

Designing Women Clothing Using Architectural Motifs of the Main Entrance of Imam Mosque in Isfahan by Shaghayegh Mohajeri

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Abstract

Architecture and clothing design are among the extensively employed arts in everyday human life. Their common features and properties must be thoroughly outlined to study their potential progress to achieve the same goal. These common features can be a mutual source of an inspiration and a great significance. Architecture is a very broad field and is deemed to predate clothing design. One of the aesthetically significant architectures is historical buildings within the kingdom of which mosques have garnered particular attention in Islamic aesthetics. The required information on this case study is, the Imam Mosque of the city of Isfahan (located on the south side of Naghsh Jahan Square), was collected from library archived, i.e., through books and articles and electronic sources. After gathering information and obtaining the common features of these two areas, this case study clothing design using conceptual motifs by Ms. Mohajeri, a restorer of historical monuments, is explored. The design of the target garment is inspired by the entrance of the Imam Mosque in the city of Isfahan. The forms, patterns, and colors used in the mosque entrance have also been recreated in this dress. The result from examining the notion, design, and creation process of this work indicates the feasibility of the interaction of the two areas.

Keywords: Architecture; Clothing Design; Imam Mosque of Isfahan; Women's Clothing Design

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1. Introduction

Architecture and clothing design are arts that boast a plethora of direct and indirect connections with each other. The differences and similarities between these two areas can be discussed in terms of: from coverage to volume, proportions, geometry, and differences that create new works. Although clothing design is much younger than architecture in the entire history of art, the two fields have collaborated a lot in terms of design concepts in the past century. They also make great use of the cultural and social issues of their era and use common impressions as symbols. In particular, clothing design, which has not only developed into a major industry in clothing and it can also be a symbol for recognizing the social class of individuals, socio-political protests, and reminiscences of the former arts.

Among the motifs considered by architects and clothing designers is some sort of Islamic art. The corresponding art has appeared since the beginning of Islam, and its theme came from Islamic's monuments. Mosques are one of these historical buildings placed next to each other at the peak of proportions and decorations. In the pre-industrialization era, mosques were mostly usually built next to the main bazaar and the city center and were among the most significant buildings constructed in all cities. Many schools and inns were also built within the perimeters of the mosque and adjacent thereto, and hence they were not only places of worship but also a passage for travelers, a venue for trade, and a place for learning. The kings of each era sought to employ all the art and power at their disposal to show-off to the public and foreign travelers.

One of the famous and beautiful mosques in Islamic art is the Imam Mosque in the city of Isfahan. It was built on the south side of Naghsh Jahan Square during the Safavid period. The main entrance to the mosque has a high arch and has been vaulted using turquoise tiles and the Muqarnas structure. The grandeur of the entrance the splendor of the azure blue tiles inspires indescribable calm within the audience. Given the relationship between these two areas, this study seeks to determine whether architecture can be a source of inspiration for a practical or symbolic design in clothing design. The study further seeks to offer sound answers for the following questions: What effect has the Imam Mosque of Isfahan had on clothing design in terms of form and designs? What did the artist mean by this inspiration? That is, just a reminder of the monument or a practical application of this source of inspiration? The design proposed by Shaghayegh Mohajari is used to explore the research subjects.

2. Research Background

The topics of Imam Mosque in city of Isfahan and the relationship between architecture and fashion have been studied separately. Nevertheless, no study has yet to examine the inspirations and influences of the Imam Mosque of Isfahan on the clothing design.

Moradi and Lolouei (2016) performed a study on Imam Mosque, give them an official name as the architectural masterpiece of Isfahani school in the history of Iranian architecture. In this study, the authors have examined the location of the mosque, plan, method of construction, and decoration.

Kazemian (2016) has analyzed the application of Muqarnas in Islamic architecture with a case study of Shah Mosque in city of Isfahan, in which has the different forms, shapes, and characteristics of Muqarnas and the tiles of the mosque and its arches.

Dadkhah (2013) performed a study to examine the artistic and architectural values of Imam Mosque of Isfahan and has sought, therein, to describe the construction of the mosque and decorations, including tiling.

Ahmadi (2009) examined the impact of Islamic philosophy on traditional Iranian architecture with a case study of the architecture of the Imam Mosque of Isfahan, in which the mosque has been proposed as a symbol and cultural and social space.

Nejad Mozhdehi and Najafi Bojarsari (2016) discuss the definitions of fashion and clothing in their article titled “Architecture and its relationship within fashion design and the role of clothing” presented at the International Conference on Civil proceedings Engineering and Architecture in the city of Rasht. The study also explores the criteria of fashion and clothing from an Iranian-Islamic perspective. The findings indicated that arriving at common ideas between fashion and architecture is feasible, which would be the introduction of creativity to both fields.

Shirzadkhan and Afzalian (2017) examined the mutual effects of architecture and clothing design in their research and discussed the fluidity of architecture and the notion of clothing from architecture.

Majlisi and Khoshnevisan (2009) studied conceptual art in clothing design and revealed that clothing design, like other arts, can reflect different styles.

Bozorgmehr and Mohammadi (2010) conducted a study entitled “Clothing, Visual Arts, Architecture: An Intertextual Discourse” to discuss the relationship between visual arts and architecture and clothing design. Their findings suggest the inevitable interaction of these two fields, especially in the contemporary period, and its sociological and philosophical effects on society.

3. Research Method

This research is an observational case study that seeks to observe, without intervention, the correlation between the main entrance to the Imam Mosque and the conceptual design inspired thereof. This research is also a descriptive-analytical study that seeks to explore the ideas, details, and finally, the semantic association the original designer has sought to convey. Library archives and direct observations were used to collect data.

4. Architecture and Clothing Design

Art manifests emotions through works created either for pleasure or other use. Architecture and clothing design are among the most practical arts in daily lives, as they are arts that humans deal with daily, from the clothes we put on every day to the very places we live. Furthermore, these two areas have a lot in common. “Both of fields depend on lines and shapes, they also deal with scales and norms related to the human body to create inventive forms, and generate structures and designs are related to the human being needs” (Akçay and Alothman, 2018). Hence may have many mutual influences and be a source of inspiration for each other. They also changed throughout history, depending on climatic, cultural, and social conditions. Both are influenced by designs on paper that eventually yield two-dimensional and three-dimensional designs. As such, clothing design can take inspiration from architecture a much more technical structure and architecture inspired by clothing design appear highly decorative (Nejad Mozhdehi and Najafi Bejarsari, 2016). Here, the authors seek first to define both domains of art, followed by examining their commonalities, relationship, and mutual impact. According to Encyclopedia Britannica, architecture is both the process and the product of planning, designing, and constructing buildings or other structures. This structure can also have an artistic and cultural aspect, hence not just the construction of large structures. Since the dawn of civilization, the construction of structures has been practiced in various forms and applications. Early structures merely served as shelters, yet with the advent of tools and materials

over various epochs, structures also found a more specific form and application and hence a more artistic dimension. The larger the structures and the more specific their design, the more applicable proportions, and mathematics. Gradually, the application of volumes and geometric forms also flourished which aesthetically induced a special concept from ancient times. Later, architecture became a tool by which kings and rulers could showcase their power, art, and wealth, who used all their strength for extraordinary results. The architecture was included in the arts field, and then aesthetics and the creation of amazing works such as sculptures, paintings, and calligraphy by the top masters of each period and their integration with architecture, swiftly propelled it to the limelight of academic interest.

On the other end of this spectrum stands the realm of clothing design. As the name suggests, designers pursue innovation in various forms of garments, accessories, and even overall fashion. Nevertheless, there is no denying that fashion is a wholesome notion highly associated with innovation (Shirzadkhan and Afzalian, 2017). Like architecture, clothing is one of the utmost basic needs of human beings. Clothing was initially devised by mankind as mere protection against extreme warmth and coldness and as a cover of a privacy. Clothing took a turn for the better with breakthroughs in the textile and sewing industry. It became a means for coverage and protection and a manifestation of social and cultural representation (Shirzadkhan and Afzalian, 2017). Clothing and architecture are considered among the basic need of mankind and have many shared features. These common features can eliminate the boundary between the two areas and combine to better outcomes.

5. Shared Features of Architecture and Clothing Design

Since the dawn of civilization, architecture and clothing design have been of human interest and thus formed an unnoticeable collaboration, which probably even predated the concept of art. They evolved, and their application and format changed.

“Design is one of the other factors which both architecture and fashion have in common. Design as the key element in both fashion and architecture brings them closer and create relationships between them” (Farahat, 2014).

Protection is the first and earliest common point of architecture and clothing design. Both were meant to offer protection against heat and cold and environmental factors. Next is the notion of privacy, about the human body or one’s living environment. This protection can also be manifested in the form of privacy in social and cultural issues and religious beliefs. Religious places of worship are, in a sense, places where people of particular beliefs feel rather protected. As such, the place where one feels safe and one’s clothes can be determined each person’s type of religion and belief in society (Shirzadkhan and Afzalian, 2017).

Cultural identity and personal ideas can be another common factor between these areas. Special designs in the architecture of structures indicate the cultural identity of a particular period, manifesting the civilizations and cultural values of that period. In the meantime, the personal tastes and ideas of the architect or the kings who ordered the construction of these architectures became evident. The very same notion is also applicable to clothing design. The costumes of each historical period reflect the culture, civilization, and beliefs of the people of that time (Kateb and Khoury, 2015).

The manufacturing process is another common feature. In both areas, a template or map should first be created before implementation: design in two dimensions and implementation in three dimensions. Raw materials are also needed for implementation. There is another common in the transition from design to implementation briefly mentioned (Kateb and Khoury, 2015).

Proportions, based on the pattern of the human body, are notions that are used in both areas. In various periods, body shape and centrality of the human head were the main inspirations for constructing structures. Likewise, body proportions are a major criterion for clothing design.

Mathematics is another principle that plays an important role in measuring and calculating these proportions. Accurate calculations are of more importance to the integrity of designs in both areas, such that incorrect calculations may make designs of both areas completely unfeasible. Nevertheless, this issue is more pronounced in architecture

The geometry issue also becomes applicable when these designs lead to three-dimensionality that is, gaining form and volume (Kateb and Khoury, 2015).

As the name implies, the facade is the appearance and procedure of work, which is highly valued in both fields. Both in architecture and the design of clothing, the foundations of work, that is, respectively, the procedure of construction and the method of sewing is covered by an outer appearance.

Lighting and decorations are also of shared features between the two realms. In architecture, lighting is applied inside, and it is hence decorative in the facade. In clothing design, different fabrics and decorative accessories enhance lighting or reflection of light as a decorative measure.

Sociality is another common feature of the two fields. In both areas, apart from the privacy, the appearance of the work in the face of society is another gateway of influence. This very appearance can introduce political, economic, and many other issues to society (Shirzadkhan and Afzalian, 2017).

It is not only the similarities that can create an unhindered association. Differences, such as differences in scale, dimensions, tactility, variability, or seasonality, can also convey ideas to each other. However, the aforementioned shared features indicate a close affiliation between these two fields of art. As such, they are different means for conveying the same. They violate past relationships and agreements and merge the two areas without any restrictions (Shirzadkhan and Afzalian, 2017).

Given the research topic, the relationship between architecture and clothing design, one of the historical and Islamic monuments called Imam Mosque (former Shah Mosque) is examined in this research. Isfahan Imam Mosque is of particular status in Islamic architecture and aesthetics. Here, the authors seek to examine the location of the mosque, its entrance and its decorations, and finally, the applicability of the form and designs of the entrance of this mosque to design clothes.

6. Imam Mosque of Isfahan

As mentioned earlier, structure and their distinct architecture have long been major means for showcasing the power and wealth of kings. With the arrival of Islam in Iran, mosques were also included in this category. At that time, apart from being a place of worship, the mosque had a special political and social dimension due to its status as the “agoras” of cities, its proximity to the bazaar, and travelers' passage. On the other hand, the central square has been a place for high officials, including kings, to meet with ordinary citizens. Therefore, the construction of such buildings has mainly been focused on showing the power and wealth of the kings in front of travelers and foreigners, while the aesthetics of the buildings were dedicated to the culture, antiquity, and civilization of Iran in particular eras.

If art, in general, is said to be a manifestation of human emotions, then the mosque should be deemed a manifestation of Islamic art. Islamic philosophy correlated to discovering the truth by observing and feeling order and harmony in the universe. A mosque is a place for worship, contemplation, and arriving at this philosophy, and these notions must be observed in its

construction. Mosques are usually envisaged with large areas, high ceilings, Observance of symmetry, harmony, and order (Ahmadi, 2009: 94).

The Imam Mosque, also known as the Abbasi Grand Mosque, the Sultani Mosque, and the Shah Mosque, was built during the Safavid period by Shah Abbas I. The architect of this mosque was Master Ali Akbar Isfahani, and the construction of the mosque took twenty years, and hence the decorations of the mosque were completed after the death of Shah Abbas (Kazemian, 2016: 7). This mosque has an area of 12246 square meters, is built with a four-porch blueprint, and is located on the south side of the central square, i.e., Naghsh Jahan square (Dadkhah, 2013).

At the very entrance to the mosque stands a majestic arch. The Magnificence, splendor, and the sense of excitement therein are overwhelming, and the blue theme brings solace. At first glance, the high ceilings and the azure color convey the feeling of the sky, while the brick colors worked between the tiles convey the feeling of the earth to a person. The white lines combined with the blue patterns also seem to indicate the sky of heaven. The entrance is made of yellow marble, and the other surfaces are decorated with tiles and mosaics. The top of the entrance is decorated with calligraphic inscriptions by Alireza Abbas, one of the top calligraphers of the Safavid period (Moradi and Lolouei, 2016: 148). This entrance, which is in the form of a crescent, has depression. This depression under the arch is filled with geometric shapes and materials such as bricks, plaster, and tiles, much like the modern suspended ceilings. This form and composition of geometric shapes using tiles are called Muqarnas. There are different types of Muqarnas, resembling motifs of bergamot and sun, among others. The space under the arch is filled with tiles with geometric shapes such as triangles and quadrilaterals, in a stratified and symmetrical manner, each row carrying another row, iterating towards the center. This form is similar to hive vaulting and honeycomb, hence its names. These vaulted tiles, of azure blue color themselves, are also painted with brick colors (Kazemian, 2016).



Fig 1 Entrance of Imam Mosque of Isfahan (Source: URL, 1)

7. Implementing the Form and Design of the Entrance of Imam Mosque of Isfahan to Clothing Design

As explained earlier regarding the similarities and relationships between architecture and clothing design, these two areas can be a source of inspiration for each other. In the last century, these influences can also be seen in works inspired or recreated by various arts. Due to the historical antiquity of mosques and Iranian Islamic art used, architects and clothing designers have highly regarded this building. Architects have used the architecture and decorations of mosques in places of worship and even modern buildings. Similarly, these forms and designs have been attractive to clothing designers.

Ms. Shaghayegh Mohajeri is one of the artists who has thought about recreating this building in the form of clothes. According to an interview conducted by E1 Art Gallery with Shaghayegh Mohajeri during her solo exhibition at E1 Art Gallery she said: She holds a bachelor's degree in restoration from the Tabriz University of Islamic Art and a master's degree in restoring historical artifacts in clothes and fabrics from Tehran University of Arts. She works in the field of restoration, and during the restoration of historical buildings, she realized that just as buildings can be restored, another means can be found to convey the existing ideas from these works. Given her childhood interest in clothing design, she decided to implement this creativity. She intended to implement these forms, designs, and even spaces such that they would feel closer to us than ever and also available to everyone. She meant to convey the feel-good factor that was induced in her from this building to her audience.

Initially, she created a collection with mirror work. Gradually, she realized that using more fluid material inspired by these architectures, forms, and motifs can be more influential. At first, practices of implementing the figures and motifs proved to be highly challenging, to the extent that was even deemed impractical by some, but with a lot of effort and familiarity with different materials and working with them, she was able to implement her idea. Using leather fabric and three-dimensional design of the tiles under the arch of the entrance of the Imam Mosque of Isfahan, she was able to implement this form in volume, not in a honeycombed form, rather in a protruding way. After that, she was able to recreate the same form and patterns by painting on this fabric with the same color combination used in the entrance of Imam Mosque of Isfahan, that is, azure blue and brick color. As evident from the figures, this work is implemented as a low-neck tank in women's clothing. This work was exhibited in the solo exhibition of Ms. Mohajeri called *Naghsh Ajab* in Ivan Gallery (URL, 2).

Beyond the graphic beauty of each work, a reading of non-verbal patterns forms in the viewer's subconscious. Perhaps this is why the audience, at the first glance at her works (Shaghayegh Mohajeri), finds them different from the garments they have seen before. At the same time, the cultural patterns of today's complex Iranian society separate the celestial beauty and splendor of traditional Iranian architecture from the modern world and the earthly beauties of creation and have made lock horns with each other. Nevertheless, contrary to this paradigm, the artist covers the body of the modern woman with the very same decorations from the traditional body of mosques and markets, such that women putting on the garment not only feels the glory of that tradition but also embraces it with more authenticity. The real achievement here is that the artist turns a deep contradiction into peace, not through war and protest, but the subtlety of art. The worthy decorations of Iranian architecture this time are a beautiful veil on the human body, such that only the worldly eye, but also the celestial soul of humans would be thrilled to observe and instantly strike the harmony with the inner beauty (URL, 3).



Fig 2 Entrance of Imam Mosque, women clothe design by Shaghayegh mohajeri (Source: URL, 3)

8. Conclusion

As mentioned, art is the expression of emotions. These feelings can be manifested in any of the seven arts. These disciplines have common features that fall into the realm of the seven arts. The features also reduce the distance between them. These common features can make them integrate. In the last century, this practice has become very common in various fields of art. Architecture and clothing design are also in this category of arts and are no exception to this influence.

Here, architecture and clothing design were defined separately, and then the commonalities of the two areas were examined. The results indicate that each can influence and inspire the other, given the commonalities in these two areas. The authors sought to examine the Imam Mosque of Isfahan, one of the prominent mosques in Islamic architecture, decorations, and aesthetics, thereby scrutinizing the form, volume, and designs on the entrance of the mosque along with materials and techniques used to achieve this form.

Moreover, the patterns and colors were also examined. Therefore, Ms. Shaghayegh Mohajeri, an artist with a background in restoration and close contact with this building, thought of recreating this form and motifs, that is, a very creative idea to recreate this building in clothing design for people to connect more closely with these monuments. As observed through figures, given the difficulty in the implementation and reproduction of the entrance of the mosque with the same form and designs, it was nonetheless deemed practical. This led to the formation of a collection of these monuments in the form of women's clothing.

Given the vast world that has been created in the field of fine arts today, we are unfortunately witnessing baseless imitations of artists from each other. Nevertheless, the interest and exploration,

even though highly meager, in the ancient culture and civilization of our country would lead to works that are heavily inspired by the creativity envisaged therein.

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