" and "meaning" constitutes the artistic conception in the artwork. Incorporating ink painting elements into clothing in clothing design is like giving the designer an artistic soul, showing a moving gallery, abstract senses, and passionate presentation on clothing. It seems that you can feel the ink painting in the ink painting, interpreting infinite power.

The use of ink and wash elements in clothing also has its own language. By grasping the aesthetic imagery of ink and wash elements, combining them with clothing elements, and conducting comprehensive creation from the perspective of the times, the designed works can naturally and unpretentiously reveal the charm of oriental culture, thus being both national and global.

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