



Innovative Research on Kintsukuroi Craft in Modern Jewelry Design

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Abstract. As a restoration technique, the Kintsukuroi craft technique not only has the function of restoring artifacts, but also serves as a secondary creation with both artistic qualities. As a derivative technique of traditional lacquer art, it contains unique Eastern aesthetics and cultural connotations. The free interpretation from materials to shapes reflects the inclusiveness of Kintsukuroi craft. In the face of disability, the Kintsukuroi craft not only repairs artifacts, but also the human heart. The aesthetic ideas of “healing” and “uniqueness” reflected in Kintsukuroi craft are highly compatible with the design concepts of modern jewelry art. The article analyzes the artistic characteristics of Kintsukuroi craft and its transformation in contemporary times, exploring the relationship between Kintsukuroi craft and modern jewelry design.

Keywords: Kintsukuroi · Functionality · Artistry · Modern · Jewelry · Lacquer art

1 Introduction

The Kintsukuroi craft has been promoted in China since 2013, and some people have started to innovate in both the improvement and application of the Kintsukuroi craft, achieving preliminary results. However, as of now, the development of the Kintsukuroi jewelry market is not particularly ideal. Most of the Kintsukuroi works that appear on the market today are still mostly used as tableware, and there are few works in the jewelry field. Moreover, they have not undergone corresponding functional evolution with the development of the times, and decoration methods and functional attributes are gradually detached from the aesthetic needs of modern audiences. Therefore, its development is relatively lagging behind and does not meet the requirements of modern design concepts. The article explores the methods of transforming Kintsukuroi craft into modernization in jewelry design, as well as the principles and methods of innovative combination. The final analysis summarizes the design language and performance of Kintsukuroi jewelry, integrates and innovates the visual elements and techniques of Kintsukuroi jewelry, and finds a balance between the combination of Kintsukuroi jewelry and modern jewelry design.

2 The Origin of Kintsukuroi Craft

Kintsukuroi, also known as Jin Ji. The Kintsukuroi craft refers to the use of natural lacquer as a binder after blending, to bond and repair damaged pottery, porcelain, and other fragments, and to apply gold powder or gold foil at the joints for decoration, giving them new aesthetic value. It is a highly decorative traditional lacquer repair technique.

The gold repair process uses natural lacquer and gold as the main materials. The combination of lacquer and gold was initially used as a decorative technique for lacquerware, mainly for pattern drawing and Huang Cheng recorded it as “painting gold”. Although the term “Kintsukuroi” originated from Japan, the origin of the Japanese legend of the Kintsukuroi craft is no longer verifiable. From the perspective of craftsmanship, although Kintsukuroi craft is different from gold painting craftsmanship, it originated from lacquer art, while lacquer art originated from China. After 8000 years of cultural sedimentation and technological iteration, there is a possibility of evolution.

Regarding the craftsmanship, the Tang and Song dynasties already had mature foil powder gold painting techniques. In the second year of the Qingli reign of the Northern Song Dynasty, the Huiguang Pagoda in Ruifian County, Zhejiang Province unearthed lacquer letters, as well as Buddhist relics. The letters were all painted with gold lacquer. In the sixth chapter of Xiu Shi Lu-Kun Ji-Description and Decoration, it is recorded that “Painting gold, also known as clay gold painting lacquer, is a pure gold flower pattern.....While the fine hook is yang, and the comb is yin, or black lacquer texture, or colored gold statue.” The clay gold here refers to the gold painting process of using finely ground gold powder to depict. In the Xiu Shi Lu · Shang Gu No. 18, it is recorded that “Repairing. It is particularly difficult to peel and strike the marks of ancient artifacts, and the freshness of the lacquer and the brightness and darkness of the color are quite wonderful. “This chapter explicitly mentions the use of large lacquer to repair ancient artifacts. In the Jingdezhen Pottery Commentary written by Lan Pu in the Qing Dynasty, it is recorded the “Method of sticking bowls and vessels” and “Method of sticking official kiln vessels” are also mentioned. Although the main materials only involve tile ash, flour, and egg white, and there is no such medium as lacquer, this method of repairing and filling defects can undoubtedly be seen as the predecessor of the Kintsukuroi craft. After entering the Ming and Qing dynasties, folk collection of ancient artifacts became very popular, and with the strong promotion of literati, many industries with porcelain as the core emerged, and various restoration techniques also developed well. The original technique of Kintsukuroi craft is to use gold to repair damaged marks and achieve a unique decorative effect. And this also happens to have a high similarity with traditional lacquer techniques such as “clay gold”, “gold lacquer” decoration, and “gilding”.

Therefore, the Kintsukuroi craft should be a traditional handicraft originating from the Warring States period. With the active exchange of lacquer art between China and Japan, the gold painting craft and lacquer painting craft were integrated with local culture and gradually developed in Japan during the Edo period (late Ming to late Qing), which was widely promoted and then absorbed and disseminated by the domestic handicraft industry. It can be said that the Kintsukuroi craft is a product of the fusion of Chinese and Japanese culture and art.

3 The Characteristics of Kintsukuroi Craft

Kintsukuroi is mainly made of gold powder, gold foil, and natural lacquer, with high strength powder and tile ash as auxiliary materials. The metal used in the Kintsukuroi craft is mostly gold, and now silver, copper, tin, etc. are also used, and the method of use depends on the purpose. Traditional Kintsukuroi craft was generally used to repair highly valuable ceramic artifacts.

As the saying goes, ‘like glue like lacquer’, many people only know about glue. Lacquer has adhesive properties, and the Kintsukuroi craft uses lacquer as the medium for repair technology. By utilizing the characteristics of natural lacquer, such as firmness, stability, good plasticity, and strong adhesion, it can bond and repair broken ceramic pieces and other pieces of different materials. The repaired objects can continue their previous functions, not only waterproof but also sturdy.

Gold is a globally recognized precious metal and is highly loved by the world. Although it may appear high-profile, it can coordinate with various materials and artifacts in terms of visual effects. Decorating imperfections with gold signifies an acceptance of imperfections. The aesthetic idea behind the Kintsukuroi craft originated from Japan’s “wabi-sabi”, which was a fusion of Chinese Zen Buddhism during the Tang and Song dynasties and Japanese local culture after it was introduced to Japan. In the face of defects, they do not abandon them but treat each other gently. This unique and romantic process from the East, with excellent qualities of inclusiveness, practicality, and artistry, contains huge soothing power.

4 Innovation of Jinshu Craft in Modern Jewelry Design

Since 2013, the Kintsukuroi craft has been revived and promoted in China. At the same time, influenced by the contemporary art environment, people’s attitudes and aesthetics towards those incomplete and old objects have also changed. Traditional Kintsukuroi craft has developed to this day, which is not only used for repairing high-value items, but also for repairing daily objects used by people, and even for creating new objects. At the same time, the design of modern jewelry has undergone significant changes, mainly reflected in the emphasis on abandoning the concept of identity symbols in design, advocating the use of cheap materials, and advocating the replacement of formal elements with ideas. The creator’s personal artistic concepts play a leading role in the design. This also provides an opportunity for the integration and innovation of Kintsukuroi art and modern art.

4.1 The Crossover of Bodies’ Materials

The traditional Kintsukuroi craft focuses more on repairing pottery and porcelain, emphasizing the integrity and unity of an object. Since the development of modern jewelry, the range of material applications has been constantly expanding. In addition to traditional precious metals and jewelry materials, it also includes the interspersed design of comprehensive materials such as textiles, leather, plastic, wood, and ordinary metals, which has extended to the range of diversified comprehensive materials. This has also



Fig. 1. Kintsukuroi chopsticks pillows



Fig. 2. Kintsukuroi jewelry https://www.sohu.com/a/439278115_99927307

opened up a new path for the artistic expression of Kintsukuroi craft in modern jewelry: crossover design where different materials are pieced together not only fully utilizes the superior adhesive properties of Kintsukuroi craft, but also forms new visual tension and emotional feelings. For example, Japanese artist Tomomi Kamoshita found many fragments of different ceramics while walking along the coast. She used the traditional repair method of Kintsukuroi craft to bond these discarded fragments with the ceramic fragments in her personal collection, ultimately creating charming and unique objects such as Kintsukuroi chopsticks pillows (Fig. 1) and jewelry (Fig. 2).

4.2 The Reconstruction of Shape

Traditional jewelry design carries too much content and symbolism. Traditional Kintsukuroi craft pay more attention to proper handling when performing restoration



Fig. 3. YEE Sookyung *A deformed vase W6* <https://artemperor.tw/artworks/23704>

work, respecting both the original work and the author. However, modern jewelry design pursues diversity and richness in the combination of forms, guiding the creative design of restored jewelry from a pure visual form, and will gain a new visual interest and novel sense of form. The shape of Kintsukuroi will vary with the cracks in the artifacts, and the combination of points, lines, surfaces, and bodies unfolds in a simple game of rules. The unconventional design not only has a unique shape but also incorporates different aesthetic tastes. From the perspective of styling, the diverse ways of expression in Kintsukuroi craft can precisely support the presentation of different artistic forms and the expression of formal sense. For example, in the work of South Korean sculptor YEE Sookyung, she completely abandons the original shape of broken ceramic artifacts and reassembles them into deconstructing irregular sculptures with postmodern art style (Fig. 3). This innovative approach can also be applied to modern jewelry design, adding new aesthetic appeal to it.

4.3 Changes in Design Concepts

With the improvement of material civilization and living standards, modern jewelry design is increasingly regarded as a work of art to show personality charm and cultivate temperament in today's increasingly diversified human life. Modern jewelry art not only focuses on the quality and technology of jewelry design, but also pays attention to the emotional factors of the wearer. While expressing a sense of design, it also pays attention to bringing people a certain inner feeling. Kintsukuroi craft is used to repair objects that have already formed emotions with people, thus possessing the attribute of touching people's hearts. The aesthetic ideas of "repair" and "healing" contained in the Kintsukuroi craft coincide with modern aesthetics. People are no longer afraid of "damage", but treat each other gently, tolerate the incompleteness of the objects, and also accept their imperfections. At the same time, during the process of Kintsukuroi craft, the restorers will give this artifact a new sense of beauty. Therefore, whether from an artistic or emotional perspective, the gold decoration process can be perfectly integrated into the design of modern jewelry.

5 Conclusion

The revival and innovation of traditional craftsmanship is one of the most important topics in the development of contemporary art, and the combination of Kintsukuroi craft and modern jewelry design has enormous potential and development space. On the basis of in-depth analysis of the artistic characteristics and cultural connotations of the Kintsukuroi craft, it is necessary to redesign and innovate the Kintsukuroi craft by combining modern technology and materials. At the same time, utilizing the aesthetic ideas and other modern aesthetic meanings of Kintsukuroi craft, combined with the artistic characteristics of modern jewelry design such as concept expression and material diversity, to explore the innovative path and method of Kintsukuroi craft in modern jewelry design. This not only meets people's different aesthetic needs and spiritual connotations, but also conforms to the concept of natural and environmental protection in contemporary design. Integrating Kintsukuroi craft into modern jewelry design not only inherits traditional culture, but also achieving multiple goals of functionality, artistry, and emotion. Innovation in Kintsukuroi craft is imperative.

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