

***Embracing Difference:
Two Case Studies of Western Painting Style Embroidery in China***

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Abstract

This study explores how traditional Chinese embroidery representing the special texture of western paintings through changes in stitch, color and manuscript through case analysis. Chinese embroidery is one of the most important traditional arts and crafts, which developed through thousands of years' profound culture. It was originally focusing on representing Ink Art painting and was named "Painting Embroidery (畫繡)", which is one kind of ornamental embroidery. With the traditional ornamental embroidery declining, embroidery artists began to absorb the characteristics of western paintings, especially emphasizing on colour combination. In the past, the pattern suitable for embroidery was limited to traditional Chinese paintings. Nowadays, it seems that all kinds of paintings can be referred to. In order to represent these paintings, the selection of stitch, colour and manuscript must be changed. This research emphasizing on two embroidery techniques, namely, the "Emulational Embroidery" (仿真繡) created by Shou Shen (沈壽) and the "Random Stitch Embroidery" (亂針繡) created by Shouyu Yang (楊守玉). By using case study, this research expects to understand the innovation of Chinese embroidery techniques. It is found that "Random Stitch Embroidery" is the stacking of embroidery threads by using the density, layer, length and interweaving of needles and threads, showing the changes of light and shadow to reflect the sense of space in western painting. "Emulational Embroidery" stitch imitates the sketch strokes and adopts the method of virtual and real needles for embroidery, paying more attention to the changes of light and shadow in the picture in colour.

Keywords: Chinese Embroidery, Western Paintings, Stitch, Colour

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Introduction

Chinese embroidery has a long history and profound culture. It has been a traditional technique in China for more than 3,000 years, counting from the ruins of the Western Zhou Dynasty (Duoduo Zhang, 2006). It is a kind of practical and ornamental arts and crafts. After the evolution of The Times and regional changes, embroidery derived hundreds of techniques and factions, such as the Qing Dynasty's four famous embroidery: Su Embroidery (蘇繡), Xiang Embroidery (湘繡), Yue Embroidery (粵繡), Shu Embroidery (蜀繡). No matter be the dress that civilian daily needs, bedding, or the "Painting Embroider" (畫繡) in the study and boudoir cannot leave delicate embroidery art almost.

However, the appearance of "Painting Embroidery" is the first attempt to combine painting and embroidery in the history of Chinese embroidery. It is the blending of pigment on the fabric to supplement the effect that embroidery cannot achieve. In short, The embroidery that is half embroidered and half painted. During the Song Dynasty, embroidery began to struggle with calligraphy and painting from its original practicality. Since then, embroidery appreciation has emerged as an independent art form in China's art world. Just as the painting of the Song Dynasty occupies an important position in the history of art, the "painting embroidery" of the Song Dynasty also leaves a glorious page in the history of embroidery (Sun, Peilan, 2007).

It originated in the Song Dynasty and reached its peak during the "Gu Embroidery (顧繡)" period of the Qing Dynasty. At that time, the embroidery manuscript of the painting embroidery was basically based on Chinese painting, with the theme of landscape and flowers and birds. However, it laid a foundation for the Chinese embroidery form which was later integrated with western culture and art. Among them, the most important two embroidery method is the "Emulational Embroidery (仿真繡)" created by Shou Shen (沈壽) and the "Random Stitch Embroidery (亂針繡)" created by Shouyu Yang (楊守玉). They developed a new style of embroidery and presented this traditional Oriental art in a form more recognizable to the western world. They combined the two differences, so that the western world has more new knowledge of traditional Chinese embroidery art. Thus, it promotes the artistic and cultural exchanges between China and the west.

This study will sort out the works of two embroidery artists and analyze their embroidery drafts, stitching techniques and color performance. Discuss the differences between them and traditional Chinese embroidery, and discuss how they use traditional needlework to express western artistic style. The objective of this study is as follow:

1. To analyze how "Emulational Embroidery" and "Random Stitch Embroidery" embrace the differences between east and west:

The expression form difference between Chinese traditional embroidery and western art is big, how does these two kinds of embroider kind change tradition and undertake innovation, what is their concrete manifestation form? Chinese traditional embroidery and western art of the form of expression is different, the two kinds of embroidery are how to change the traditional and innovative, their specific form of expression is

what.

2. To make these changes in the creation of traditional art accessible to more people.

Literature Review


The evolution of embroidery techniques


The stitch of embroidery is the decisive factor affecting the style of the whole embroidery work, and it is also the most direct way to identify the category of embroidery. The innovation of modern Chinese embroidery is based on the traditional Chinese style and incorporates the characteristics of western painting, emphasizing color and light. Most of the traditional Chinese embroidery products we have seen in the past tend to be flat totem images and later Chinese ink painting. In modern times, it seems that all painting schools can become the manuscript of embroidery.

However, each style has its own stitching method suitable for presentation. For example, photography works or oil paintings need to use "Random Stitch Embroidery" method to present the mixed color effect of oil paintings with various chaotic color lines. Landscapes, courtyards, flowers, birds and figures in Traditional Chinese painting are applicable to the "Needle Nesting" (套针) method, which is characterized by uniform color mixing and highlights a fresh and elegant realistic landscape (Liu, Fengxia, Li, Fengxian, Zhang, Yanqing, 2003).

From the point of view of embroidery technique, according to the running track of needle and the structure formed, its basic stitch can be divided into two categories: ring stitch and straight stitch. These two kinds of basic stitch are the most basic unit of embroidery. At the same time, different stitch can be organized and matched on this basis to form several specific stitches. The stitch of Chinese embroidery has been enriched for thousands of years while some ancient techniques have been slowly forgotten by The Times. Through the collection and arrangement of literature, this study aims to understand the evolution of traditional Chinese embroidery techniques and its representative artistic products, and to compare with the representative period of Western art in the same period.

Table 1: The emergence of "Emulational Embroidery" and "Random Stitch Embroidery" and their representative products and the comparison table of western art and culture period

Time	Evolution of Common Stitches	Representative Cultural Relics	Description
Qing Dynasty (1616-1911)	1. Embroidery began to form its own unique artistic		

<p>Rococo Period (Early 18th century ~ middle 18th century)</p> <p>Classicism (late 18th century ~ first half of 19th century)</p> <p>Neoclassicism (late 18th century ~ first half of 19th century)</p> <p>Romantism (early 19th century)</p> <p>Impressionism (late 19th century ~ early 20th century)</p>	<p>school.</p> <p>Su Embroidery Xiang Embroidery Shu Embroidery Yue Embroidery</p> <p>2. Shen, Shou initiated "Emulational Embroidery" (1909)</p>	<p><i>The Portrait of the Italian Queen-Alina</i></p> <p>It won a prize at the Italian world's fair in 1911. It was given to Italy as a national gift.</p>
<p>Republican period (1912 ~1949)</p> <p>Impressionism (late 19th century ~ early 20th century)</p> <p>Modernism (20th century)</p>	<p>At the end of the 1920s, Yang, Shouyu initiated "Random Stitch Embroidery"</p>	 <p><i>The Portrait of Roosevelt</i></p> <p>It was given to the United States as a national gift in 1945.</p>

Data Source: This study

"Emulational Embroidery" — Shen, Shou (1874-1921)



像肖士女壽沈余

Figure 1: Portrait of Shen, Shou of Italy in 1911





Figure 2: A medal from the empress

She pioneered the art of embroidery combining western painting styles -- "Emulational Embroidery". This kind of embroidery works pursue the "real" effect, so the colors are rich and bold. Shen shou is good at using needles to show the light and shade changes in her works. Shen, Shou created the "virtual and real stitch" and

"rotating stitch", which are similar to the sketch. This style of embroidery is as delicate as a western oil painting, but the luster produced by the silk thread under different lights and angles makes the embroidery more vivid than the painting. She pioneered the use of needles instead of brushes in Chinese embroidery. Although Shen Shou created a new style of embroidery, it still inherits the essence of traditional Su Embroidery, which is "neat, smooth, straight, even, thin and dense" (Pan, Jianhua, 2009). "Emulational Embroidery" is a new way to carry out the old art.

Table 2: Shen, Shou's representative work of "Emulational Embroidery"

 <p><i>American Actress – Beecher</i> (美国女优倍克像) 1916-1919 (In the Nanjing Museum)</p>	 <p><i>The Portrait of Jesus</i> (耶稣像) 1913-1914 (In the Nanjing Museum)</p>	 <p><i>The Portrait of the Italian Queen – Alina</i> (意大利皇后爱丽娜) 1910 (In Italy Museum)</p>
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"Random Stitch Embroidery" — Yang, Shouyu (1896—1981)



Figure 3: Portrait of Yang, Shouyu

The "Random Stitch Embroidery" was created by Yang, Shouyu. This kind of stitch absorbed the brushwork and color characteristics of Western paintings. This embroidery style is unique, although it originates from Su Embroidery. It surpasses Su Embroidery. Although it is called "Random Stitch", it is actually arranged in an orderly way. Yang, Shouyu used overlapping silk lines to express the artistic style of western painting, which has a strong artistic expression. It is the major breakthrough of Chinese traditional embroidery for thousands of years, and it is the representative product of the fusion of western painting art and Chinese traditional embroidery art.

"Random Stitch Embroidery" and "Emulational Embroidery" are to absorb western art to apply in Chinese traditional embroidery likewise, but Shen Shou is with new idea, carry old skill, and Yang, Shouyu is with new idea, carry new skill.

Table 3: Yang, Shouyu's representative work of "Random Stitch Embroidery"

 <p><i>The Portrait of Tolstoy</i> (托尔斯泰) 1931 (Private Collection)</p>	 <p><i>The Maid</i> (少女) 1931 (In Suzhou University)</p>
 <p><i>Beauty and the Skeleton</i> (美女与骷髅) 1937 (Private Collection)</p>	 <p><i>The Portrait of Roosevelt</i> (罗斯福像) 1945 (In American Art Museum)</p>



Research Method

This study will analyze the case studies of Shen, Shou and Yang, Shouyu's works, and analyze the style characteristics of embroidery products from the aspects of stitch, color and light performance. Discuss the commonality between their embroidery style and western painting art.

Their embroidery works are numerous and varied. In order to make a better comparison of their embroidery, this study chose the embroidery with the same theme. This study takes portrait as the research direction, and chooses Shen, Shou's "Emulational Embroidery" -- *The Portrait of Jesus* and Yang, Shouyu's "Random Stitch Embroidery" -- *The Portrait of Roosevelt*. In addition to the theme of the same

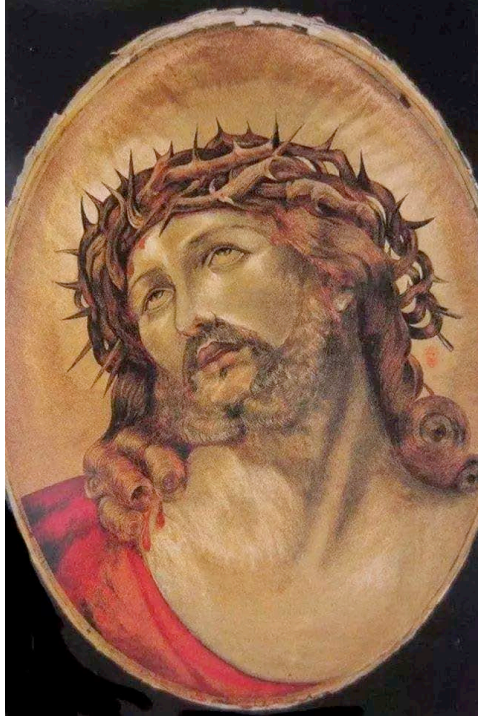
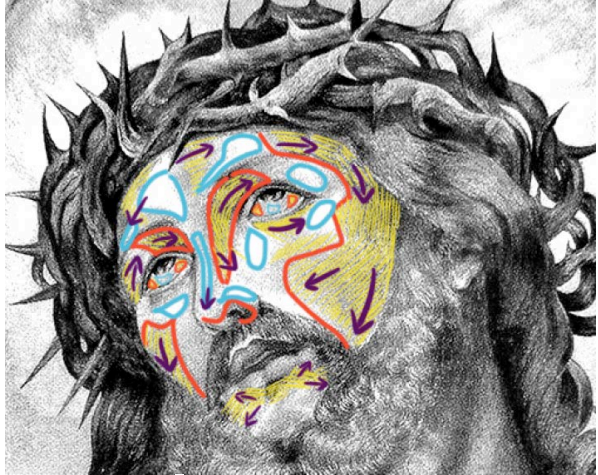
portrait, the source of embroidered manuscripts are oil paintings. At the same time, they were representative in the eyes of the Western world at that time.

Table 4: Description of sample

Creator	The embroidery style	work	The embroidery draft	Description
Shen, Shou	Emulational Embroidery	 <i>The Portrait of Jesus</i>	• Oil Painting	It won first prize in the Panamanian International Exposition in 1915.
Yang, Shouyu	Random Stitch Embroidery	 <i>The Portrait of Roosevelt</i>	• Oil Painting	It was given to the United States as a national gift in 1945.

Data Source: This study

Table 5: Analysis of *The Portrait of Jesus*

The Original Work	Schematic Diagram
 Figure 4: <i>The Portrait of Jesus</i>	 Figure 5: A Partial Black-and-White Sketch of <i>The Portrait of Jesus</i> (The images were drawn by this study) Take the face of Jesus (The image was adjusted to black and white to enhance the contrast between light and dark.) • Range circled in blue: light side

(39.4cm*54.8cm)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range circled in red: dark side • Yellow line: embroidered thread • Purple arrow: directionality of silk threads
The source of the image: https://www.sohu.com	

Stitch: Virtual and Real Stitch-虛實針(initiative), Rotating Stitch-旋轉針(initiative) Shi Stitch-施針(Shu Embroidery), Bi Stitch-必針(Shu Embroidery), Jie Stitch-接針 (Shu Embroidery), Tao Stitch-套針(Shu Embroidery)

In stitch, Shen shou changed the traditional embroidery technique of arranging silk threads in a single direction. She arranged the direction of silk threads according to the human body's skeleton and texture. To achieve this effect, she created two new embroidery techniques, The Virtual and Real Stitch-虛實針 and The Rotating Stitch - 旋轉針.

Jesus' face uses a lot of Rotating Stitch to show the texture of the face. The focal point of the whole piece of embroidery is the part of the eye. The eyeball uses the fine silk thread with The Rotating Stitch to show the three – dimensional effect of the sphere. The white part of the eye is represented by The Virtual and Real Stitch. The place that approaches pupil uses the "Virtual Stitch", namely stitch length is long, silk thread color is shallow. And the "Real Stitch" was used in the near canthus and under the lower eyelid. The stitch length is short and dense, and its color is darker. Finally, the highlight of the eye uses the effect of white space, using the ground colour to show the transparent texture of the eye.

She broke through the uniform line arrangement in traditional Chinese figure embroidery. She uses the arrangement of rotating silk threads to embroider the layers of light on the face and the textures of the muscles. On the forehead, bridge of the nose, cheekbones and other areas receiving light, the silk threads are arranged in a smooth and dense manner. At the same time, Shen shou uses the smoothness of the silk line to enhance the effect of the bright part. Because neat silk thread can present better luster. The dark part is to use short silk thread to undertake the performance of skill of embroider of crisscrossing or Rotating Stitch, which reduce the burnish feeling of silk thread.

Colour: yellow, brown, red, black and white as the main color, and more than 110 kinds of silk thread colors

In order to achieve a realistic effect, Shen shou combines the silk thread of various colors on a needle for embroidery, in this way to show a variety of color changes under the light.



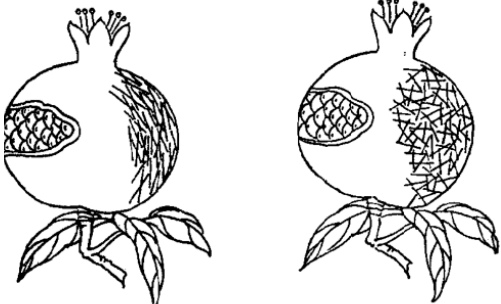

Changes of light and shadow:

In the light and shadow section, the area marked by red and blue in Figure 5 shows clearly that light is coming into Jesus' face from the upper left. The overall light and shade effect of the work is obvious, the color change of the transition area is smooth, and the highlight uses blank to express the effect.

The surface of the embroidery:

- Straight silk
- The thread is close, neat, even and flat

Table 6: Analysis of *The Portrait of Roosevelt*

The Original Work	Schematic Diagram
	
<p>Figure 6: <i>The Portrait of Roosevelt</i> (50cm*66.7cm)</p>	<p>Figure 7: A Partial Black-and-White Sketch of <i>The Portrait of Roosevelt</i></p>
<p>The source of the image: https://kiinii.com</p>	<p>(The images were drawn by this study)</p>
	<p>Take the face of Roosevelt (The image was adjusted to black and white to enhance the contrast between light and dark.)</p>
<p>Big Random Stitch (大亂針) Small Random Stitch (小亂針)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range circled in blue: light side • Range circled in red: dark side
<p>Figure 8: Stitch Diagram</p>	
<p>The source of the image: <i>"Random Stitch Embroidery" Method</i> Ren, Huixian, Zhou, Xunxian, Zhang, Meifang</p>	<p>Figure 9: Orientation Diagram of Silk Thread Arrangement.</p>
	<p>(The images were drawn by this study)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Yellow line: embroidered thread • Purple arrow: directionality of silk threads

Stitch:

- **Big Random Stitch-大亂針(initiative)**

It's called " Random Stitch ", and it has a certain directionality.

- **Small Random Stitch-小亂針(initiative)**

It's called a " Triangular Stitch ", and it has no direction.

"Random Stitch Embroidery" is made up of layers, similar to the steps of western painting. The first step of making is to embroider a layer of ground color on the surface of fabric and then to embroider the large part. After finishing whole embroider face colour and light and shade fundamental key, carry on the detail characterization. It follows the principle of "first light then dark, first simple then complex" (Mo, Yuanhua, 2016) .

This work in the stitch aspect basically use Big Random Stitch and Small Random Stitch, which are original embroidery skill.

The part that the figure receives light makes full use of the burnish feeling of silk thread. The line is fine and long, crossing level off. It gives priority to with Big Random Stitch. The performance of dark part wants to avoid the burnish of silk thread, line is thick, short, cross messy, give priority to with Small Random Stitch. "Random Stitch Embroidery" 's stitch is messy, but be not disorderly. According to the general trend of the stitches in Figure 9, the direction of the silk thread follows the facial texture and bone performance of the portrait.

Take the eye part of this work as an example. The eye is the most delicate part in the facial depiction, so it is more accurate and meticulous to use the stitch and use the fine silk thread to depict. From a sketching point of view, the eye can be divided into several areas to distinguish between changes in light and shade. The upper left part has a clear boundary line, but it is also formed by crossing silk threads. The boundary line of the backlight surface is fuzzy, the lines vary obviously with each other, mainly with short lines, rich in color changes.

Colour: Yellow, brown, red, blue, white and gray are predominant. The use of color is rich and bold.

When Yang, Shouyu applied the silk thread in layers, the color superposition of the silk thread was reasonable and the transition was smooth, which made the facial light and shade in the embroidery products clear and three-dimensional. Take eyelashes as an example, Yang, Shouyu does not use black silk line performance. Because the characters were influenced by the environment colour and light, the silk thread was mixed with yellow, brown, white and other colours.

Changes of light and shadow:

From the distribution of blue and red areas in Figure 7, it can be seen that the light source comes from the upper left of the work. The creator uses the direction of the silk thread arrangement and the way of color superposition to make the color transition soft and rich. This makes the light and shade of the face in the embroidery clear and strong sense of three-dimensional. The effect is vivid, not rigid.

The surface of the embroidery:

The density of the thread is even and moderate. In the part of the work that receives the light, the silk thread intersects clearly and flatly. On the contrary, the silk thread at the junction of light and shade is short, and the crossover Angle is large and dense.

Data Discussion

Table 7: Characteristics of works

Work	Stitch	Colour	The surface of the embroidery	Is the direction of the thread based on texture?	Is there any change of light and shade in the work?
<i>The Portrait of Jesus</i>	Virtual and Real Stitch-(initiative) Rotating Stitch-(initiative) + Traditional stitch in Su Embroidery	Yellow, brown, red, black and white... more than 110 kinds silk thread color	Straight silk, close, neat, even and flat	YES	YES
<i>The Portrait of Roosevelt</i>	Big Random Stitch-(initiative) Small Random Stitch-(initiative)	Yellow, brown, red, blue, white and grey...	Crossed threads, even and moderate	YES	YES

As can be seen from Table 7, the direction of the lines in the two embroidery works is to a certain extent based on the growth direction of the human body's skeleton and texture. Moreover, both embroidery works have the expression of light and three-dimensional sense.

In addition, two artists in order to achieve the western painting effect in embroidery needlework innovation. However, due to the use of different stitch, so that the effect of the whole embroidery is also different. "Emulational Embroidery" pays attention to neat, smooth, and "Random Stitch Embroidery" is disorderly in order. They have in common is that they are both rich and bold in the use of colour.

Research Conclusions

This study concludes that if traditional Chinese embroidery is to be integrated with western painting styles, it will be changed in three aspects, namely, the innovation of embroidery techniques, the expression of rich colors and the three-dimensional sense of embroidery. The most important thing is that their works follow the three-dimensional feeling and the changes of light in western paintings.

Shen shou's "Emulational Embroidery" is made by using the traditional techniques of Su Embroidery and integrating western painting, emphasizing the characteristics of

light and shade and perspective. The artistic style of the "Emulational Embroidery" is similar to the realism in western painting, emphasizing the change of the relationship between sketch and light, and pursuing the real effect.

"Random Stitch Embroidery" reformed traditional embroidery techniques and combined embroidery with the brushwork and color of western paintings. This style of embroidery is similar to the impressionist paintings in western paintings, focusing on the changes of light and color. It uses the seemingly free brushwork to realize the picture effect.

"Random Stitch Embroidery" uses human vision for color fusion. The embroidery thread of each color in the work of "Random Stitch Embroidery" exists truly. It achieves the effect of color fusion on the vision because of the special form of needlework. Each work is unique and cannot be copied.

I think this way of integrating Chinese and western culture gives more development direction and choice to Chinese traditional embroidery. It also enables the western society to better understand traditional Chinese art. Embroidery and oil painting originally come from different cultural backgrounds, but their combination gives a different light to traditional art. We should carry out more innovation and research on traditional skills, so that they can carry out cultural transmission and inheritance in another way while not being eliminated by The Times. Each art finds its best expression at different times.

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