

Bedouin handicrafts as a source of innovation

Traditional fashion in modern Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

Lifestyle in Saudi Arabia is facing challenges regarding its cultural heritage. In particular the way of life of the Bedouin is undergoing changes as never seen before. Instead of a nomadic way of life, Tribes are now settling in specific places. As a result, identifying features of their traditional lifestyle are in danger of becoming obsolete. It is therefore necessary to take measures to preserve this rich cultural heritage as a legacy for future generations. There must be consideration of how to achieve a harmonious balance between cultural change, technological advancement and the preservation of Bedouin traditions.

Traditional products made by the Bedouin employ many techniques and methods, the most important of which are weaving and embroidery. Throughout time in the regions of Saudi Arabia these techniques were recognized as the most decorative of arts and were used by the Bedouin to produce functional objects, decorate clothes, tools, and furniture. The use of natural yarns of all kinds, semi-precious gems, and beads gives additional value and uniqueness to these traditional objects.

The aim of this study was to examine traditional techniques used in the production of handicrafts for Bedouin of Saudi Arabia, including artistic methods devised by Bedouin women which are no longer in use and the objects which no longer have a role in modern life. This was achieved by the following objectives:

- Determining methods and traditional motifs of traditional Bedouin weaving.
- Determining the methods and traditional motifs used in decorating embroidered Bedouin handicrafts.
- Development of those methods, material and colors to use it in the creation of the modern traditional fashion.

The study has been applied to a sample of artisans in the Qassim region at the invitation of Princess Noura bint Mohammed President of the Board of Directors for Handicrafts Cooperative Society, in

order to develop the production of artisans and make successful projects to guarantee them a decent income and allow them to continue practicing their art.

The study succeeded in using the methods of Sadu (Bedouin weaving) in producing decorative colored ribbons and incorporating them in modern designs derived from authentic traditional costumes. It also featured the re-appropriation of Bedouin embroidery which was originally only used on household items, wall hangings and tents. Multi-coloured flowers created in Roman stitch was incorporated on clothing thus preserving traditional Bedouin methods and motifs.

This has culminated in the unique fashion show called "We are together," which has been met with much enthusiasm and admiration.

Keywords: Handicrafts, Traditional fashion, Weaving, Embroidery, Saudi Arabia

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