Transcendency and Embracement in Fashion Designs

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Abstract

Fashion designs reflect the trend of the times embedded within the cultural structures of eastern and western civilizations as well as the traditional styles. However, the motives in fashion designs fundamentally come from human beings' willingness for creation through deep understand of nature or using symbolism and artificial esthetic appreciation.

Mankind has expressed their willingness for creation through speculation not with the attitude of conquering nature but by acknowledging the flow between their lives and nature. The purpose of this paper is to investigate human beings' transcendental and embracing attitude toward the natural environment and the human environment in fashion design.

In natural environment factors, sublimity toward nature's marvelous powers and the transcending state of mind within happiness and delight or the extreme fear or unavoidable coerciveness and the consequential daunting feelings and smallness, and sorrow all stimulate the will of mental speculation and cause a transcending sublimity. A sublime state of mind does not exist in a superficial framework of enjoyment. It is rather an act of transcendence and embracement residing in a sublime object and leading man's spirit into a state of philosophical thought.

Also, in man-made Environment factors, we found from magnanimity we were ability to see the true nature of an era's culture.

Key words: embracement, man-made environment factor, natural environment factor, transcendency

I. Preface

Today all throughout the fields of clothing, food, and housing, the traditional framework of the past has been surpassed, and the past conceptual regularities and form itself are showing the process of being demolished. The phenomenon of fusing together of eastern and western cultural characteristics or the phenomenon of embracing various historical backgrounds that span different time periods and space to create a single entity is

also an important characteristic of today.

In this kind of open world, sensual metaphysics focusing on the physical appearance gives its way to mental speculation on the open world and thus in turn an entirely new form of culture and customs becomes ever present. Considering the nature of fashion, this becomes even more relevant. In fashion, appearance can be altered at ease and its symbolic effects much greater. This is the reason why our traditional attire is becoming more simplistic and dyed hair is

becoming a trend. This trend can easily be seen in both males and females, no matter how old they are, but today's society has become a place where the disapproval of such fashions or even intending to disapprove them has become a form of moving against the tides of history.

Martin Heidegger stated in his work on eastern speculation¹⁾ that if the coming together of what is traditional and what is foreign does not mean that one side possesses or dominates the other, then a sincere dialogue between the two cultures makes the traditional culture more traditional and at the same time makes the foreign one even more foreign. Whether this coming together could be considered as a form of sincere dialogue between cultures, surpassing the oppressive and dominating nature of the imperialistic past relationship between east and west, or whether this, in the future, would lead to a cultural independence movement remains to be seen.

According to Hume²⁾, true independence comes only from sincere speculation and recognition. The pleasures of being free in everyday life follows the law of cause and effect and behaviors based on freedom of nonchalance and essential freedoms all fall under ethical responsibilities. This means that all free actions taken on by human beings, even actions of creating formative art work, should meet the moral responsibilities as the free actions to fulfill the duties and obligations in everyday life should. This also means that an artist's creative actions have tremendous social impacts.

Instead of attempting to overcome or control nature, man has come to meet nature with sincerity. Through this mutual response, he has recognized that there is an exchanging flow between life and nature and was able to maintain a transcending and embracing relationship

through speculation. It is also easily seen that artificial actions of everyday living through man's independent will(creativity and technological skill) and a unique way of thinking of the senses acquired through doing formative arts have been mixed and included each other.

In this paper we'd like to examine man's pure and various transcendental and embracing senses represented in religious and artistic activities of the past. Today, motives in designs that conform to the cultural and artistic styles can be enhanced through the process of conflict and distinction and can be sublimated to a more unique and traditional form. With this, the much needed creation of a new relationship between man and the world in an era of technology would be possible.

II. Transcendency and Embracement in Designs with respect to the Natural Environment

In the 21st century, there seems to be no clear paradigm in modern clothing design. The merging fusion effect of east and west is creating a world where traditional boundaries between countries, ethic groups and regions no longer exist and a single identity of worldwide openness is evident. It is not certain whether the real sense of beauty in modern clothing is a creation of a monotonous fashion through superficial imitation or a fusion of things brought by an inner mind desiring not to put forth things which belong to their particular culture.

However, mankind has acknowledged the harmony and sublimity of the truth through living with nature. With the mutual relations between the natural world and the spiritual, man's will of transcendency was expressed. This we consider is both fear and awe of nature's power and the fact that man must abide by its power for survival.

Man feels dwarfed by the natural creatures, objects and events that surround him, the changes in seasons, the sun and the moon, the weather, storms and thunder and lightning. The fact that man is controlled by the external effects of things such as the changes in time and the existence of day and night has given man conflicting desires. He has become awed and at the same time desiring to be free from such control as well as desiring to worship it. And so the subjects that stand up to and give comfort to mankind is religion and totem.

But modern men, with their transcendental mentality, try to overcome nature's strength over them with scientific thought. Before science occupied man, the primitive man drew pictures, created, ornamented, and imitated nature's power and nature's creatures. These were mankind's creative artistic activities; both transcending and embracing. Though in earlier times, decorating and ornamenting might not have been the main objective, within artistic creations were each ethnic group's artistic urges and their unique methods and skills for recognizing objects through speculation. The methods and skills were distinct and later they developed into traditional art forms.

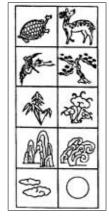
<Fig. 1> and <Fig. 2> depict eastern clothing patterns. There are shipjangsaeng munyang (patterns of 10 longevities) and the Twelve jangmun(12 patterns) which were decorated on the traditional attire for the king. The plants and animals used for patterns can easily be found in nature. Especially for trees, the bamboo and pine symbolize longevity because of their vividness all throughout the four seasons. The wavy patterns

of storms express powerful and dynamic movements. According to Wilhelm Werringer of Germany, the decorative artistry of Greece and Egypt go in harmony and replaces geometric rationality with an organic form. In organic rationality the purpose of absolute beauty is to express a static emotion.³⁾ This expression of static emotion can be found in the 4 cradles of world civilization and elsewhere.

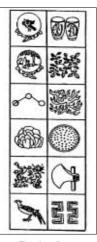
<Fig. 3> and <Fig. 4> are those from Egypt and from them an inner stillness can be felt. In the patterns of the papyrus and lotus flowers on the left hand side of <Fig. 3>, the two hands do not meet and the right hand is supporting the lower area and the left the upper, the picture looks still and at the same time as if the hands are trying to pull the flower or as if the hands are holding the stem still in order to observe the specimen. Because of the two hands without a face represented, the picture of the lotus flower patterns has within it comprehensive expressions of a variety of man's dynamic inner thoughts.

Static emotion, having nature and objects as motives, brings comfort and at the same time a delicate happiness. From the creations of artistic activities, a sympathy that transcends time and space is possible. Also these creations embrace the ecosystem of plants and the actions of human beings. Werringer also stated that from the coming together of man and nature, man's abstract empathy with nature creates unique abstract values, further setting the foundation of modalic notion.⁴⁾

The basic truth in all artistic works results from the empathy of naturalistic concept. An example is found in Vitruvius' *De Architectura*(which consists of 10 books dealing with city planning and architecture). This text tells of how the Greek building style, the Corinthian order, came about.



<Fig. 1> Ship Jang Saeng patterns You Hee-Kyung, The History of Korean Clothing p. 257



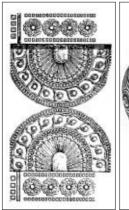
<Fig. 2> Twelve Patterns, You Hee-Kyung, The History of Korean Clothing p. 257



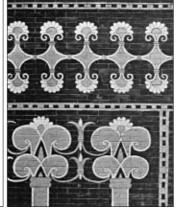
<Fig. 3> Egyptian Patterns, Collection of World Arts-11 p. 13



<Fig. 4> Egyptian Patterns, Collection of World Arts-11 p. 13





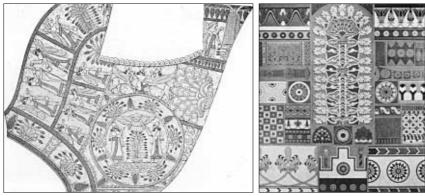


<Fig. 5> Helenistic Patterns, Collection of World Arts-11 p. 14

After seeing the acanthus leaves growing from a basket of flowers which have been placed on a young girl's grave, Callimachos' empathy with the leaves created the Corinthian style pillars of Greek and Roman architectures.⁵⁾

Alois Riegl⁶⁾ also believes that Callimachos did not directly imitating the leaves, but thought of the ecological characteristics of the acanthus tree and was moved by the purity of it. Then his empathy with the leaves gave birth to this traditional western style of architecture.

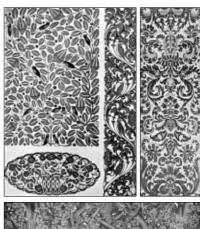
Kant said that man's sublimity towards nature causes man to feel dwarfed but at the same time allows transcendence of man's physique from this smallness. For him, the nature of this conversion is the nobleness of man's rationality



<Fig. 6> Mesopotamian Patterns, Collection of World Arts-11 p. 18



<Fig. 7> The Renaissance Patterns, Collection of World Arts-11 p. 28





<Fig. 8> The Renaissance Patterns, Collection of World Arts-11 p. 26

and calling, and man's rationality, which is the essence of artistic and creative works, surpasses the object of diminutive emotion.

Ever since the sublimity towards nature formed from western thinking left the Corinthian style architecture on the shrine of Erechtheum during the 5th century B.C., designs after the shapes of plants and animals have been applied to architectural buildings, wall and interior decorations, furniture, carpets, and clothing.

<Fig. 5> is an example of ancient Helenistic designs and is quite impressive because of the fluidness and curves of the octopus have been put together very artistically.

<Fig. 6> is a design of Mesopotamian origin.
This picture has some similarities with the

Egyptian design on <Fig. 4>, but the thick fringe (wide border, fine wrinkles) on the clothing and its style make this design uniquely Mesopotamian.

The design in the central part of <Fig. 7> reveals naturalistic beauty of the Renaissance. Raphael intentionally inserted the rat and snake, two creatures hated by man, into plant stems. His empathy, though it cannot be said for certain, expresses a surpassing of fear, caution, or dread of nature, and sublimates it into a creative formative art.

<Fig. 8> can be thought of as a tree branch that holds within it the turmoil and power that has led it through the numerous changes in weather.

Hume said that it is easy to think of creativity as something accidental but it is never accidental, and it is but man who thinks it is. He suggests that man's belief of creativity to be accidental is due to man's incomplete knowledge which stems from the environment. And even man's mental activities, considered to be free actions, have causes and effects.

Twelve Jangmun(12 patterns) in <Fig. 2>, mentioned above, are representative patterns for clothing in eastern styles that have their origins in nature. During the Pre-Han dynasty(500 B.C. ~ 600 B.C.), the essence of life in all the universe was already adapted in design patterns. The heavenly hosts representing the emperor and sovereign are all in the sky and from the sky they shine. The way they shine is said to be impartial. Public and private affairs, as well as the rich and the poor, the politically powerful and the weak are not discriminated under the heavenly hosts.

These pictures can be found on Koguryeo wall paintings(Sashin-chong, Ssangyoung-chong) in Korea. A sun is designed on the right of the king's shirt, and a moon on the left. The sun is distinguished from the moon by the crow with

three feet(sam jok oh) on the sun and the toad or rabbit on the moon. The mountain and the dragon symbolize the land and the water(or sea) respectively. When the mountain is covered with cloud and fog rain is symbolized and the dragon symbolizes the supernatural ability for change.

Hwachung stands for the beautiful five colors on the wings and are expressed using feathers from that of pheasants.

Jongi is put in pairs. The tiger inside symbolizes valor and the roebuck stands for wisdom. It also symbolizes filial piety.

Jo has many different patterns and they stand for brilliance. They also symbolize the patterns of curves and variety forms. In the east, depictions of seaweed were sometimes used in decorating a building's interior.

Hwa(fire) symbolizes brightness and illumination. They are rays of the sun. They stand for warmth, mildness, and energy.

Bunmi either represents innocent people or mankind who eat grain.

Bo(axes) stands for decisiveness as well as man's tools. Bul along with bo stands for the sovereign and his subjects and has been changed into design patterns to lay embroidery of the letters facing each other on clothing.

The reason man views nature as being so noble is because he had thought long and hard about nature from times before the development of modern science.

The dragon, with the magical stone in its mouth, symbolizes all the riches and treasure of this world. The designs of the dragon and phoenix have existed for several thousands of years as spiritual comfort and object of worship in the oriental countries. The fact that these designs can easily be found in interior decorations and sculptures at Buddhist temples tells us of the

significance of their meanings.

In modern clothing, food, and housing, there are so many designs based on nature that it is not worth getting into the detail. One may wear the same clothes as another, and one may sport the same yellow hair. But this does not mean that their inner essence has become forever melted together and they think in the same way.

Today's world is a place where material wealth must be created for anything to be measured as being of great value. In a world where another's creative writings or artistic works are assessed using numerical values(as if there was an exact measure to abide by), true philosophical thinking may seem like a useless endeavor. But I believe that pursuing a broader, more variable creative mixture and imitation, not pursuing simplistic sensuality, allows us to share a new form of transcending and embracing ways of thinking.

III. Transcendency and Embracement in Designs Caused by Man-made Environments

It just would not be possible to list and speak of all the paradigms designers suggest as being of man's creativity, since there are so many different forms in modern fashion design. As there is a wide variety of fashion designs flooding colleges and institutions, trends just cannot be described under one proposition.

Transcendence is not negative. It is not a dissolution, nor is it a fusion or withdraw. And it is not anything like running with a long spear or an inherence to go over. Kant, speaking of artistic taste, stated as follows. First, artistic taste is a phenomenon understood through man's

viewpoints. Second, artistic inherence is expressed through the object of man's will to practice. And third, when it is not possible to assess the will from superficial characteristics, you must find it in the inner attitude which tries to express the sublime impulsive will.⁸⁾

Edward Riley Bradley⁹⁾ said artistic sublimity is identical to that of Kant's theory of will, but artistic sense itself is based upon moral and spiritual sublimity. For instance, in his 'Anecdote of a Bird and a Hunting Dog', he said, "It happened on the way coming back from hunting. The baby bird fell from its nest and the hunting dog ran towards it. At that moment the mother bird hurried and pecked at the dog and saved its baby. The mother bird confronted the dog till the last breath. The courage and love of the mother bird are the same as artistic sublimity and they pertain a transcending will." Here the mental attitude and timing is expressed as an act of the definite will.¹⁰)

As for creative confrontation, Heidegger says that through confrontation and separation with the adversary one's unique self and existence can be more distinctively portrayed.¹¹⁾ The new design trends of the era conflict and at the same time separate from the design factors that were just in vogue and are declining from popularity; hence the creation of an independent creativity. In German, the word 'to confront' means to separate, or to keep apart. The new trends separated from the declining factors through creative confrontation remain as unique and independent design.

Egypt's clothing design of 3,500 years ago might not need analysis of fads and trends. But it can be noted that even in clothing design originating from an artificial environment the process of integration, imitation and melding together had been present. For example, take the

torso of Nefertiti in <Fig. 9>.12) Nothing else about her was known except that she was King Akhnaton(or Ikhnaton)'s wife. However, many people have fallen under its spell because of the beauty that hold up even under modern artistic values. Though there survives no written text about her ancestors, her name which means 'a beautiful woman has come' lead archaeologists to believe that she was a foreign princess when they first found her. Later on it was discovered that her husband Amenhotep the 4th's name was Akhnaton(Amenhotep is in Greek Ametopese). People believed that two gods Rea and Hatole were incarnated on earth as the king and the queen. This was to express that rule was made by the gods.

But as in <Fig. 10>, and its era, foreigners such as prisoners of war, criminals and slaves were a part of society. And other than these foreigners were hereditary slaves, illegal aliens, and foreign students and princes. As can be seen from the hair styles and everything else of the Asian and Nubian criminals in shackles in <Fig. 10>, modern clothing does not differ too greatly from that of 3,500 years ago. Also from this era is said to have been cases made out of high quality locust trees, baskets made out of palm leaves, and cotton products. For palace furniture, African ebony and Asian cryptoeria were used.¹³⁾

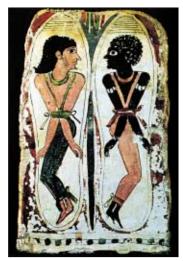
In <Fig. 11>, the ornaments the king (Amenemhat III) wears depict a scene of a prisoner's head being struck. This picture can be seen on other ornaments as well and they symbolize the king's strong power and reign. The club on the crown of Queen Nefertiti as seen on <Fig. 9> can be interpreted in the same way.¹⁴⁾

<Fig. 12> and <Fig. 13> depict a scene where a man is shooting an arrow from on top of a running horse and an Asian is struck by the arrow and falls to the ground. These kinds of wall paintings describing battle and hunting scenes can readily be found in many other places. However, <Fig. 13> is from the front side of the wooden casket(height 45cm) in the tomb of King Toutankhamon(1336-1327 B.C.). The scene was depicted for the purpose of commemorating Toutankhamon's achievements in battle. From the figures holding up and running with the feather fans behind the king, Toutankhamon's gorgeous clothing and ornaments on his crown, and the decorations on the saddle of the horse, is a brilliance in color.

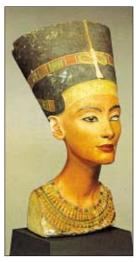
<Fig. 14> was made with the black death which swept through Europe of 13th and early 14th centuries and the 100 Years War (1337~1453) between England and France in mind. It imagines and evokes the existence of the soul from a point in time when many lives were lost and from where fear and obsession of death was ever present.

Hume in his An Inquiry Concerning the Principles of Morals¹⁵⁾ stated that morals is not perception but based on feeling. Accordingly the reason for certain actions having moral values is because they give someone else happiness and the action itself is useful. Moral sentiment is usually due to sympathy to another and this sympathy is the principle for the social life caused by man's basic instinct and an individual's happiness. In Hume's Principle of Criticism¹⁶⁾, he states that pleasures of sensual organs and beauty are one and the same. This logic, in the history of aesthetics, is viewed with much significance.

The reason we stated above that morals are not a true perception is because sympathy rather than a sensuous feeling gives man's inner self happiness and pleasure. <Fig. 14> was drawn



<Fig. 9> An Asian man and a Nuibian man in shackles, Changhae ABC Books-Egypte ancienne, p.35



<Fig. 10> Torso of Nefertiti, Changhae ABC Books- Egypte ancienne, p.35



<Fig. 11> Pendant of Amenemhat III, Galleries of the World -5, p. 45





<Fig. 13> Wooden casket in King Toutankhamon's tomb, Galleries of the World -5, p. 178

<Fig. 12> King Toutankhamon shoots an arrow to an Asian man, Galleries of the World -5, p. 116

when the Gothic era was coming to a close and the Renaissance was just on the verge of coming about. It contains equality of man's soul. The picture depicts the Pope and emperor leading the way with the various classes following. They all head towards the graves of the dead, the way being lead by a corpse(a ghost). This picture is titled 'Death Ball' and it is part of a series called 'The Grave of the Innocent'. It is a visualization of the subject matter seen in this period's literature and plays. In this perspective, <Fig. 15> drawn in late 19th century 'Mexican Muralism' can be viewed in the same way and thought of as truly coming to terms with man's essence.



<Fig. 14> Death Ball, Encyclopaedia Britannica p. 196



<Fig. 15> Posada, a Mexican Muralist painter, Treasures of the British Museum, p. 207





<Fig. 17> Statue of a little girl, Museums of the World-9, Shirukurodo Museum, p. 106

Historically, various artistic forms formed from different artistic trends have been defined based on a certain conceptual regularity. <Fig. 16> is a piece that was uncovered by a French explorer in Afghanistan in 1937. It is perceived to be from A.D. 700 ~ A.D. 800 and is a work of Buddhist art. The peaceful smile, comfortable figure, colorful ornaments and the Shari on the body are not bound by formality and the clothing design is of equal standing as that of today. When even comparing it to modern clothing design's basic step, fashion illustration, it would have to be called infallible. Man's artistic spirit moved on from being centered on gods to being centered on man and impressionist paintings explain man's inner truth in various forms. From this sculpture of a bodhisattva can be felt a soft line of flow and from the 'S' shaped figure an unbalanced rhythmic line can be sensed. The half-pulled up hair style, the waves of the hair and the earrings seem to be moving. This picture's innerness gives a comforting and pleasing emotion that is non-threatening. The art piece displays within it a transcendence and embracing spirit.

<Fig. 17> is a statue of a little girl and is thought to be a piece from A.D. 200 ~ A.D. 700. Though most Afghani Gandala pieces of art are schist embossed carvings, this piece of art has been created using the Haddasuke method (originating from Suket of the Hadda region in Afghanistan). As in <Fig. 16>, this piece focuses more so on man's inner emotions. The large eyes filled with emotion, the wide forehead and fluid hair style with slight waves and naturalness conjure up images of purity.

Jang Pa¹⁷⁾ said that even in the creation and formation of the field called aesthetics, there have been several complications. From around the 4th century B. C. when the Greek philosopher Plato talked of beauty(beautiful women, beautiful words) to when Alexander Gottieb Baumgarten18) of

Germany established 'Aesthetics' as a field of science in literary terms in 1775, it took nearly 2,000 years. He was suggesting that aesthetics would, in a world like today's where various paradigms collide, exist and in fact develope into a stronger artistic value.

Today, cyberspace integrates the five senses and combines them. Thus there comes about collision among them. The collision makes man and object intertwined, creates cyber characters and even personalities. But Jang Pa believes that though world may become connected in cyber space, the foreboding, inspiration, transcendence, and Aura(in ancient Indian Buddhism is referred to as 'Shanka', means understanding) of high quality art cannot be connected.¹⁹⁾

There seems to exist an atmosphere of respect for individuality and spiritual freedom of the individual. But as superficial imitation such as mixing together, imitating, and fusion become understood and popularized, understanding of other people's ways of life and of religion become desired. And so comes greater conflict and unending strife. As stated above, creative activities with true moral sublimity must be accomplished in order not to be separated by confrontation and not to be misunderstood as creative thinking and recognition.

IV. Conclusion

Design is then a product of man's creative actions, which was brought on by his spiritual free will, and stems from the many impulsive sensations and emotions of ordinary life. The factors behind these impulses can be divided into two categories. The first is the design brought about by natural environments. The second is

those brought on by artificial environments.

In natural environment factors, sublimity toward nature's marvelous powers and the transcending state of mind within happiness and delight or the extreme fear or unavoidable coerciveness and the consequential daunting feelings and smallness, and sorrow all stimulate the will of mental speculation and cause a transcending sublimity. A sublime state of mind does not exist in a superficial framework of enjoyment. It is rather an act of transcendence and embracement residing in a sublime object and leading man's spirit into a state of philosophical thought.

Also, in man-made Environment factors, we found from magnanimity we were ability to see the true nature of an era's culture.

Overall man saw evergreen trees, which had green leaves all throughout the seasons, as symbols of life which transcends the four seasons. From vines and the roots growing from each node, man saw life's vitality and made design patterns based on them. Shapes of grape clusters, pomegranate, and the leaves of gledistsia japonica trees meant fertility and abundance. And from gledistsia japonica(the red leaf trees) leaves which faced each other, man saw a symbolization of union. And in the sun, the moon, the sun god, courageous animals and others, man saw a desire to overcome its diminutive. Symbols of righteous animals and attractive insects were depicted in pure beauty and in brilliant colors. These were in effect intended to express the value of life.

Designs of repugnant reptiles and rats were used to express man's inner beliefs of good and evil. Fear of death and the finiteness of life were represented by corpses from graves.

After the Renaissance the conversion of design involving man's speculative instinct was not only

brought about by impressionistic and surrealistic thought, but also can be found in cultural relics from ancient civilizations. Ancient sculptures have also been found to depict man's suffering and delight.

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- 10) Jang Pa op. cit. p. 210
- 11) Lee Jin-Woo op. cit. p. 297
- 12) Changhae ABC Books—Egypte ancienne, published by Changhae Publishing Co. 2000: 35-38.
- 13) Changhae ABC Books, ibid. p.35
- 14) Changhae ABC Books, ibid p. 35
- 15) Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit. p.622
- 16) Encyclopaedia Britannica, ibid. p. 435 Henry Hume(1696-1782) was an English philosopher.
- 17) Jang Pa, op.cit. p. 17
- 18) Encyclopaedia Britannica, op. cit. Vol 8
- 19) Jang Pa, ibid. p.9

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