

STUDIES ON HIGH FASHION EMBROIDERY INDUSTRY: A REVIEW

Dr. Neelam Singh
Department of Home Science
Govt. Arts and Commerce College, Beohari (M.P)

ABSTRACT: Fashion embroidery has been an integral part of high fashion since before King Louis XV of France in the 18th century. Upon the development of haute couture in France, a professional fashion embroidery industry arose to serve the needs of the new high fashion designers. Despite significance of professional embroidery in high fashion, there is little documentation of the history of the fashion embroidery industry. Particularly scarce is information about the professional embroiderers working in the industry.

Keywords: Fashion, embroidery, industry and designers.

INTRODUCTION:-

Embroidery, a craft that has developed into an auxiliary industry to fashion as fashion itself, has moved from home-based to a multi-billion dollar industry (Digby, 1963; The NPD Group, 2012). Fashion, and particularly high fashion, would not exist in its current form without auxiliary industries. Yet, while much of the fashion industry's history is documented (Kawamura, 2010), few publications exist about the supporting trades, and specifically, their histories. Embroidery is one of the more visible auxiliary services in the high fashion world as many of the garments are beaded, stitched with decorative patterns, or bedecked with sparkling crystals, making the end product noticeable. Embroidery has become one of the traditional methods of emitting an aura of opulence in fashion and is an expected part of high fashion collections each season (Martin & Koda, 1995). Nevertheless, very little is known about this trade except by the people in this trade. As the older generations of embroiderers die, much of the industry's history is lost with them.

A complete history of the fashion industry is unobtainable without also studying the history of the supporting industries. A common practice in art history is to study objects to better understand the social contexts and design culture of the historical period (Dobraszczyk, 2012). In historical studies, researchers

also study a tiny event or a small industry to gain a better understanding of the larger picture. Because studies of smaller aspects of any part of an industry provide important insight into the larger industry as a whole, it is not possible have a complete view of the fashion industry without researchers and historians obtaining a more complete understanding of the history of the auxiliary industries such as embroidery. The auxiliary industries are much like microcosms that affect the greater environment and are, in turn, affected by the greater environment (Olsen, 2002). The interaction between the greater and the lesser helps to reveal trends, causes, and effects. Due to this need for the history of auxiliary industries, the purpose of my study was originally to create a documented history of the fashion embroidery industry. As I further developed the study, the purpose altered to focus on capturing the life stories of the embroiderers working in the embroidery industry.

The fashion industry is divided into market levels in order to define and segment design, production, and sales activities. Haute couture and prêt-à-porter are the two highest market levels in fashion (Sorger & Udale, 2006). They are also the two levels of fashion that dominate the catwalk fashion shows worldwide. Paris haute couture (2012) defines haute couture as the ultimate level of fashion in price, luxury, and innovation. Designers working at this level are less constrained by conventional restrictions of production or society than designers working in the lower-priced markets. Rather, garments in haute couture are expected to push the boundaries of fashion (Sorger & Udale, 2006; Stone, 2012). Prêt-à-porter translates as ready-to-wear. However, as a market level, prêt-à-porter means much more than that. As haute couture is much too expensive to sell many pieces or to sustain itself financially, many designers have elected to produce lines of less expensive garments in greater numbers. The prices of these garments are still high enough to allow use of luxurious fabrics and treatments. Moreover, as these garments are mass produced and not designed for one particular

customer, prêt-à-porter, sometimes termed prêt-à-porter deluxe, has become the field in which many designers express their design vision and display their design abilities (Sorger & Udale, 2006).

MATERIALS AND METHODS:-

Design disciplines have a history and a need to document that history (Clark & Brody, 2009b). Sometimes the responsibility of recording the history falls on the shoulders of researchers from the discipline concerned, rather than a traditional historian. In those cases, traditional historical methodology often is combined with other methodologies, capitalizing on the strengths of the researcher (Delamont & Jones, 2012; Henry, 2006). According to academic tradition, fashion embroidery is a sub-field of fashion or textiles, which qualifies embroidery as a design field. As a design field, fashion embroidery is deficient in documented history. However, there is a limited amount of literature published on fashion embroidery history. I could not locate any recently written scholarly reviewed publications on fashion embroidery history. The limited amount of literature available in the field of fashion embroidery confirmed the need for the study.

DISCUSSION:-

This study is based on the premise that all design disciplines are part of the greater discipline of design studies (Clark & Brody, 2009a). Both embroidery design and fashion design fall under design studies. More precisely, embroidery design is typically classified as a subsection of both textile design and fashion design. The perpetual inclusion of embroidery design in the fashion studies in colleges and universities provides support to this classification. Embroidery's constant inclusion in textile or costume collections in museums reaffirms the taxonomy. Fashion design and textile design, as the larger areas of study encompassing embroidery design, are subsections of design studies (Clark & Brody, 2009b). Therefore, the histories of each of these disciplines are likewise subsections of the greater design history.

Clark and Brody (2009a) and the Cold stream Report by the National Advisory Council on Art Education, Cold stream, and the Ministry of Education (1960) state the pedagogical importance that all students of design are taught the history of their respective design discipline. It

follows that embroidery history, as a sub-history of fashion history should be taught in fashion design courses as well as in embroidery design courses. However, in order to effectively teach in any design discipline, a documented history of that discipline is required (Triggs, 2011). The need for a documented history of any design discipline in order to facilitate teaching was the foundation of the conceptual framework for this study. There is currently very little documentation on the history of the embroidery industry.

Narvaez (2000) indicated that the history of the process is just as much a part of design history as the history of the objects. To add to this view of design history, Lichtman (2009) argued that design history should include the history of design practices and changes in industry. These newer definitions of design history as something more than a history of objects validate a history of the fashion embroidery industry as a legitimate part of embroidery design history.

Margolin (2009) argued that not only has there not been enough research on design history, but that new research on design history must not be isolated within itself or be history for history's sake. Rather, it must situate itself in the larger picture, relating to other disciplines such as material culture, business practices, or labor history. In this manner, a design field's history begins to reveal its importance to the world around it (Fallan, 2010; Margolin, 2009). Instead of contrasting the entire history with a separate discipline, I chose to expose elements of the history to other disciplines where appropriate. For instance, I reviewed how business practices have aided different embroidery companies' competitiveness. Additionally, I show how the smaller embroidery industry is part of a larger history of the fashion industry.

CONCLUSION:-

I utilized oral history methods in conducting, transcribing, and analyzing in-depth open-ended interviews. The 20 participants were all embroiderers, embroidery designers, or embroidery executives working in high fashion embroidery workshops. This study provides a written history that not only benefits students of embroidery design, but also students and practitioners of fashion design. The history and the stories of the embroiderers provide teaching material for students in embroidery and fashion design. The history and the

embroiderers' narratives of production methods and business practices form foundation knowledge for embroidery students to analyze and utilize. The same information increases fashion students' understanding of auxiliary industries and how to work with the industries. Fashion design professionals benefit similarly. The information raises designers' awareness of the embroiderers' abilities as well as the embroidery process. The knowledge eases communication between fashion designers, thus eliminating many unnecessary misunderstandings.

REFERENCES:-

1. Digby, G. W. (1963). *Elizabethan embroidery*. London, England: Faber and Faber.
2. Kawamura, Y. (2010). The fashion industry. In J. B. Eicher & P. G. Tortora (Eds.), *Encyclopedia of World Dress and Fashion* (Vol. 10, pp. 191-203). New York, NY: Oxford University Press.
3. Martin, R., & Koda, H. (1995). *Haute couture*. New York, NY: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
4. Dobraszczyk, P. (2012). City reading: The design and use of nineteenth-century London guidebooks. *Journal of Design History*, 25(2), 123-144.
5. Olsen, K. J. (2002). *Through the looking glass: Engagements with history and the decorative arts in Britain, 1870--1910*. (Doctoral dissertation), University of California, Berkeley, Berkeley, CA.
6. Sorger, R., & Udale, J. (2006). *The fundamentals of fashion design*. Lausanne, Switzerland; Worthing, England: AVA Academia.
7. Stone, E. (2012). *In fashion*. New York, NY: Fairchild Books, Inc.
8. Clark, H., & Brody, D. (2009a). The Current State of Design History. *Journal of Design History*, 22(4), 303-308.
9. Clark, H., & Brody, D. (2009b). *Design studies: A reader*. Oxford, England; New York, NY: Berg.
10. Delamont, S., & Jones, A. (2012). *Handbook of qualitative research in education*. Cheltenham, England; Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar.
11. Henry, A. (2006). Historical studies: Groups/institutions. In J. L. Green, G. Camilli & P. B. Elmore (Eds.), *Handbook of complementary methods in education research*. Mahwah, NJ; Washington, D.C.: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; Published for the American Educational Research Association.
12. Triggs, T. (2011). Graphic design history: Past, present, and future. *Design Issues*, 27(1), 3-6.
13. Narvaez, L. M. J. (2000). Design's own knowledge. *Design Issues*, 16(1), 36-51.
14. Lichtman, S. A. (2009). Reconsidering the history of design survey. *Journal of Design History*, 22(4), 341-350.
15. Margolin, V. (2009). Design in history. *Design Issues*, 25(2), 94-105.
16. Fallan, K. (2010). *Design history: Understanding theory and method*. Oxford, England; New York, NY: Berg.