

FREQUENT RETURNS TO ETHNIC GROUNDS IN FASHION DESIGN

ALEXANDRA MOCENCO, SABINA OLARU, GEORGETA POPESCU, CARMEN
GHITULEASA

*National R&D Institute for Textiles and Leather, Bucharest, Romania,
alexandra.mocenco@certex.ro*

As part of the history and civilization of the Romanian people, the Traditional costume constitutes a living document which lasted for centuries and sent to the generations the message of an authentic artistic creation. The folk costume is a precious artistic document, social and historical. The Traditional Romanian costume is a continuous source of inspiration in fashion design. The analysis of these forms of cultural expression supports the conclusion, according to which the reuse of these decorative motifs can create products with a great effect in contemporary fashion. It is obvious, in this context, the importance of the source of inspiration, but also the presence of a relevant manner of reapplication and reinvention of these elements. Although the contemporary designers are working in accordance with a vision, appealing to a wide area of styles and methods using current technology, cyclical they return to traditional techniques and ethnic folklore motifs, which converts and resize them, integrating them in their contemporary space. In terms of product design, is very important to take into account some intrinsic elements of the creative process, such as trends and artistic values present in traditions, customs, crafts and design. The current research in fashion related to national folklore motifs developed by INCDTP is to define the anthropometric characteristics of the population and the ethnographic features of the folk costumes from different regions of the country and use it as a source of inspiration for the fashion collections.

Keywords: fashion, Romanian costume, inspirational source

INTRODUCTION

Romanian folklore is the best preserved, most varied and traditional in Europe. The tasteful beauty of the regional costumes can be seen throughout Romania. The costumes reflect ethnic identity and document the historical and artistic values of the Romanian people. As part of the history and civilization of the Romanian people, the Traditional costume constitutes a living document which lasted for centuries and sent to the generations the message of an authentic artistic creation. The folk costume is a precious artistic document, social and historical (Doaga, 1978).

The national Romanian costume is also an inspirational source in fashion design because of the multitude of forms particular to each region of the country and decorative elements that can always be reinterpreted.

THE TRADITIONAL ROMANIAN COSTUME

The traditional Romanian costume as general features, has the same resemblance across the country, with certain differences of details, changes of shape, cut, decoration and color. They differ by region: Banat, Transylvania, Bukovina, Moldavia, Crisana, Maramures, Dobrudja, Oltenia and Muntenia (Mocenco *et al.*, 2013).

The structure of Romanian traditional clothing has remained unchanged throughout history and can be traced back to the earliest times. The basic garment for both men and women is a shirt or chemise, which is made from hemp, linen or woollen fabric. This was tied round the waist using a fabric belt, narrow for women and wider for men. The cut of this basic chemise is similar for men and women. In the past those worn by women usually reached to the ankles while men's shirts were shorter and worn over trousers or leggings made from strips of fabric. Women always wear an apron over the chemise. This was initially a single piece of cloth wrapped round the lower part of their bodies and secured by a belt at the waist, as is still seen in the east and south east of

Romania. In Transylvania and the south west of Romania this became two separate aprons, one worn at the back and one at the front.



Figure 1. Traditional Romanian Costumes

Men's traditional clothing throughout Romania comprises a white shirt, white trousers, hat, belt, waistcoat and or overcoat. Local differences are indicated by shirt length, type of embroidery, trouser cut, hat shape, or waistcoat decoration. In most areas shirts are worn outside trousers, which is the older style. This is a basic Balkan man's costume largely uninfluenced by fashions from west or east. Hungarian and Saxon men living in Romania wear trousers with a more modern cut often made of dark material rather than white. This reflects their closer ties, and more frequent communication, with the west.

The outer garments worn by both men and women are similar, the main differences being in cut and decoration which depend mainly on the region of provenance. These garments are usually made of sheepskin, or felted woollen fabric, and decorated with leather appliqué and silk embroidery. Traditional clothing worn on workdays and festivals used to be similar, the main difference being that the festive dress, especially those worn for weddings was more richly embroidered. In the past the headwear worn by the bride was especially ornate with specific local styles. In poorer areas basic clothing with little or no embroidery has always been worn (Stefanuca, 1990).

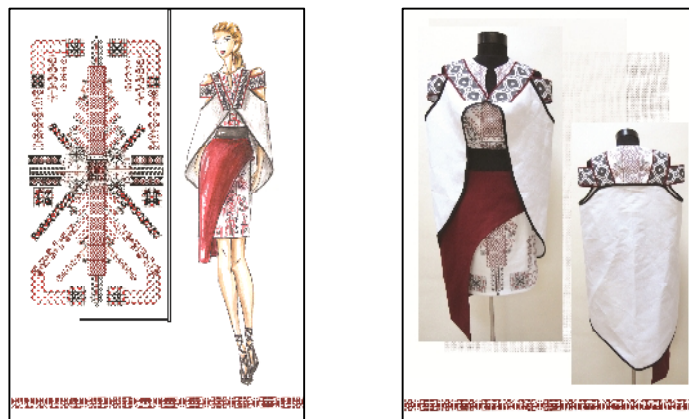


Figure 2. Outfits from the collection "Influence Mix"

In Maramures the popular art is preserved in its original form and the predominant colour of the folk costumes is green. The traditional costume from Moldavia is characterized by simplicity and sobriety. Specific for Oltenia are the bright cheerful colours of the embroideries and the splendour of the decorative compositions made with precious materials - gold and silver metal threads. In Bucovina, the basic piece of the female costume is the flax blouse with hems and the chromatic composition is dominated by red, yellow and orange. The traditional costume from preserves the vigour of some ancient clothing pieces: women's zadii (rectangular woollen skirts) and guba (a long white coat, woven with long wollen treads introduced into the filling to obtain afur effect) worn by both men and women. The folk costume of Transylvania is characterized by a unitary morphological structure of the basic clothing pieces. In Banat, there are some unique pieces - opregul cu franjuri lungi (catrinta) and the conci (bonnet) worn by women-, and on the other hand, to the sumptuous embroideries and alesaturi made in gold and silver threads. The popular costume from Dobrudja consists of: the shirt (camasa dreapta) with two aprons with "peak" for women and a shirt with wide trousers, wrinkled (in dark colours) and red belt for men.

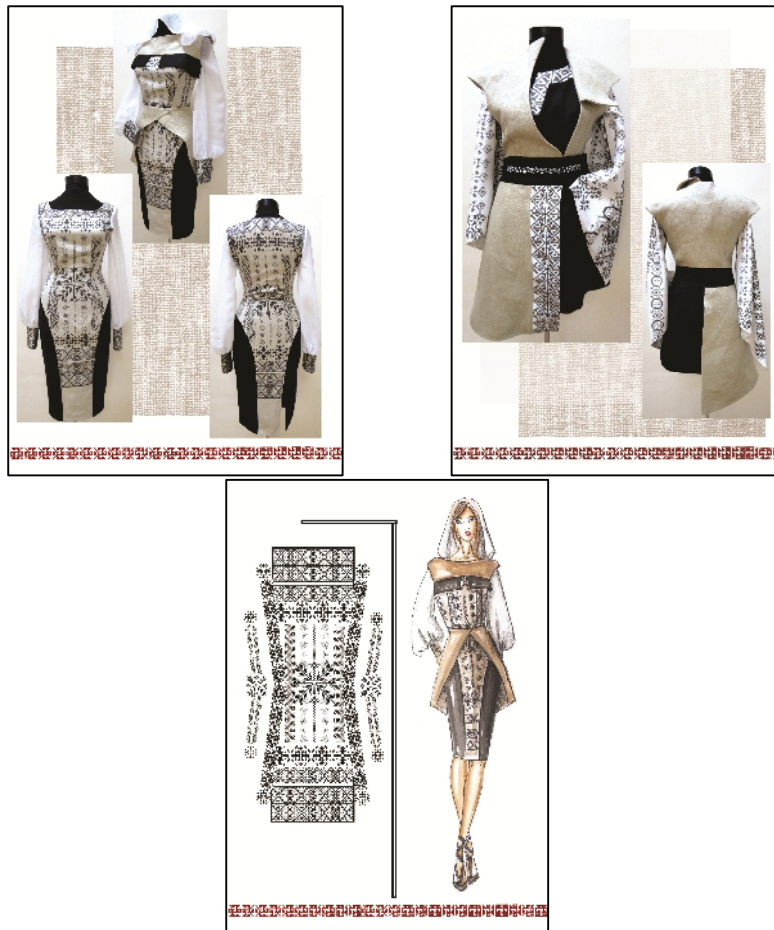


Figure 3. Outfits from the collection "Influence Mix"

The various pieces of costume have gone out of use at different times during the 20th century. The first item to disappear in many areas were leather peasant sandals (*opinci*), although these could be seen in poorer villages again in the years just after the communist regime fell. In most rural areas men's traditional trousers were replaced by modern factory made trousers by mid century and in the post communism years jeans has become universally common. Traditional over garments became an expensive luxury, new garments only being purchased by people living in the very wealthy villages. More recently the traditional jacket makers in many areas have died with few new artisans being trained to carry on their craft.

FASHION COLLECTION WITH INFLUENCES FROM ROMANIAN FOLKLORE

The Traditional Romanian costume is a continuous source of inspiration in fashion design. The analysis of these forms of cultural expression supports the conclusion, according to which the reuse of these decorative motifs can create products with a great effect in contemporary fashion. It is obvious, in this context, the importance of the source of inspiration, but also the presence of a relevant manner of reapplication and reinvention of these elements. Although the contemporary designers are working in accordance with a vision, appealing to a wide area of styles and methods using current technology, cyclical they return to traditional techniques and ethnic folklore motifs, which converts and resize them, integrating them in their contemporary space (Olaru *et al.*, 2014) In terms of product design, is very important to take into account some intrinsic elements of the creative process, such as trends and artistic values present in traditions, customs, crafts and design (Mocenco *et al.*, 2013).



Figure 4. Outfits from the collection "Influence Mix"

The current research in fashion related to national folklore motifs developed by INCDTP is to define the anthropometric characteristics of the population and the ethnographic features of the folk costumes from different regions of the country and use it as a source of inspiration for the fashion collections. In the initial stage of one project, financed through national funds, a documentary study on ethnographic characteristics

of the popular costume from different regions of the country was elaborated. Based on this study it was developed a fashion collection inspired by the Romanian folklore.

The fashion collection entitled “Influence Mix” is inspired by the traditional Romanian costume and its decorative motifs. The dress forms and the decorative motifs specific to traditional costumes from the regions Oltenia, Muntenia and Dobrudja are reinterpreted in a modern way, with refined proportions and volumes restructured. The traditional motifs taken from the Romanian folklore are digital printed on the clothes, arranged in various artistic compositions. The fabrics used in making the collection are made from natural fibers, cotton, flax and hemp, treated to retain their natural properties. These fabrics have so many properties and they are environmentally friendly (Dabija *et al.*, 2014).



Figure 5. Outfit from the collection “Influence Mix”

The mix of folk influences of the three regions of the country - Oltenia, Muntenia and Dobrudja are combined in a versatile, current collection. The clothes are printed with Romanian traditional motifs, updated and converted into ingenious decorative compositions. For achieving these folklore-inspired prints digital print was used on textiles from natural fibers (cotton, linen and blends of natural fibers). The clothing shapes and details refer to the Traditional Romanian costume. Also, each outfit of the collection is versatile, being composed from several pieces of clothing. The color palette is limited, consisting in tone of beige, red, burgundy and non-colors black and white.

The collection “Influence Mix” stands out due to the clean lines, asymmetries and unexpected cuts.

CONCLUSIONS

The Traditional Romanian costumes reflect the ethnic identity and documents the historical and artistic values of the Romanian people. It has a great and artistic value because of its spectacular cut and decorations. The traditional costumes differ by region: Banat, Transylvania, Bukovina, Moldavia, Crisana, Maramures, Dobrogea, Oltenia and Muntenia. In fashion, nowadays, is an important inspirational source.

INCDTP has developed a fashion collection inspired by the Romanian folklore entitled “Influence Mix”. The clothes are printed with Romanian traditional motifs, and their shapes are asymmetric with unexpected cuts.

REFERENCES

- Dabija, D.C., Pop, N.Al., Szentesi, S.G. (2014), “A customer-oriented perspective on retail brand equity in the fashion industry”, *Rev. Industria Textila*, 1, 37-46.
- Doag , A. (1978), *Romanian Stitches* (in Romanian), Ed. Ion Creang , Bucharest.
- Mocenco, A., Ghițuleasa, C., Olaru, S., Popescu, G. (2013), “Romanian Folklore - a way to bring forward the traditional values through fashion design”, in 6TH TEXTEH INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS, ISSN 2068 - 9101, 327-331.
- Olaru, S., Mocenco, A., Popescu, G., Dobre, M. (2014), “Legal protection of fashion creations”, *Rev. Industria Textila*, 2, 95-100.
- tef nuc , L. (1990), *Collection of Folk Stitches* (in Romanian), Ed. Dacia, Bucharest.
- ***, “Folk costume - inspirational source for fashion design” national project, NUCLEU program, contract no. 10N/2009.
- ***, <http://unirea.org.au/index.php/blog/item/71-traditional-romanian-folk-costumes>
- ***, <http://www.eliznik.org.uk/RomaniaPortul/>
- ***, www.harghita.ro