

An Application of “Wabi Sabi” Philosophy in Fashion Design “Nature: Impermanence”

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Abstract

This research aimed at studying and analyzing the “Wabi-Sabi” philosophy. Its root was in Buddhism, which has an important saying that "Everything in the world is vain" or impermanent, including the absence of a self or the feeling of emptiness. The “Impermanence” was used for the subject of this research. The other concepts were found which related to the “impermanence”. The evidence of discovered aesthetics was derived from literature, poetry, and tea ceremonies, as well as architecture including art techniques that involved the use of symbolism. The information obtained from the study was used to create high fashion designs. The final purpose is to design 5 high fashion apparels as follows.

The “Impermanent” concept was interpreted from nature. It was used for story-telling along with other concepts such as simplicity which were used for main looks. As stated in the history of aesthetics, nature represented asymmetrical, unfinished, and incomplete things. All of them were incorporated to use in the creation. In addition, “Contradictions of thoughts” and “Emergence” that come from the history of aesthetics provide some conclusion. “Shibusa” or “Nature”, “Confusion”, “Simplicity” were used in the creation of the apparels as well. Considering the apparels’ design, the simplicity or minimal look was applied by using “Kiri” a technique through the design method of cutting out unnecessary things to a minimum in “Wabi” appreciation. The purpose of “Iki” (new style with subtle sex appreciation in Edo period) was to apply the “Emergence” concept. In this collection, hand-woven fabrics with natural color were used together with fabrics dyed with natural colors, such as indigo and ebony. They represented “Wabi-Sabi” just as Rikyu’s teacup concept which was simple and homegrown. The important “Symbolism” found in Heian period was used for design practice in this research.

Research feedback from two focus groups; the first group, focused on an overview of suitable production which natural fiber handwoven fabrics were used in haute couture design. Cotton fabrics was seen too heavy. In addition, hemp and linen fabrics were too easy to crumble. Especially, pineapple fibers because they are too short, it was not suitable to be spun by hand. Moreover, hand weaving was seen as not tight enough and made the shape unstable. Therefore, the selected handwoven fabrics are seen moderately suitable. The overall looks were good. The second focus group focused on research and creative design which was seen good to very good. The outcome would be used to be a prototype in product development in the village in Lampang Province, Thailand.

Keywords: *Wabi-Sabi, High Fashion, Impermanence, Simplicity, Symbolism*

1. Introduction

There is lack of confidence in understanding how Japanese designers such Rei Kawakubo (Talon, 2017; Borrelli, 2017) and Yoji Yamamoto (Verner, 2014) present their creative works to distinguish from the styles of Western designers (Mower, 2016). It is also questionable if their story-telling as told through the previous collection design about the truth of life, from birth to death are believable as well. It is also doubtful whether the philosophy, society, background, atmosphere and life influenced the two designers as well as their education. They accept the beauty that has passed through time that are shown in some collections. It is the proposition in aesthetics that is unexceptional by Western standards (The-D-Lover, 2012). In which western fashion critics criticize the work in doubtful ways as well. Koren (2008) has compared the difference of Modernism and Wabi-Sabi significantly. Most of Kawakubo and Yamamoto designs express various ideas (Borrelli, 2017; Verner, 2014) until now. There are many collections which can be interpreted in many ways.

In order to understand Japanese designers, it is imperative to research the Japanese aesthetics. Then, it becomes the core of the research on the use of “Impermanence” concept from “Wabi-Sabi” philosophy for High Fashion or *Haute Couture* which is an attempt to design apparels in a new perspective. According to the philosophy, it is related to nature and rooted on the teachings of Buddhism and the spirit of the Japanese people who try to find their own aesthetics by studying nature and discover the truth by themselves. The important concept of “Impermanence” led the history of aesthetic studies from the Heian period to the early Edo period which was used in this research.

At the beginning of the pursuit of aesthetics, Japanese people were influenced by Buddhist teachings related to the saying "Everything in the world is vain" or impermanent, including the absence of a self or the feeling of emptiness. That is the concept of the research title. The evidence of discovered aesthetics was derived from literature, poetry, and tea ceremonies, as well as architecture including the art techniques that involved symbolism. The information obtained from the study was used to create high fashion designs.

The hypothesis is as follow 1. Wabi-Sabi aesthetics are interpreted to concepts, such as naturalness, impermanence, imperfection, etc. Can Wabi-Sabi concepts really be applied into high fashion? 2. Is it possible to apply natural dyed hand-woven fabrics produced in the country for high fashion

2. Objectives

- 1 To study and analyze Wabi-Sabi philosophy and collect concepts.
- 2 To apply the concept of Wabi-sabi Philosophy in fashion design titled “Nature: Impermanence”
- 3 To experiment with woven fabrics from natural fibers in Thailand in high fashion design and sewing.

3. Materials and Methods

3.1 Woven fabrics from natural materials in Lampang province

Having an opportunity to survey the weaving site, a community enterprise is found. Its name is Baan Tuup Kaew Ma, Natural Color Hand-spun Cotton Weaving Group at Nadoa village, Serm Ngam District, Lampang Province. The housewives are gathered to weave and produce lifestyle products in the village. Natural yarn is used in weaving and dyed with natural colors such as Indigo (*Indigofera Tinctorial*) to be blue, Shellac to be dark pink. Takhian Nu (*Anogeissus Acuminata*) leaves turn yellow. Ebony turns brown, gray or black, etc. In addition, dyes are mixed to obtain more colors such as purple, green, light pink, etc. Cotton is grown in the village with organic standards, non-toxic. Normally in northern part of Thailand the Hom (*Strobilanthes*) is dyed to be blue color. Currently, Hom is found difficult to grow in this area. So, the Indigo is ordered from some provinces in North-Eastern part of Thailand. However, the indigo color procedure is created by the villagers. All of the fabrics are woven and spun and also winded by hands with the looms and antique bobbins.

Materials which are mostly used in this research are natural color cotton fabrics in off white color and natural brown color. Some Pineapple yarns in natural color are spun, winded and woven in the village. Later, because of its short yarn, some problems are occurred in the weaving process. So, in the future some longer yarn will be ordered, of which are spun and winded by machine from Prachuap Khiri Khan Province. Hemp yarn with natural color are also ordered from nearby provinces, for instant Chiang Mai Province and Mae Hon Son Province, they are dyed in dark indigo in Nadoa village. Moreover, the Linen yarn with natural color is imported from foreign country. they are ordered from some distributors in Thailand However, the yarn was dyed in blue in the village.

3.2 Analysis

Wabi-Sabi Philosophy

Aesthetics in Japan (Wikipedia, 2019) derives from the influence of Zen Buddhism that spread around the year 500-1000 A.D. Zen spread from China and, later, arrived in Japan. However, there were obstacles in building Zen faith due to the original Japanese spiritual beliefs at that time. Some Japanese studied Buddhism, strictly and the by-products. Those interested in art create some poems while studying Dharma. Later, it became the evidence of Japanese beauty or aesthetics and could be found in poetry in early literature. Japanese artists need to create art with their own identity, because, in the ancient time, they created

art (interactiongreen.com. n.d. (a)) on which influence came from China (Yurt, & Basarir, 2020) Wabi-Sabi happened around 14th and 15th century (Kobayashi, 2019)

The Impermanence

In the 19th century, Japanese aesthetics or "Japonism" became popular and influential in Western art. Some groups of artists, designers, and writers were inspired by Japonism. Japanese art and aesthetics widely spread and also appeared in research and writings on the Wabi-Sabi philosophy by many foreigners until now. They summarized the meaning of the Wabi-Sabi philosophy stated in writings, such as Koren (1994) Wikipedia (2019); interactiongreen.com 2019b, Nov.21.); Lafayette (2006); Kempton (2018); Parkes (2018); Kobayashi (2019)

Some Japanese terms like Mujo (unsustainability or vanity) and Utsurou (emptiness) are related to religious ideas from Buddhism. Some Japanese people who are interested discovered spiritual answers by themselves. Since the Heian Period, Japanese people also created both poetry and literature from the truth that believe that nothing was uncertain. Thus, they used the word "Mujo" (interactiongreen.com. 2019 Nov. 11) or "Impermanence" (Kempton, 2018) from Buddhism insight, meaning that everything in the world was vain. Nothing lasts and of course, no one should be attached to the surrounding things such as money, wealth, rank, and everything including love and happiness because one thing could happen, exist, and be gone (interactiongreen.com, 2019b, Nov. 21)

In accordance with the study, it was found that the Heian period (794-1185) was the beginning of the propagation of Buddhism which was the opposite of the idea of spirituality including God in the invisible nature. It is inexplicable to the ancient Japanese. Buddhism is therefore a belief and a foundation of understanding that is contrary to traditional thinking. The "Emptiness" or "Ku" in Buddhism is difficult to believe.

In interactiongreen.com. (2019b Nov. 21) Parkes (2018) and Kempton (2018) the novel "Genji," another novel considering the culmination of "Mono no Aware" was also mentioned. "The Tale of Genji" is a novel written in 1008 (interactiongreen.com. 2019 (a) Nov. 21). It is considered an old novel and the last copy was written by Murasaki Shikibu. In one part of the novel, she described Genji's loss and his need for a relationship with one working woman whom he was in love. Shikibu interpreted "empty", and then she used the symbol of a robe to show her decision. It means 'no' ("empty" or "Ku" in Buddhism) which was symbolized by the robe that she left behind

That is to say, things are transient. There is no absolute of the love of a woman or to name a lasting relationship. In the interpretation of "Wabi-Sabi" it is a display of calmness and humble beauty expressed in literature and most of the authors also use symbolic signs. It does not adhere to Western stereotypes. "Wabi" means simple and has little detail. It is similar to Minimalism (less is more), which is the key identity of "Wabi-Sabi" which also appreciates natural beauty. In addition to its simplicity, "Wabi" also has humility and naturalness. In essence, Sabi means loneliness and admiration of things that have changed over time and that changes cannot control the natural process of change (Yurt, & Basarir, 2020) Overall, Japanese arts clearly emphasized rough, simple, aged things as the image of Wabi-Sabi aesthetics.

Yurt and Basarir (2020); Kobayashi (2018) mentioned about things connected with reality, understanding, and the value of emptiness and that nothing was perfect. According to the principle of nature in Buddhism, even in every universe or in every particle, human beings are not real while aesthetics emphasizes the idea of the beauty of what is present. Some Japanese works of art were also created with some stages of imperfection The impermanence is natural, but it is sustainable and conveys completeness for Japanese art. In other words, it is a kind of beauty that each word is expressed differently which can be described as an obscure beauty (Green Milly, 2017).

The important aesthetics that can be explained often arise from culture, traditions and way of life. The appreciation of art in Japan has different feelings towards beauty appraisal, or artistic beauty. "Mono no Aware" is one of Japanese aesthetics aspects in accepting beauty. That is to say, beauty just like the word 'excellence' should show emotion to the audience or readers. It is interpreted to an exclamation of "oh" or "ah" during a feeling of joy, excitement, sympathy, sadness, or an unbearable expression of emotion. For "Mono no", it means "things or events that" can connect and relate feelings of "Aware" (means being impressed) to the audience. Therefore, "Mono no Aware" is a phrase that arises from surprise with the intrinsic or the essence that appears in things or events (interactiongreen.com. 2019a, Nov. 21)

In other words, Mono no Aware in Japan is a feeling of emotion that allows the audience to connect and access to authors' or artists' thoughts. The audience is programmed to appreciate art; therefore, any art presented has the power to stimulate that feeling just as aesthetically pleasing (interactiongreen.com n.d. (b)) "Wabi" means lessening or cutting principled beauty while "Sabi" refers to something plain, rustic, coarse, like hand-spun thread or a surface layer that has developed over time as a stain. "Yugen" means mysterious, profound, and so, deeply concealed. "Iki" refers to a refined, or new idea of painting (hiding some erotic representation). Kire or elimination (Parkes, 2018) There are also different forms of beauty, such as "Shibui", which means astringent or raw, simple, and straightforward. The beauty of "Shibui" is the beauty that manifests in complete harmony with nature, and there is an image that affects the viewer's perception. "Shibui" and "Wabi-Sabi" are the fundamental themes of Japanese traditional culture as well as philosophy, emotion, spirit, and mindset. (Kaygi, 2020).

De Monte summarizes some key words in "Wabi-Sabi" philosophy for designers, such as "Simplicity or Honshitsu" "Kire" means cutting out until it becomes really necessary or showing the essence of quality. "Seizui" means the same as "Kire" which may be translated to purity or concentration or essence of things. "Shizenbi" means "natural beauty" or having the spirit of nature. "Wa" means "law of the land is harmony." "Heisei" means peace of mind or tranquility. "Iki" means the emergence of a new form of artistic creation. Yugen is mentioned as well. It means a mysterious feeling and what is hidden in the dark. (Lafayette, 2006)

Cutting or "Kire" means leaving only the necessity or essence of things. Emotions and feelings are distilled from their essence into seeds that grow into leafless trees. As a result of Buddhism insight, people should practice until they find the "Enlightenment"

Moreover, Kempton (2018) concluded that the terms most commonly used in "Wabi-Sabi" included, asymmetrical, atmospheric, flawed beauty, humble, imperfect, irregular, marks of passage of time, modest, natural, nostalgic, raw, rough, simple, serene, soulful, subtle, etc.

Such important aesthetics arise from evidence from life, way of life, living, and behaviors. Then, it appears in poetry, literature, tea ceremony and equipment, architecture, painting, performing arts, etc. All the aesthetics as previously mentioned led to a research study which analyzed data to create "Nature: Impermanence" in fashion design. The symbolism technique of creating things in literature and the idea of architecture were used as well.

Haute Couture Design

Fashion products lead the way in shapes, forms, colors, materials and details. Designs are changed every season to develop fresh images for customers. Seasonal introduction of designs are popular to customers. Fashion without a plan can be a sham, and a creation for the target group or consumers is preferable. However, fashion clothing is particularly complex, it is a kind of art from the soul more than the look. Designers have to work in relation to consumer needs, both beauty and the mood of the atmosphere at that time. According to the concept of the design, it is often criticized and debated by fashion critics. Fashion apparels are also often featured on catwalks and media such as magazines, electronic media, etc. Fashion design also depends on as the climate of politics, economy, and technology.

The so-called fashion segmentation, Haute Couture or High Fashion, is grouped by taste, budget and occasion (e.g. daywear, evening gown). The word Haute Couture is derived from French; "Haute" mean high, fine and exquisite. Couture means luxury clothes, dress and so on. It has become a business that is special in designing, sewing and selling to consumers. Luxury fashion makes the price high. Most of them are sewn by hand and they are the most expensive apparels in the fashion design range (Matharu, 2010). In Thailand, the term "High Fashion" is mainly used to create designs, sewing, or hand embroidery. It has different principles as compared to France which is not applicable to high fashion.

High Fashion apparels are often made of fabrics with high quality, sometimes having bright and shiny surfaces that are created by machines and using high technology in production. They always present a luxurious appearance and using expensive materials such as silk woven by machines and desired patterns. This research used the concept of "Nature: Impermanence" to show a new design perspective, and it causes controversy in High Fashion of Western standards. For instance, highlighting the possibility of using hand-woven fabrics from natural fibers for high-fashion apparels which expresses nature from the concept of "Impermanence" that tells the story of the search for Japanese aesthetics history. There should be an

agreement of the fine and neat stitching in measuring as tailor specified, and tryouts on the wearer. For typical High Fashion designs, the inspiration is most unclear. It is more of a creative approach to art. Clothing is created and approached in a simple and elegant way, in accordance with the Wabi Sabi philosophy.

“Wabi-Sabi” philosophy in design research

In conclusion, Wabi-Sabi philosophy is the aesthetics that linked to Zen by considering things from Buddhism insight about the impermanence of nature, life and daily living. There is no absolute permanence and no ending existence. All lives and things are in the circle of birth, old age, sickness, and death, and others even believe in another next life. Beauty shows the origin and where it goes (birth, old age, sickness, and death). It shows the beauty of lives and things that would change. It is impermanent, uncertain, incomplete, imperfect or unfinished etc. What has happened is not permanent. Therefore, the following are the points of conclusion of “Wabi-Sabi” in this research.

1. According to "The Tale of Genji" which is a novel written by Murasaki Shikibu in 1008, is considered an old novel and the only remaining copy. In one part of the book, Shikibu interprets the answer 'no' and uses symbolism of the robe that has been left behind. ("Empty" or "Ku" in Buddhism (interactiongreen.com. 2019a Nov. 21; Parkes, 2018) The idea of practicing “Symbolism” is applied in the whole collection.
2. Due to the images of the Golden Pavilion and the Silver Pavilion, which exemplify the evolution of the Wabi-Sabi aesthetics in early Muromachi and late Muromachi periods (interactiongreen.com. 2019a Nov. 24; Parkes, 2018) apparently showed conflicts of thoughts and create conflict to the ideas presented. It is the same concept as Mujo and Utsuro, meaning “Impermanence”, sometime, it means emptiness. The “Impermanence” concept is applied in the whole collection.
3. Shibusa is an aesthetic attitude. Its key elements of naturalness include an unusual shape, simplicity, subtle delicacy, naturalness, peace, tranquility, normality, plainness, etc. in everyday life. It is especially blended with different elements to create a timeless beauty (Casebier, 2006, p. 227-230 as cited in Parkes, 2018), and these concepts were used in design no. 1-3
4. Wabi is the beauty of simplicity (Kempton, 2018; Kobayashi, 2018; Ray, 2018). In other word, beauty which has limitations, sometime looks rigid. The most important thing of “Wabi” is the beauty that reduces or cuts the unnecessary (Kire) until it only shows simplicity. “Sabi” refers to a rough surface, homegrown, loneliness, despair, with the appreciation of the possibilities of things that passed through time (Parkes, 2018.(n.p.)). Natural fibers spun and woven by hand fabric were chosen to be used in all designs. Moreover, it emphasized the beauty of simplicity in design no. 4
5. “Kire” is found in cutting out words which is the art of Haiku poetry that means cutting out some words, and it is connected to the next lines of the poem. That is found in the anthology written by Matsuo Basho. This technique is used of cutting or reducing the entire poetry collection, and the concept of “Simplicity” which unfolds from design no.1-5 was used.
6. “Kintsugi” (Repairing the broken things especially pottery. Fixing the broken parts together by using gold, silver or platinum powder) is applied. The repair is the evidence that each poetry repair is treated with pleasure to see what actually happened in history. (Richman-Abdou, 2019). It was applied in design no.5.
7. The concept of changing style to new level, called “Iki” (interactiongreen.com. 2019b Nov. 24; 2019 Dec. 6) in the history of early “Edo” period (with some imprinted meanings of sex) was also applied in design no.5.
8. Storytelling about evolution of aesthetics from the Heian period to the early Edo period is applied in the whole collection.

In conclusion, symbolism technique has been practiced in design, complete with storytelling about the impermanence of things and life. “Kire” (The cutting-off technique) is used in order to show “Simplicity” from nature as much as possible. Kintsugi (the repairing technique), represents connection with new “Wabi-Sabi”. Some concepts in “Wabi-Sabi” philosophy are used as well.

Story Telling in the Collection

It all begins from Buddhist insight, which is the matter of “Impermanence” to study and to learn naturally from nature. Some of the pilgrims understood the meaning of impermanence, the simplicity of things, and true appreciation of what had passed through time.

Evolution of Japanese’s search for Wabi-Sabi aesthetics is supposed to have happen in the Heian period, during the peak of Shogun's power. Wealthy merchants who traded with China and always used Chinese expensive products also appreciated Chinese arts, collected the valuable Chinese potteries, and competed among themselves. At the same time, there was a movement of pursuing Japanese aesthetics identity. It appears in groups seeking aesthetics, such as sages, ascetics, soldiers and villagers who were interested in searching for Japanese aesthetics. Starting from Buddhist insight which is the matter of unsustainability or impermanence study and learn naturally from nature, some of them such as pilgrims found the meaning of impermanence, the simplicity of things, true appreciation of what had passed through time.

Furthermore, Japanese writers also use symbolism, producing excellent works of art (Mono no Aware). In the pursuit of power, people who engaged in war suffered from poverty and loss which was clearly expressed in “Onin,” the uncertainty of things. It clearly influenced the concept of “Wabi-Sabi” aesthetics. It can be said that, the idea of “Simplicity” was likely to arise from poverty. The people who lived in poverty admired the beauty of “Simplicity” and “Naturalness”.

Consideration

The creative research results are reviewed in 2 ways and divided into 2 groups: 1. The use of natural materials in high fashion design and sewing is reviewed by 3 experts; marketers, designers and academics. 2. Creative design research is reviewed by The Committee of 10th International Design Symposium “Work in Progress: Clean Design”, College of Design, Rangsit University, of 5 experts; namely artists and designers.

4. Results



Figure 1 1st Design

Storytelling: It started in the early Muromachi period with a group of wealthy and extravagant shoguns who showed conflicting ideas against the Wabi-Sabi concept group. The lavishness of the Shogun and other wealthy people preferred art that come from China. In the late Muromachi period, the Shogun who pursued identity of Japanese aesthetics, and people accepted the idea of “Wabi-Sabi” showed “Simplicity”. Thus, in this age of Muromachi, it appeared that the unsustainability or conflicted ideas changed, and found entirely the concept of impermanence in the architectural concept of the Golden pavilion and the Silver Pavilion.

Concept: “Conflict of thought”

Design Process: The imperfect long and short dress represents the controversial of ideas between shoguns in the area of architecture. A long dress with an overcoat represents extravagance and luxury was used to symbolize the “Conflict of thoughts.”. “Impermanence” is gradually becoming apparent. The technique of cutting out or "Kire" was used, and letting some parts of dress hang loose presented naturalness. Moreover, the use of folk textile materials with spinning and weaving and the use of natural dyes, e.g. indigo and ebony, are the examples of “Wabi-Sabi” mood.



Figure 2 2nd Design

Storytelling: Expressing the idea of the “Impermanence” inherent in the nature of life, such as the losses in wars. It gives a feeling of scarcity, survival, and the spontaneity of power and loss.

Concept: “Shibusa” or naturalness is an aesthetic attitude with key elements of an unusual shape, simplicity and, subtle delicacy.

Design process: Natural shapes that were unusual, incomplete, blending different designs with a long dress inside and also the ornamental outer dress that was partially cut off symbolized and represented the “Natural” concept. Cutting off technique or "Kire" showed asymmetry and represent “Naturalness”. Folk textile materials with spun yarn and hand-woven natural colors represented “Simplicity” as well. A combination of nature, peace, tranquility, normalcy, normal everyday life, especially blending with different elements showed a timeless beauty (Casebier, 2006, p. 227-230).



Figure 3 3rd Design

Storytelling: The quest for aesthetics of Japanese design continued, sometimes confusing. It is like the creation of Chashitsu in various designs crafted for tea ceremony. The creation of a tea room of Rikyu is very small showing simplicity with different objectives. It may contribute to the solemnity of the ceremonial leaders and attendees or for the participants to indulge in the aesthetics or beauty of gestures, atmosphere and equipment, etc.

Concept: The pursuit of “Wabi-Sabi” aesthetics were confused along the way. The interpretation of the “Confusion” concept was conducted to create a work that showed both confusion and simplicity. Creating with beauty that is limited looks strict. The most importance of “Wabi” is the beauty that has been reduced to what is not necessary or it is cut (Kire) until only what is necessary is retained. “Sabi” is rough texture which expresses loneliness, despair, and limited time.

Design Process: The dress is white and a long cloth is folded back and forth, the hand-woven material with rough-textured cotton, symbolized the concept of “Confusion” and “Simplicity”. It also represented the confusing path of seeking Wabi-Sabi beauty. Nevertheless, this work also showed a cut that is not yet at its core.



Figure 4 4th design

Storytelling: “Kire” was found in cutting words and appeared in the art of Haiku poetry. It is the elimination of descriptions. Meanwhile, the meaning is connected to the next line of the poem. Such an anthology written by Basho, Sen no Rikyu's teacups and vases are simple, vases are simple. The story of "Genji" by Matsuo Shikibu also cut out the explanation, and she used the symbol instead. The story of "Genji" by Matsuo Shikibu also cut out the explanation, and she used the symbol instead.

Concept: “Simplicity” using cutting off, or “Kirei” technique was applied. Cutting it off to become a leafless sapling.

Design Process: A single piece of fabric symbolized and represented “Simplicity”. It was cutting out an unnecessary thing to the core or sapling without leaves. It also represented peace, happiness, humility, and desolation. “Wa-Sabi” in the Muromachi era was interpreted like teacups and vases of Rikyu's tea ceremony



Figure 5 5th design

Storytelling: After Muromachi, “Wabi-Sabi” is supposed to be clear. Japanese aesthetics have evolved and extended their identity in many directions. At the same time, it has spread and has been developed all over the world. However, the pursuit of simplicity as part of Japanese identity in the modern time has evolved from “Iki” style in early Edo period until now.

Concept: “Emergence”; the pursuit of simplicity

Design Process: In the pursuit of simplicity of Wabi-Sabi from the Muromachi era to the present, a simple square shape and patchwork technique in different colors at the back of the dress or Kintsugi technique represented “Emergence” concept. The design was attempted to demonstrate a new development idea of Wabi-Sabi as new “Simplicity”. As the result of “Iki”, the creation of a painting style that implied a new style in the early Edo period was also imprinted in the “Emergence” concept. Hand-woven fabrics from pineapple fibers were represented as simple, homegrown and interpreted to represent “Wabi-Sabi”.

5. Discussion

The one who is interested in “Wabi-Sabi” philosophy must be suspicious as to why Japanese people express their mystery in terms of ideas currently used in Manga, sushi, cosplay, Japanese street style (subculture), anime, robots, etc. However, “Simplicity” is the most recognizable identity of Japanese aesthetics. Nevertheless, the relentless pursuit of simplicity in design has never stopped, showing the unsustainability of things and new concepts come along with time. Many designers and artists around the world extend the idea of Japonism. It is applied to new and original creations by famous artists, such as Frank Lloyd Wright, the father of Minimalism and Le Corbusier, who cut the wall in a box shape and let the lights get into the room as Japanese architecture designers do etc.

Until today, the experiment in simplicity, less is more, is dramatically famous all over the world. In parts, designers just want to expand their ideas influenced by Wabi-Sabi philosophy. Many Japanese product designers, such as Oki Sato, create their works based on the philosophy of “Wabi-Sabi”. At present, designers with their DNA “Wabi-Sabi” present new creative works, and the audience can see the movement of those works. It is not significant to report that Japanese fashion designers, Rei Kawakubo and Yohji Yamamoto, used “Wabi-Sabi” philosophy as only as remarkable consideration. However, they have various concepts without using the concrete of Japanese style in the international arena anymore. They dare to create their works with original ideas that are different from each other. According to the Japanese aesthetics, the “Wabi-Sabi” philosophy was widespread in the western world in the 1900s.

In studying the history of Wabi-Sabi from the Heian period to the early Edo period found such philosophy. It's a part of the Japanese aesthetics which is caused by changes in society, culture, living from prosperity to the hardships of people in society. Along with the desire to pursue a unique beauty, aesthetics was created by Japanese people themselves. "Everything in the world is vain" or impermanent is the main focus of the research. Evidence of discovered aesthetics are derived from literature, poetry, and tea ceremonies, as well as architecture. Some techniques in art that involved the use of symbolism were also included. The information obtained from the study was used to create High Fashion.

For “Simplicity” concept, it should be clearer that the works were designed simply as “Wabi-Sabi” concept. Things that passed the time might influence the ‘Simplicity’ concept. Therefore, the work had to be eliminated to be simply in this research. However, the idea of things that passed the time could be applied as the imitation of mending things with neat and clean would result in further research. Moreover, in this research, it was difficult to sew neatly by hand because of the flexible woven fabrics which was not tight enough. Therefore, it could be only done trying out to fit the wearer. However, there were some parts that needed to be sewn by hand.

In order to use cotton and pineapple hand-woven fabrics, one should be careful; (1) Hand woven from natural brown cotton have a rough texture. They should be damped and keep in plastic bag for a while before ironing otherwise the fabric will be rough and unusable (2) Hand-woven fabric from pineapple fibers, one must understand that Pineapples have short fibers. Therefore, it must be spun with cotton before weaving. It has a rough texture and is easy to tear. It must be preserved in order to be used for a long time. In addition, hand-woven cotton, linen and hemp soften after washing.

6. Conclusion

The study of “Wabi-Sabi” philosophy will be more understandable if the reader has basic information in Buddhist teachings. There is some more knowledge of important Buddhist insight involving the enlightened principles which are "Trilak" (three characteristics), consisting of teachings on the subject of Anicca (impermanence/ transiency) Dukkha (state of suffering), Anatta (non-self).

In conclusion, all experiences combining with the study of “Wabi-Sabi” were analyzed to be the body of knowledge which would be successful in some level to finish the research. It is the application of “Wabi-Sabi” philosophy to create the apparel designs, “Nature: Impermanence”. Symbolism, simplicity and some inspirations were applied added to the diversion of the concept of Wabi-Sabi. The interpretation of “Wabi” concepts was in the main designs while “Sabi” was in minor designs in this research. The focus group gave some feedback for the research outcome, identifying that using natural fibers and hand-woven fabrics for high fashion produced average or fair quality products. The designs were satisfactory. The outcome of the study could be used as an example in product development at Nadao village, Lampang Province in Thailand.

Reviewers’ opinion are as follows

(1) Focus group, who considers the use of natural materials in high fashion design and sewing, has commented that hand-woven cotton may only be used moderately in haute couture. Creativity is average to good and overall is good

(2) The Committee of international Symposium “Working in Progress” No. 10, College of Design, Rangsit University, creative works reviewer who has commented on the creative design that overall is good to very good.

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