

Utilizing the Aesthetic Properties of Felt Fabric as an Entry for Enriching Students' Skills in the Fashion Accessories Course

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Abstract

The study aims to develop the students' skills in the Fashion Accessories Course by recruiting the various aesthetic properties of felt fabric. Innovative designs were created with different inspiration themes to produce a variety of fashion accessories, including necklaces, handbags, hats, and slippers. The study follows the experimental development method, the study identifies the felt fabric: its manufacture and properties, extracting the aesthetics and technical methods of felt. The experiment was conducted on a sample of students in the Fashion Design Program at the University of Nizwa, Fall and Spring semesters 23/2024. Through the study, the students applied different topics, for example a women's handbag inspired by a modern art painting, and contemporary necklaces inspired by Omani traditional motifs, the designs adopted an unconventional style. The products of the experiment' students are analyzed in terms of achieving the aesthetic values through the design elements and principles, in addition achieving the utilitarian function. The students' opinions are measured after the experiment ends. The significance of the study is to enable students to develop their creative abilities in knowledge, skills and values to implement products with remarkable designs with precise techniques that can be produced and marketed widely as entrepreneurship projects. The study recommends investing in college courses, especially design programs, in enriching students' innovative thinking to produce functional artistic products that meet the needs of the labor market, and conducting more innovative developmental experiments for students in the Fashion Design Program at the University of Nizwa.

Keywords: Felt Fabric, Fashion Accessories, Students' Skills, Creative Abilities, Plastic Formulations, Handcrafts

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Introduction

Material:

Through nature and properties, materials provide great plasticity possibilities through the diversity of different shapes and textures. Also, through its artistic formulation, which means the artist's attempt to create artistic works based on employing innovative thought that depends on finding plastic solutions and alternatives which achieve new innovative products. The creative person can find new ways to complete artistic works. Creativity is a method of purposeful thinking, through which the artist seeks to discover serious relationships and arrive at innovative plastic solutions. To achieve innovative work: It is necessary to find good material with flexible and wide plastic specifications. Examples of these materials are felt.

Human Relationship With Decorative Objects:

Human's relationship with decorative accessories began as a means of achieving essential needs and purposes, just as primitive man considered them amulets that brought him benefit and protected him from dangers. Human needs have graduated to become (the aesthetic aspect) a basic human need. Aesthetic needs also combined with functional and utilitarian needs which made human motives for decorating him/herself and the place remain until today in all human societies. The techniques used by the artist are varied to be able to formulate the materials in the best form, and with the widest scale for producing distinguished works of art with successful aesthetics.

Problem

1. How can the creative abilities of students in the “Fashion Accessories” course be utilized in producing fashion accessories?
2. To what extent is it possible to use felt material in designing and producing artworks as women fashion accessories?

Objectives

1. Developing the innovative capabilities of students in the “Fashion Accessories” course through experimental samples.
2. Taking advantage of the various plastic formulations and possible techniques for shaping felt material with the aim of producing innovative fashion crafts.
3. Directing the products to an entrepreneurship project that uses available cheap, sustainable materials, such as felt fabric, to produce fashion accessories as a small entrepreneurship project.

Significance

1. Connecting the student to how to achieve artistic and expressive formulations in a way that develops his/her creative and innovative abilities.
2. Introducing the students of the “Fashion Accessories” course to the felt material, and the artistic treatments that can be performed to produce many innovative ideas for artistic works that are suitable as women accessories.
3. Enhancing artistic practices with methods and techniques that help in producing artistic artifacts, such as accessories items (handbags- necklaces...), that are low in cost and compatible with public taste.

4. The study achieves the indicators of the Oman Vision 2040 in terms of its keenness to develop: Innovation - environmental performance - and skills development.
5. The results of the study represent the seed of a small or micro entrepreneurship project for entrepreneurship with environmentally sustainable products.

Hypotheses

- The creative abilities of students in the “Fashion Accessories” course can be employed to produce distinctive decorative accessories.
- Many aesthetic techniques can be applied to felt to design and produce distinctive artistic crafts.

Methodology

The paper follows the experimental development approach through the practical framework. This paper addresses four main axes, as follows:

- The first axis: Creative education for female students in the “Fashion Accessories” course.
- The second axis: Felt material and its uses.
- Third axis: Handmade Fashion accessories.
- Fourth Axis: Applied experiment (Material Techniques – Artworks Analysis).

Literature Review

The study (Abdul Rahman, 2023) oriented to create artistic artifacts with a utilitarian function based on some technical methods for natural leather materials, investing the products in a small entrepreneurial project. Al Sakhawy (2020) presented a set of artistic proposals for decorating the women’s shawl through the felting technique. The study showed the properties of wool fibers, where the scales intertwine in the fine fibers, under pressure, temperature, and water, the filaments sometimes overlap and form a cohesive piece, from which it is difficult to separate the fibers, but they are characterized by flexibility and elasticity. The current research has benefited from the study applications through identifying the properties of felt and the manufacturing method.

Shaker, and others (2020) They presented in detail the properties of non-woven materials, as they employed the manual felting method in proposing innovative designs for textile hangings. Non-woven fabrics were defined, and the felt material is the focus of the current research. It does not depend on the warp and weft method of weaving, which is the traditional method. Rather, it is a assembling of natural or artificial hairs, short or long, that are held together by mechanical or chemical methods, and therefore felt fabrics do not go through the weaving stage. The study also addressed the definition of ancient and modern felting methods, as the felting method is considered the oldest method for making fabrics before weaving on looms. Artistic felting was presented in detail and applied to the production of artworks using wet felting and dry felting. This study benefited the researcher in identifying the technical properties of felt, the various possibilities of artistic formation and some of the techniques that can be utilized.

Al Abd, (2019) and Dyiab, and others (2024) They presented applied experiments to benefit from the felt material and the felting method in enriching the aesthetic values of clothing and artefacts, different plastic techniques were used in the two studies.

Although Al-Abd's study focused on the use of felt in post-modern arts and the art of installation particular, the study of Diab, and others came to embellish women's clothing by adding felt decorations to ready-made clothes, some using the dry felting method and some using the wet felting method, and the study concluded that Dry felting is less expensive and effortless, while wet felting is more artistic and creative.

The current research benefited from the two studies in identifying the properties of felt and its artistic formulations potentials.

1) Felt Components and Manufacturing Method (Wool Fibers)

Felt is formed from wool filaments, which are characterized by flexibility and the ability to elongate 30%. Its degree of flexibility increases with hot water, and then it can be adapted to the desired shape, and after drying it maintains its new shape.

Wool is also characterized by its durability and high physical and chemical endurance.

One of the most important properties that helped the material in the process of artistic formation is the felting property on which the felt material is based, which is the consistency of fine hairs if they are exposed to pressure and heat. Wool can also absorb 30% without appearing wet. It has excellent thermal insulation properties, and its natural colors in addition. Its good ability to dye, its luster and elegant appearance are properties that allow wool to be one of the distinguished materials in artistic forming (Al Sakhawy, 2020).

Artistic Techniques: Technique is the artist's ability to shape materials appropriately, and it is the ability to use tools so that they achieve their purpose (Reda, 2023).

Felt is a non-woven material made of wool fibers. This composition gives the felt good shaping properties. It is a non-edge fraying material and has good elasticity that helps it take shape. Its surface also allows for many technical treatments in relation to the process of felting, which is the basis for the manufacturing of the material.

Examples of unlimited plastic techniques for felt materials include painting, braiding, inlaying, appliqué, embroidery, braiding, weaving, adding materials, felting, quilting, ruching, patchwork, tucks, trapunto and paper manipulating as fringing, winding, scalloped edges and curling.

Aesthetic values: Beauty is a value whose standards vary based on the cultural factor from one society to another, and plastic artists consider aesthetic values to be the combination of artistic principles and expressive value.

Felt Manufacturing: In short, felt consists of several layers that are subjected to pressure and heat, as well as water, vibration, and alkaline compounds. Then it dries. The layers of hairs are arranged in one or two perpendicular directions.

2) Handicraft Entrepreneurship Projects

Youth is the basic pillar of society. Paying attention to the human resources of youth is one of the most important components of development. When presenting a model for a small production project, it must be built on scientific and practical foundations to guarantee the

success of the project, especially that opportunities for manual labor have become less with technological progress and the revolution in machine use. Small projects related to the fields of handcrafts, especially when producing fashion accessories such as handbags and jewelry, whose model measurements can be easily identified, this enables students to create projects, which in turn achieve profits and reduce the unemployment rate, and waiting for public or private sector employment.

Training students in handcrafts entrepreneurship projects supports the development of students' knowledge, skills, and values, it prepares them to enter the labor market.

There are three criteria that should be achieved in student training:

Using technical methods in a correct, attractive and sustainable manner, achieving artistic values in the product, and the final appearance of the product is attractive, distinct and is accepted by consumers.

The general objective of establishing small projects is to fill free time in a way that is beneficial, achieve profit, improve the living standard, and achieve independence, especially since the current study experience included many male and female students with special needs, as well as the ability to achieve self-developing, and provide job opportunities.

One of the factors for the small project' success that the researcher took into account while guiding the students in teaching: achieving the function, so the functional aspect was considered in terms of the ability of the products to be cleaned, their compatibility with the lines of the human body, the nature of consumption and also the stability of colors and formation, as well as the compatibility of the society taste. The students produced a high level of finishing' techniques.

3) Fashion Accessories Course (The Experiment)

Fashion Accessories course is one of the major courses in Fine Arts Programs at University of Nizwa, Fashion Design and Jewelry Design Divisions. The course is being taught to normal and special needs students, because of this the researcher/ professor of the course oriented the course product to concentrate on the possibility of establishing entrepreneurship small and micro projects.

The handcrafted work proceeds through a series of sequential steps whose stages sometimes overlap, as follows:

- Determine the purpose of the design, the specific nature of the product, a bag or a necklace, for example.
- Collecting information related to aesthetic problems and design solutions. This stage often begins with choosing a source of inspiration. In the current experiment, inspiration was drawn from three methods: nature, modern art, and traditional Omani folk motifs.
- Analyzing and classifying the information collected by the student, by training the student to analyze the aesthetics of the inspiration in preparation for reformulating this aesthetics in a manner consistent with the nature of the product to be produced.
- Selecting and experimenting with appropriate ideas, and in the case of the current experiment, many artistic techniques were experimented to choose the most appropriate ones with the design parts.

- Presenting ideas to choose the most appropriate one, by having the student identify the best techniques with which to formulate his or her innovative artistic work.
- Choosing the most appropriate materials to achieve the design, in terms of auxiliary materials, and distributing artistic techniques to the design.
- Follow up on continuous improvement and modification during production.

Noting that during implementation, some changes occur as seen by the student/designer in terms of technology, colors, and other elements of the artwork.

4) Students' Artworks Samples



Figure 1: Bow bag

Figure 1 – Student: ABIR KHAMIS SAID AL RUZEIQI

Inspiration: By Picasso painting- cubism

Additives materials: Cotton threads- fabric colors

Techniques: Painting- embroidery- braiding- inner padding/trapunto



Figure 2: Handbag



Figure 3: Water Cover' Bottle



Figure 2 – Student: NOOR AL HUDA MOHAMMED SAID AL ANBURI

Inspiration: Picasso painting- cubism

Additives materials: Satin ribbons - colorful feathers - crystal beads- plastic buttons

Techniques: Painting - sewing - framing with zigzag machine's stitching- embroidery

Figure 3 – Student: RAYA IBRAHIM SALIM AL ADAWI

Inspiration: Van Gogh painting- expressionism

Additives materials: Crystal beads- silver chains - threads - colors - wire to strengthen

Techniques: Painting - embroidery with threads and crystal beads - three-dimensional modeling/applique



Figure 4 (a): Baggit Handbag

Figure 4 (a) – Student: SOMAIYA HUMAID SALIM AL HAKMANI

Inspiration: Nature- flowers with abstract

Additives materials: Threads- crystal beads- wire – pearls

Techniques: Embroidery with threads and crystal beads - covering the wire with thread' winding - 3D modeling/applique – crochet



Figures 4 (b): Baggit Handbag

Figure 4 (b) – Student: SOMAIYA HUMAID SALIM AL HAKMANI

Inspiration: Nature- abstract-colored flowers

Additives materials: fabric colors

Techniques: painting- 3D appliques- rolling



Figure 5: Laptop Handbag

Figure 5 – Student: AHMED SAID MOHAMMED AL KHATRI

Inspiration: Piet Mondrian painting

Additives materials: Cotton embroidery thread

Techniques: Embroidery- applique



Figure 6: Necklace



Figure 7: Necklace



Figure 6 – Student: ARWA ALI NASSER AL KHAMISI

Inspiration: Omani traditional motifs

Additives materials: Wood strips- cotton and wool thread

Techniques: Waving-embroidery- trapunto- pom pom tassel-braiding

Figure 7– Student: SOMAIYA HUMAID SALIM AL HAKMANI

Inspiration: Omani traditional motifs

Additives materials: pearls- thread

Techniques: Braiding- embroidery- applique-ruching



Figure 8: Necklace



Figure 9: Necklace



Figure 8 – Student: RAYA IBRAHIM SALIM AL ADAWI

Inspiration: Omani traditional motifs

Additives materials: Jute twine- beads- pin clips

Techniques: winding- embroidery- stitching- interlining

Figure 9 – Student: NOOR AL HUDA SAID HUMAID AL JADIDI

Inspiration: Omani traditional motifs

Additives materials: Cotton and wall thread- beads

Techniques: Padding- embroidery- synthetic fibers-crochet



Figure 10: Bag

Figure 10 – Student: MARYAM MADHAFFAR YOUSUF AL GHAILANI

Inspiration: Palestinian struggle- modern art

Additives materials: fabric colors- decorative coins- white muslin fabric

Techniques: Embroidery- applique- painting

Results

1. Students in the “Fashion Accessories” course, Fine Arts Program at the University of Nizwa – Fall & Spring 2024, have creative energies and abilities that can be utilized in the field of artistic works to produce crafts such as women fashion accessories.
2. The felt material has plastic formulations and creative solutions that, through some treatments and techniques, can motivate students to experiment and explore producing creative women accessories.
3. The students’ products are marketable and were displayed in more than one art exhibition in the academic year 23/2024, University of Nizwa exhibition for the nineteenth cultural season - and the exhibition held in the “Oman Across ages” Museum, April 2024.

Recommendations

1. Academics’ keenness in developing students’ creativity through various applied courses and workshops. Creative education in educational institutions is an important direction for promoting the development of innovative skills and creativity that leads young people to the possibility of establishing small projects.
2. Designers and producers pay attention to sustainable and cheap environmental materials to formulate them within creative entries to produce aesthetic artworks.
3. Encouraging and supporting the competent authorities to finance entrepreneurship projects for creative students.
4. Conducting artistic workshops in art colleges for experimentation with materials, the composition and the artistic formulation techniques, which helps in new approaches to artistic work.

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