

APPLICATION AND INNOVATION OF CLOUD SHOULDER ART IN MODERN BAG DESIGN

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ABSTRACT. Cloud Shoulder, as an important decorative element in traditional clothing of the Ming and Qing dynasties, holds rich cultural connotations and unique aesthetic value. This study explores the application and innovation of Cloud Shoulder art in modern bag design. Through an in-depth analysis of the historical background, design features, and cultural symbols of Cloud Shoulder, the study investigates its creative application in modern bag design. Specific cases of using Cloud Shoulder elements in contemporary bag designs are selected to analyze their design concepts, implementation methods, and market feedback, summarizing the application characteristics and innovative methods of Cloud Shoulder in modern design. Based on the research and analysis of Cloud Shoulder elements, modern bag design practices are conducted to explore innovative application methods of Cloud Shoulder in contemporary design. The results show that Cloud Shoulder art in modern bag design can not only inherit and promote traditional culture but also inject new inspiration and vitality into modern design, enhancing the aesthetic value and market competitiveness of bags.

KEYWORDS: cloud shoulder art, modern bag design, cultural inheritance, design innovation, aesthetic value

APLICAREA ȘI INOVAREA ARTEI GULERULUI ORNAMENTAL ÎN DESIGNUL GENȚILOR MODERNE

REZUMAT. Gulerul ornamental, ca element decorativ important în îmbrăcămintea tradițională din dinastiile Ming și Qing, deține conotații culturale bogate și o valoare estetică unică. Acest studiu explorează aplicarea și inovarea artei gulerului ornamental în designul genților moderne. Printr-o analiză aprofundată a contextului istoric, a caracteristicilor de design și a simbolurilor culturale ale gulerului ornamental, studiul investighează aplicarea sa creativă în designul genților moderne. Sunt selectate cazuri specifice de utilizare a elementelor gulerului ornamental în designul contemporan de genți pentru a analiza conceptele de design ale acestora, metodele de implementare și feedback-ul pieței, rezumând caracteristicile de aplicare și metodele inovatoare ale gulerului ornamental în designul modern. Pe baza cercetării și analizei elementelor gulerului ornamental, se dezvoltă practici moderne de design al genților pentru a explora metode inovatoare de aplicare a gulerului ornamental în designul contemporan. Rezultatele arată că arta gulerului ornamental în designul genților moderne poate nu doar să ducă mai departe și să promoveze cultura tradițională, dar și să aducă o nouă inspirație și vitalitate în designul modern, sporind valoarea estetică și competitivitatea pe piață a genților.

CUVINTE CHEIE: guler ornamental, designul genților moderne, moștenire culturală, inovație în design, valoare estetică

APPLICATION ET INNOVATION DE L'ART DU COL ORNEMENTAL DANS LA CONCEPTION DE SACS MODERNES

RÉSUMÉ. Le col ornamental, en tant qu'élément décoratif important dans les vêtements traditionnels des dynasties Ming et Qing, possède de riches connotations culturelles et une valeur esthétique unique. Cette étude explore l'application et l'innovation de l'art du col ornamental dans la conception de sacs modernes. À travers une analyse approfondie du contexte historique, des caractéristiques de conception et des symboles culturels du col ornamental, l'étude examine son application créative dans la conception de sacs modernes. Des cas spécifiques d'utilisation d'éléments du col ornamental dans les conceptions contemporaines de sacs sont sélectionnés pour analyser leurs concepts de conception, méthodes de mise en œuvre et retours du marché, résumant les caractéristiques d'application et les méthodes innovantes du col ornamental dans le design moderne. Sur la base de la recherche et de l'analyse des éléments du col ornamental, des pratiques de conception de sacs modernes sont menées pour explorer des méthodes d'application innovantes du col ornamental dans le design contemporain. Les résultats montrent que l'art du col ornamental dans la conception moderne de sacs peut non seulement faire avancer et promouvoir la culture traditionnelle, mais aussi apporter une nouvelle inspiration et vitalité dans le design moderne, améliorant la valeur esthétique et la compétitivité sur le marché des sacs.

MOTS CLÉS : art du col ornamental, conception de sacs modernes, héritage culturel, innovation en design, valeur esthétique

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INTRODUCTION

Cloud Shoulder represents a distinctive decorative tradition from Ming and Qing dynasty clothing, embodying sophisticated craftsmanship alongside profound cultural symbolism [1]. This ornamental element reflects the aesthetic philosophies and social values of its historical period while demonstrating exceptional artisanal skill [2]. Contemporary design practice increasingly recognizes the transformative potential of traditional cultural elements, with Cloud Shoulder emerging as a compelling case study for cultural preservation through design innovation [3].

The innovative integration of Cloud Shoulder art into contemporary bag design holds significant practical implications. Within the framework of cultural confidence, the modern transformation of traditional cultural elements has emerged as a vital pathway for design innovation. As one of the most representative decorative elements from the Ming and Qing periods, Cloud Shoulder offers distinctive formal language and abundant creative resources for modern bag design. Current bag markets face severe homogenization challenges, while consumer demand increasingly favors products with cultural depth and personalized characteristics. The incorporation of Cloud Shoulder elements effectively enhances product differentiation and competitive advantages, while facilitating the living transmission of traditional culture through daily-use carriers.

This research employs a comprehensive methodology involving examination of historical literature, academic papers, and design works to understand Cloud Shoulder's origins and evolution, combined with case study analysis of contemporary applications in modern bag design. The study investigates design concepts, implementation approaches, and market responses to establish methodological frameworks for contemporary designers. Through creative practice and theoretical analysis, this research explores the form, color, pattern, and craftsmanship characteristics of Cloud Shoulder, discussing its

unique charm in design expression, cultural inheritance, and market competitiveness while establishing foundations for cultural heritage integration in modern product development.

BACKGROUND RESEARCH

Historical and Cultural Background of Cloud Shoulder

Historically, Cloud Shoulder achieved prominence during the Ming and Qing dynasties, functioning as both aesthetic enhancement and social signifier [4]. Characterized by elaborate embroidery and complex patterning, these shawl-like accessories were primarily worn by aristocratic women and wealthy households, serving as markers of status and cultural refinement. The design of Cloud Shoulder was often inspired by clouds in nature and traditional auspicious motifs, symbolizing beauty and harmony [5].

In the Ming and Qing periods, Cloud Shoulder was not just an aesthetic symbol but also held social and cultural significance. For instance, its complex patterns and fine craftsmanship often represented the wearer's status and identity, reflecting the hierarchical and aesthetic values of the time. Moreover, Cloud Shoulder's usage varied across different occasions and seasons, highlighting its importance in traditional rituals and cultural practices.

Application of Traditional Cloud Shoulder Elements in Modern Design

With the deepening of globalization and cultural exchange, the application of traditional cultural elements in modern design has gained increasing attention [6]. Designers are blending traditional elements with contemporary design concepts to create unique styles. This fusion not only helps in preserving and promoting traditional culture but also brings new vitality and creativity to modern design [7].

In contemporary Cloud Shoulder design applications, these elements are predominantly utilized in costume design for television dramas, such as "Empresses in the

Palace” and “Story of Yanxi Palace,” where their distinctive stylistic features have garnered widespread public appreciation. Domestic designers have conducted extensive theoretical and applied research on Cloud Shoulder design. For instance, Liang Hui'e and Liu Shui's study “The Meaning of Cloud Shoulder Form and Color and Its Innovative Application in Modern Women's Wear” explores the formal and chromatic significance of Cloud Shoulder, opening new developmental spaces for modern fashion design through borrowing its structural forms and color schemes to explore novel design methodologies [8]. Shi Jianping and Wang Xuan's article “Application of Traditional Cloud Shoulder Costume Art and Its Decorative Aesthetic Significance” investigates traditional Cloud Shoulder forms and integrates traditional Cloud Shoulder art into modern garments such as qipao, evening gowns, and woolen sweaters, creating innovative clothing items that demonstrate Cloud Shoulder's artistic value and unique creative appeal in contemporary fashion [9]. Pan Jianhua considers the four-part Ruyi style and four-square willow leaf style as typical forms, achieving fusion of ceremonial significance and decorative art through multi-layered structure and tailoring [10]. Liu Anqi provides an overview of the artistic characteristics of Cloud Shoulder patterns, discussing application principles and specific practices of Cloud Shoulder patterns in modern product packaging design, aiming to provide systematic theoretical references for contemporary transformation of traditional patterns [11]. Li Jingtong develops a “pattern extraction—symbolic transformation—cultural creative application” pathway for Qing dynasty Cloud Shoulder cultural creative development from a semiotic perspective, providing innovative approaches for the living heritage of Cloud Shoulder culture [12]. Li *et al.* conducted investigation, analysis, and synthesis of Qing dynasty Cloud Shoulder artifacts and related materials housed in the Soochow University Museum. By integrating interdisciplinary approaches from history, sociology, folklore, and art studies, they examined and summarized the morphological evolution,

characteristic classifications, and folkloric symbolism of “Ruyi Cloud” patterns in Cloud Shoulder designs [13]. While theoretical research on Cloud Shoulder elements in international academia remains relatively weak, foreign designers' attention to, application of, and creative reconstruction of Chinese Cloud Shoulder in fashion design fields is quite prevalent. For example, in the film “Alice Through the Looking Glass,” the protagonist Alice wears Chinese-style costumes, with the most notable feature being the towering Cloud Shoulder design on both sides, demonstrating the gradually increasing popularity trend of Cloud Shoulder elements in modern fashion and cinema. Gucci's 2017 design combined Chinese Ming and Qing Cloud Shoulder elements with formal gowns, incorporating Chinese embroidery and dragon patterns in an East-West fusion. Burberry's “Cape Reimagined” exhibition toured multiple cities worldwide, where capes revealed traces of mixed-linked Ming and Qing Cloud Shoulder styles, with layered willow leaf-shaped Ming and Qing Cloud Shoulder elements fully expressing the layered style. Burberry combined feathers, knitwear, and lace elements with Ming and Qing Cloud Shoulder elements using deconstructive techniques, making the exhibits appear rich and full. Valentino's 2025 Spring/Summer Haute Couture collection employed the “four-square willow leaf style” Cloud Shoulder form, with color schemes extracted from traditional Cloud Shoulder, featuring varying numbers of willow leaf shapes—eight, sixteen, eighteen—arranged radially at the shoulders and waist, symbolizing a garden full of spring colors and eternal vitality. In summary, as a representative element of Chinese aesthetics, Cloud Shoulder is increasingly integrated into contemporary design practices to meet diversified aesthetic demands. Currently, domestic and international applications of Cloud Shoulder elements primarily concentrate in clothing, jewelry, packaging, and cultural creative product fields, with design focus largely remaining on borrowing its morphological characteristics, while in-depth extraction and application of its rich patterns remain relatively insufficient. Particularly in

fashion bag design, the utilization of Cloud Shoulder patterns is even rarer. This reveals that research and application of Cloud Shoulder patterns in the bag design field harbors vast innovative space and developmental potential.

Precedents of Cloud Shoulder in Modern Design

The Cloud Shoulder, as a representative traditional element, has many successful applications in modern design. For example, some designers incorporate Cloud Shoulder patterns and structures into contemporary clothing, accessories, and bag designs. Through innovative design techniques and modern production processes, they breathe new life and fashion into Cloud Shoulder elements [14].

Specific cases include certain fashion brands that integrate Cloud Shoulder elements into their product lines. These brands use Cloud Shoulder curves and embroidered patterns in the design of shoulders or collars in clothing, retaining the essence of traditional elements while enhancing the simplicity and fashion sense of modern design. Additionally, some designers reinterpret and combine Cloud Shoulder patterns, applying them to modern bag designs to create products with unique styles and cultural connotations.

These precedents demonstrate that Cloud Shoulder elements can successfully bridge historical aesthetics with contemporary market demands, creating products that resonate with both cultural significance and modern functionality. This design approach meets consumers' dual demands for traditional culture and modern fashion, providing designers with abundant creative inspiration and possibilities.

Therefore, the historical and cultural background of Ming and Qing Cloud Shoulders, the application of traditional elements in modern design, and the precedents and innovations of Cloud Shoulder in modern design provide an important theoretical foundation and practical reference for this study. By reviewing and analyzing these literatures, this study will further explore the specific applications and innovative strategies

of Cloud Shoulder elements in modern bag design.

ANALYSIS OF CLOUD SHOULDER CHARACTERISTICS

As a significant decorative element in Ming and Qing dynasty garments, Cloud Shoulder's design characteristics are primarily manifested in its form, color, patterns, and craftsmanship. The structural styles of Cloud Shoulders are diverse, commonly including single-piece, layered, linked, and mixed types, with each style demonstrating distinct aesthetic features and craftsmanship levels. Scholars have categorized them into several common types based on their structural characteristics and compositional methods [15-16].

Form and Structure of Cloud Shoulder

Single-piece: This represents the earliest and most straightforward style of Cloud Shoulder, crafted from a single piece of fabric with simple yet elegant shapes that conform to the human body [17]. Despite its simple structure, the design often achieves sophistication and elegance through embroidery and patterns.

Layered: Constructed from multiple fabric layers stacked together, following the principle of bottom-to-top and large-to-small arrangement [18]. Layered Cloud Shoulders appear more substantial and luxurious, with more rhythmic color combinations, typically employing traditional five-color schemes for striking visual effects.

Linked: Compared to the overall stacking of layered styles, linked Cloud Shoulders feature more intricate structures. They are formed by connecting pre-cut independent shapes through beading, silk cords, or ingenious sewing techniques [19]. This structure often creates rich openwork effects, with each independent element requiring extremely delicate craftsmanship, and the combination demanding overall harmony and unity, presenting a transparent and dynamic aesthetic appeal.

Mixed: This style integrates multiple design elements and patterns together,

displaying rich variations and diversified effects [20]. Its design pursues abundant changes and diversified visual effects, innovatively combining different forms, patterns, and even craftsmanship techniques to satisfy more varied aesthetic demands, reflecting ancient artisans' active exploration and inclusiveness toward formal beauty.

Color and Patterns of Cloud Shoulder

The color design of "Cloud Shoulder" is rich in traditional Chinese aesthetic taste, typically using classic colors such as white, green, red, black, and yellow. Each color has specific meanings; for example, white represents purity, green symbolizes freshness, and red signifies passion. These color combinations not only produce a strong visual impact but also embody deep cultural connotations. Table 1 establishes a Cloud Shoulder color system based on traditional

Chinese Five Elements theory. In ancient China, there existed four great divine beings, also known as the Four Symbols (White Tiger, Azure Dragon, Black Tortoise, and Vermilion Bird), which originated from ancient stellar worship practices. These four mythical creatures were integrated with the Five Elements and directional orientations, represented by distinct colors: eastern azure symbolizing Wood, western white representing Metal, southern vermilion denoting Fire, northern black signifying Water, and central yellow embodying Earth, each with corresponding symbolic associations. Ancient people expressed emotions and preferences through these colors while facilitating their application across different occasions. This color system not only possesses profound cultural connotations but also provides scientific color coordination principles for contemporary bag design.







Table 1: Cloud Shoulder Colors and Their Meanings

| Four Symbols | Yin-Yang and Five Elements | Traditional Five Colors | Modern Colors | Meaning |
|------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|---------------|-----------------------|
| White Tiger (West) | Metal | White | White | Purity, Serenity |
| Azure Dragon (East) | Wood | Green | Blue | Freshness, Liveliness |
| Black Tortoise (North) | Water | Black | Black | Depth, Tranquility |
| Vermilion Bird (South) | Fire | Red | Red | Passion, Enthusiasm |
| Center | Earth | Yellow | Yellow | Harmony, Stability |

In terms of patterns, Cloud Shoulder designs include floral patterns, mythical animals, and traditional folk stories, each representing people's wishes for a good life [21]. For example, plum blossoms in floral patterns represent noble character, and pomegranates symbolize fertility and

prosperity; dragons in mythical animal patterns symbolize power and wisdom, while phoenixes represent auspiciousness and nobility; traditional folk story patterns reflect historical tales and daily life scenes, rich in cultural symbolism. The types of Cloud Shoulder patterns are shown in Table 2.

Table 2: Types of Cloud Shoulder Patterns
(Source: Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology Museum of Ethnic Costumes)

| Pattern Type | Pattern Content | Pattern Image |
|------------------------|---|---|
| Mythical Animal | The upper layer features deep red satin with flat embroidery, gold stitching, and seed stitching of butterflies and flowers. |  |
| Mythical Animal | The visual center features an immortal sitting on a cloud releasing butterflies, with Wan symbols and domestic birds on the embroidery. |  |
| Floral | Features stone green, green, and red colors, with embroidered butterflies, crickets, plum blossoms, chrysanthemums, bamboo, interlaced with willow leaves and semi-Ruyi patterns. |  |
| Floral | White satin with embroidered birds and flowers using flat embroidery techniques, adorned with gold stitching in the form of a four-part Ruyi Cloud Shoulder. |  |
| Floral | Willow leaf patterns, green satin with bird and flower patterns, golden toad on a lotus leaf, butterflies flying among the flowers. |  |
| Traditional Folk Story | Depicts scenes of traditional weaving work, decorated with figures and courtyards, primarily using white satin. |  |

The Cultural Symbolism and Significance of Cloud Shoulder

In the Ming and Qing dynasties, Cloud Shoulder served as both an aesthetic symbol and a representation of ritual and status. Its

complex patterns and fine craftsmanship signified the wearer’s identity and social standing, reflecting the hierarchical views and aesthetic preferences of the era. During ceremonies such as weddings, Cloud Shoulder functioned as an important decoration,

expressing aspirations for marital bliss while showcasing noble status [22].

As a representative of traditional culture, Cloud Shoulder embodies profound aesthetic and cultural value. Beyond being mere clothing accessories, these intricate artworks demonstrate exceptional craftsmanship through their ingenious structural designs and sophisticated embroidery techniques. The unique characteristics of Ming and Qing Cloud Shoulder—from their distinctive forms to elaborate patterns—represent the profound heritage of Chinese traditional clothing culture, providing contemporary designers with abundant inspiration for promoting cultural inheritance and innovation in modern design.

CASE STUDIES OF CLOUD SHOULDER

Cloud Shoulder Elements in Scarf Design

Cloud Shoulder art has been widely and deeply applied in scarf design, especially in the integration into scarves, clothing, and jewelry, showcasing its unique aesthetic charm and artistic value. It is not only an aesthetic

application but also a transmission of traditional culture.

In scarf design, the color combinations and composition forms of Cloud Shoulder become sources of inspiration. The pattern designs mainly derive from figures, animals, plants, landscapes, etc.; by combining Cloud Shoulder patterns and colors with textile techniques, designers skillfully incorporate traditional Cloud Shoulder elements into scarf designs [23]. For instance, the EORILKS brand, dedicated to merging scarf design with Chinese culture, has a “Colorful Cloud Shoulder” series of scarves (see Figure 1). The inspiration comes from Cloud Shoulder art, extracting Ruyi cloud patterns and Cloud Shoulder tassel elements, depicting a series of elements such as chrysanthemums, tassels, butterflies, and orchids, and adopting a free composition form. This free arrangement emphasizes the direction and density of patterns and the rhythm of the design, providing a visual impact different from traditional designs (see Figure 2). In terms of color design, similar colors and complementary colors are used, with strong contrasts to stimulate the visual effects of consumers and promote consumption.

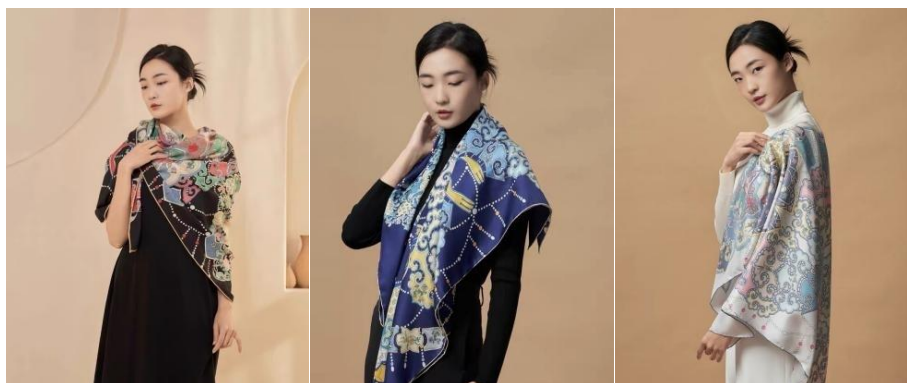


Figure 1. EORILKS “Colorful Cloud Shoulder” Series Scarf (Source: Official brand website)



Figure 2. EORILKS Design Pattern (Source: Official brand website)

Cloud Shoulder Elements in Clothing Design



Figure 3. Lafemme Cloud Shoulder Women's Dress (Source: Lafemme Official website)

In the 2019 Lafemme women's clothing series, a fashion show named "Forbidden City" was held to commemorate the 600th anniversary of the Forbidden City (see Figure 3). Part of the design drew inspiration from the Cloud Shoulder, using its overall shape in the silhouette and incorporating two tassels. The main color was chosen to be fungus purple, with gold accents, giving a romantic and elegant feel. The purple color also highlights the dignified and grand sense conveyed by the Cloud Shoulder. The fabric used mesh to create a four-part Ruyi pattern, with gold embroidery embellishing floral and plant motifs, perfectly blending the Cloud Shoulder with modern clothing, creating a collision of ancient and modern aesthetics.

Cloud Shoulder elements in clothing design bring a unique fashion language to the fashion industry. Designers skillfully use Cloud Shoulder designs on the shoulders or collars of garments, creating unique contours and a sense of line, making the clothing more three-

dimensional and artistic. This innovative design approach not only emphasizes comfort but also highlights the design layers of the clothing. With the rise of the "New Chinese Style" in fashion, many niche brands have vividly interpreted the integration of Cloud Shoulder art in modern clothing design.

For example, in the 2024 spring "Oriental Charm" New Chinese Functional Wind Sports Suit by YUEXI (see Figure 4), Cloud Shoulder art with an oriental freehand style is integrated into the sports suit, with neat and smooth shoulder lines paired with grey and white edge decorations. The development of Cloud Shoulder art in modern clothing design will become more diverse and creative, presenting a unique fashion atmosphere. TELL THE TRUTH Tai Zhen innovatively expresses Cloud Shoulder art with sequin tassels, featuring light purple ocean-themed embroidery on transparent white fabric, with sequin tassels around the edges. The unique use of colors and materials gives a cool and ethereal feel.



Figure 4. YUEXI 2024 Spring "Oriental Charm" New Chinese Functional Wind Sports Suit (Source: Official brand Little Red Book account)

Cloud Shoulder Elements in Jewelry Design

Cloud Shoulder elements in jewelry design bring a blend of classical and modern aesthetics to the pieces. Jewelry designers incorporate Cloud Shoulder patterns into necklaces, earrings, and other jewelry, breaking the conventions of traditional jewelry design and creating unique pieces with cultural depth [24]. This combination of traditional art elements in jewelry design not only adds decorative value but also imbues each piece with a narrative quality. Each piece of jewelry becomes a cultural canvas, allowing people to feel the historical and traditional charm.

In ancient times, the material of the Cloud Shoulder was a symbol of one's status. The "Record of the World" describes Cloud Shoulders and jewelry: "The collar decorations are of three types: the largest is made of white silk, draped over the shoulders, with embroidered flowers and birds on the chest and back, adorned with gold beads, jade, and

bells, making a sound when moving, called palace attire. The second is the Cloud Shoulder." This indicates that Cloud Shoulders were associated with jewelry and designed to reflect one's social rank.

In modern times, jewelry designs themed around Cloud Shoulders are also luxurious and textured. For example, Hong Kong's famous designer Wallace Chan designed a jewelry piece called "Fortune and Prosperity Cloud Shoulder" (see Figure 5). Utilizing the four-part Ruyi Cloud Shoulder style with symmetrical composition, the piece exudes a magnificent and grand feeling. It is adorned with different colors of jade, showcasing unparalleled luxury. The color scheme follows traditional Chinese Cloud Shoulder coloring principles, with white as the main color, complemented by green, purple, and orange. The secondary colors are distributed approximately at 25%, 15%, and 10%, creating a varied yet harmonious color palette.



Figure 5. Fortune and Prosperity Cloud Shoulder Jewelry (Source: Baidu Images)

APPLICATION OF CLOUD SHOULDER IN BAG DESIGN

As an important symbol of traditional culture, the artistic value of Cloud Shoulder has been fully realized in modern bag design. Designers integrate Cloud Shoulder elements into bag designs, preserving historical culture while giving new life to modern design. In this process, designers must consider how to retain the traditional aesthetic of Cloud Shoulder while innovating to make it vibrant in contemporary design [25].

During the design process, the rich colors, unique patterns, and exquisite

craftsmanship of Cloud Shoulder provide abundant inspiration for bag design. The aesthetic value of Cloud Shoulder art is reflected in its color diversity and pattern complexity. By recombining and innovating these elements, designers can retain the essence of traditional culture while meeting modern aesthetic demands. Using these traditional elements, designers create products that possess both traditional charm and modern fashion, enhancing the attractiveness and market competitiveness of the products.

Incorporating Cloud Shoulder elements elevates product narratives while establishing

distinctive brand identities in competitive markets. In the context of the popular “China-chic” culture, the elegance of Cloud Shoulder combined with the simplicity of modern design makes the bags not only practical but also stylish art pieces. This design approach meets consumers’ demands for cultural heritage and aligns with their pursuit of fashion and individuality.

The application of Cloud Shoulder art in bag design is not merely a reproduction of traditional culture but an innovation. By reinterpreting Cloud Shoulder patterns, designers can retain its traditional aesthetic value while giving it new design language and expression. This innovation not only enhances the aesthetic value of the bags but also strengthens their market competitiveness, allowing brands to stand out in a homogeneous market.

The increased market competitiveness stems not only from design innovation but also from the rich cultural connotation [26]. The application of Cloud Shoulder elements gives the bags higher recognizability and cultural added value, attracting more consumer attention and favor. Through innovative applications of Cloud Shoulder elements, brands can establish unique images, increase market share, and boost sales. Additionally, the application of Cloud Shoulder art in design promotes the development of cultural creative products, expanding the product lines of brands and bringing broader commercial value.

From the above case studies, it is evident that many brands, through innovative designs, cleverly incorporate Cloud Shoulder elements into various parts of bags, such as straps and surface decorations. This not only preserves the essence of traditional elements but also infuses modern fashion sense, realizing the inheritance and promotion of traditional culture and providing abundant inspiration and methods for modern design.

Design and Development Process

This study selects Ruyi-style Cloud Shoulder as the primary design element based on the following considerations: First, through statistical analysis of Cloud Shoulder samples collected by institutions such as the Museum of Ethnic Costumes at Beijing Institute of Fashion Technology and the Palace Museum, Ruyi-style Cloud Shoulders were found to account for over half of all Cloud Shoulder styles during the Ming and Qing periods, demonstrating strong representativeness. Second, the curved structure of Ruyi-style Cloud Shoulders aligns more harmoniously with the formal language of contemporary bags, facilitating modernized transformative design. Finally, the Ruyi pattern itself symbolizes auspiciousness and fulfillment of wishes, corresponding to modern consumers’ psychological expectations. Design and development sketches (see Table 3).

Table 3: Design and Development Sketches (Source: Author's Own)

| Design Stage | Design Sketches | Main Issues | Improvement Measures |
|--------------|-----------------|---|---|
| First Draft | | The design was not based on Cloud Shoulder form improvement, lacking innovation in patterns. | Strengthen formal variations and enhance pattern innovation. |
| Second Draft | | Lacked integration with bag practicality, excessive external layers, unsuitable for mass production, complex manufacturing processes. | Simplify layered structure and enhance practical considerations. |
| Third Draft | | The second bag design was overly exaggerated and lacked practicality, patterns lacked coherence and were overly fragmented, with monotonous colors. | Optimize formal practicality, integrate pattern design, and enrich color combinations. |
| Fourth Draft | | Pattern selection lacked coherence, color coordination lacked refinement, overall colors were overly monotonous. | Unify pattern styles and optimize color configuration schemes. |
| Final Draft | | - | Addressed previous issues comprehensively to develop a final solution balancing functionality and aesthetics. |

Color and Pattern Analysis





Color Selection and Application

Color variation is an important element of emotional expression in ethnic bags. Different colors exhibit different personalities, expressing various emotional tones such as rigidity, softness, warmth, and coolness. In the design of ethnic bags, Cloud Shoulder mainly uses bright, high-saturation colors to create a strong visual effect with contrasts.

The primary colors chosen are the “Five Colors” as the main colors, with “intermediate

colors” as supplements. The “Five Colors” are white, green, black, red, and yellow, representing the Chinese Five Elements of Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, and Earth. In the bags, this is reflected in green, red, yellow, white, and black, symbolizing that everything in the world comes from the Five Elements and belongs to the colors of all things [27]. The bags use this color scheme by dotting vibrant, lively reds on the calm black and green, creating a striking contrast. The use of high-purity colors achieves a varied and beautiful effect. As shown in Table 4, this illustrates the color design process.

Table 4: Color Design Process

| Design Stage | Design Content | Theoretical Basis | Application Strategy | Color Display |
|----------------------|--|--|--|--|
| Color Extraction | Extract the five-color system from traditional Cloud Shoulder: white, azure, black, red, yellow. | Based on Chinese Five Elements theory (Metal, Wood, Water, Fire, Earth). | Establish traditional color foundation palette. |  |
| Color Transformation | Adapt traditional colors to modern aesthetic needs. | Consider modern consumer color preferences and fashion trends. | Adjust color brightness and saturation. |  |
| Color Configuration | Determine proportional relationships between primary, secondary, and accent colors. | Contrast and harmony color theory. | Primary tone: blue-azure color family. Accent colors: red-yellow color family. |  |
| Specific Application | Apply color scheme to various parts of the bag. | Visual guidance and functional requirements. | Bag body: stable tones, patterns: vibrant colors, accessories: neutral colors. |  |

The bags employ this color strategy by incorporating vibrant and dynamic red accents

over a foundation of stable black and azure tones, creating striking contrasts through the

application of high-purity colors to achieve a varied and dynamic aesthetic appeal. This color scheme maintains the cultural connotations of traditional Cloud Shoulder while meeting the visual requirements of contemporary design.

Pattern Extraction and Innovation

The application of patterns mainly includes insect and plant patterns. In ancient China, silkworm, cicada, and butterfly patterns were commonly used, with the butterfly pattern being the most representative. The butterfly pattern has auspicious meanings, representing fertility and prosperity, and a happy marriage. In the Ming and Qing dynasties, the legend of Liang

Zhu transforming into butterflies and the butterfly-loving flower pattern symbolizing the love between men and women were popular, as “butterfly” and “longevity” are homophones. Therefore, the butterfly pattern often symbolizes health and longevity. This is specifically reflected in the design of Bag 2. The plant patterns mainly use peony patterns, symbolizing prosperity, usually positioned at the center (Bag 3). They are paired with other flowers, where plum blossom patterns are used as decorations, connected by black lines to symbolize the continuation of offspring and rising success. Tables 5 and 6 illustrate the pattern design process.

Table 5: Pattern Extraction (Source: British Museum)



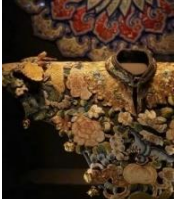
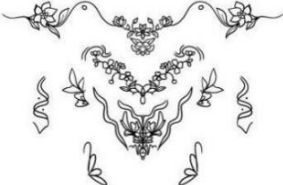


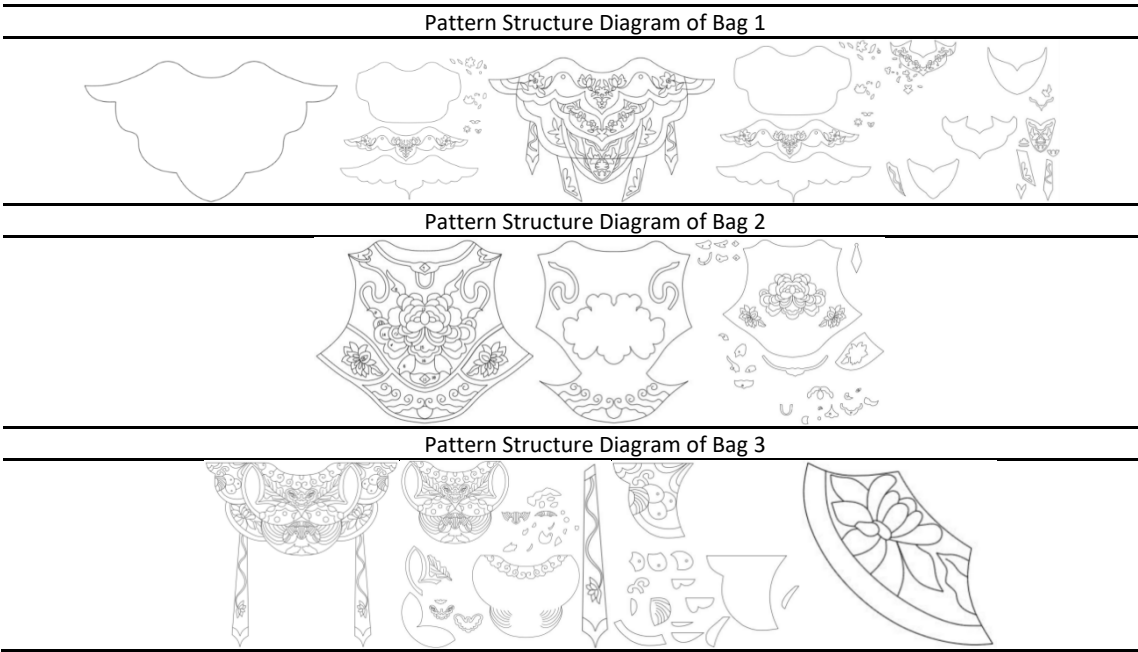
| Design Process | Bag 1 | Bag 2 | Bag 3 |
|---------------------------|---|--|---|
| Cloud Shoulder Pattern |  |  |  |
| Extracted and Transformed |  |  |  |

Table 6: Pattern Design Decomposition Diagram



Display and Evaluation of Developed Products

This study employs laser engraving and cutting technology as an alternative to traditional embroidery craftsmanship, primarily based on the following technical advantages. Comparative experiments revealed that laser cutting achieves pattern precision of $\pm 0.1\text{mm}$, representing a significant improvement over manual embroidery's $\pm 2\text{mm}$ accuracy, enabling superior restoration of Cloud Shoulder patterns' intricate structural details. Regarding production efficiency, laser cutting requires approximately 3 minutes per pattern compared to traditional embroidery's 2–3-hour requirement, resulting in a 40-fold efficiency increase suitable for modern mass production demands. In terms of cost control, laser cutting reduces batch production costs by over 60% compared to conventional techniques, with smooth post-cutting edges eliminating additional polishing procedures, further reducing time and labor expenses.

Laser cutting technology also demonstrates unique advantages in visual effects. Due to its high precision and minimal heat-affected zone characteristics, it ensures that colored materials maintain their original color purity during cutting and assembly processes, producing clear and smooth cutting edges particularly suitable for pattern designs requiring distinct color boundaries, making it ideal for expressing the rich layering of Cloud Shoulder patterns. Additionally, this technology provides designers with expanded creative possibilities, enabling precise cutting of complex geometric patterns and effectively extending the expressive forms of Cloud Shoulder elements in contemporary bag design [28]. The application of laser cutting technology not only addresses the limitations of traditional craftsmanship in modern production but also provides new technological pathways for the contemporary transformation of Cloud Shoulder art. The finished products are displayed in Figure 6, with combined product presentations shown in Figure 7.



Figure 6. Final Product Display (Source: Author's Own)



Figure 7. Combination of Final Products Display (Source: Author's Own)

DISCUSSION

Challenges and Strategies in Design

In the process of applying Cloud Shoulder art to modern bag design, designers face challenges related to functionality and practicality. Although the traditional shapes of Cloud Shoulder are aesthetically pleasing, maintaining their complex structures in modern bag design may lead to practical deficiencies. Therefore, during the design process, it is necessary to simplify and generalize the main features of Cloud Shoulder, retaining its “multi-layered” design elements while ensuring the practicality and modernity of the bag.

The choice of materials and craftsmanship is another important challenge in design. To ensure the durability and practicality of the bag, top-layer cowhide with good breathability and sturdiness was selected to maintain the bag's quality in various environments. Although traditional embroidery can reflect the exquisite beauty of Cloud Shoulder, it is not suitable for modern mass production. To reduce production costs and enhance the modernity of the patterns, laser engraving and cutting techniques were adopted, making the design more youthful and aligned with contemporary aesthetics.

In terms of pattern design, Chinese culture has always valued the symbolic meaning of patterns, pursuing auspicious symbols such as “love,” “happiness,” and “health.” Therefore, when designing Cloud Shoulder elements, these symbolic meanings need to be considered to enhance the cultural connotation and market appeal of the product, thereby improving the brand image.

The Value of Traditional Culture in Modern Design

As times progress and information becomes more widespread, people's design requirements are not limited to functionality but also emphasize individuality and aesthetic expression [29]. As an element of traditional culture, Cloud Shoulder art holds unique aesthetic value and deep cultural connotations, making it significantly valuable in modern design applications.

Cloud Shoulder is not merely a decorative piece but also carries rich cultural symbols and historical significance. Integrating Cloud Shoulder elements into modern design can evoke emotional resonance and cultural identity, promoting the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture. The traditional cultural elements conveyed through design works can enhance the depth and quality of design, providing viewers with a richer visual and emotional experience.

Incorporating Cloud Shoulder art into modern bag design facilitates traditional culture preservation while stimulating contemporary design innovation. By modernly interpreting traditional elements, designers can create works that possess both traditional charm and modern aesthetic appeal, achieving a perfect blend of tradition and modernity. This design innovation not only satisfies consumers' pursuit of uniqueness and cultural connotation but also enhances the market competitiveness and commercial value of the products.

In summary, the application of Cloud Shoulder art in modern bag design is not only a means of preserving traditional culture but also a form of innovation and enhancement in modern design. By continually exploring the application methods of traditional elements in modern design, designers can promote both design innovation and cultural inheritance, creating more works rich in creativity and cultural value.

CONCLUSION

This study explores the application and innovation of Cloud Shoulder art in modern bag design during the Ming and Qing dynasties. By deeply analyzing the historical background, design characteristics, and cultural symbols of Cloud Shoulder, the research investigates its re-creative application in modern design. This study combines specific cases to analyze the application characteristics and innovative methods of Cloud Shoulder in modern bag design and conducts creative practice in modern bag design, summarizing the innovative application methods of Cloud Shoulder in contemporary design.

As an important element of traditional Chinese clothing, Cloud Shoulder holds profound cultural connotations and unique aesthetic value. Its complex structure and exquisite patterns still possess strong visual appeal in modern design. Findings demonstrate that Cloud Shoulder reinterpretation successfully preserves cultural authenticity while generating innovative design solutions for contemporary markets. By incorporating Cloud Shoulder elements into design, designers can create modern bags with unique styles that meet the dual demands of

consumers for cultural inheritance and fashion innovation.

The application of Cloud Shoulder elements in modern bag design not only enhances the aesthetic value of the bags but also increases their market competitiveness. The innovative application of Cloud Shoulder art in design makes the bags more recognizable and culturally valuable, thereby increasing the commercial value of the products. During the design process, by modernly interpreting Cloud Shoulder elements, designers can create works that possess both traditional charm and modern aesthetic appeal, achieving a perfect blend of tradition and modernity.

This study also emphasizes the importance of rationally applying traditional cultural elements in modern design. Through the research and application of Cloud Shoulder elements, designers can enrich the expression forms of modern bag design and promote the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture. In future design practices, it is essential to continue exploring the application of more traditional elements in modern design, promoting both design innovation and cultural inheritance.

The application and innovation of Cloud Shoulder art in modern bag design demonstrate the infinite possibilities of traditional culture in modern design, providing designers with abundant creative inspiration and methods. It is hoped that the findings of this study can offer valuable references for modern bag design, promoting the inheritance and innovation of traditional culture in modern design.

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