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## Combining Traditional and Modern Art to make Fabric using Poly Vinyl Alcohol Material

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Received 7 May 2017; revised 16 September 2017; accepted 21 September 2017

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### Abstract

Art in a broader sense refers to an activity that is spontaneous and self-restrained. Over many years, traditional art has represented its concepts with motifs and colors, which reflects the consistency and harmony with nature. On the other hand, there is modern art, which refers to trends of artistic improvement and modernism being affected by recent thoughts, and one wonders whether traditional art may fade away with the presence of new ideas and thoughts. Therefore, considering both traditional and modern art, one of the strategies that represent significance and prevent the decline of any one will be combination of the two arts, to harmonize with nature along with novelty and modernism.

In this regard, traditional colors and patterns were used in the present study in order to design textile with the combination of modern art, since the art of making fabric has been accompanied with creativity and innovation. Therefore, Poly Vinyl Alcohol material has been used with the feature of being soluble in water instead of ordinary cloth.

*Keywords:* Traditional Art; Modern Art; Making Fabric; Poly Vinyl Alcohol Textile

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### 1. Introduction

Today we are faced with the deliberate movement of the modern world. In different communities, scientists and social reformists are interested in cultural expansion based on maintaining local cultures, and Iran is no exception. Iranian scholars and artists should first identify inner elements of modern art and then recognize the forgotten infrastructures of traditional art, followed by combination of infrastructures, which will establish the background of social

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transformation. In this article, simple definitions and concepts of traditional and modern art, fabric making and water-soluble fabric and their characteristics to create original artwork will be investigated.

### 1.1. Traditional Art

Undoubtedly, the life of a nation depends on its culture and knowledge as well as the extent to which they benefit science and civilization. This has an effective role in the national honors, which can only be achieved by nobles, scholars, and scientists of that civilization. Among countries popular for their traditional art (China, India, Turkey, Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Malaysia), Iran has the highest rank regarding numerous fields and products of handicraft industry in the world. This could be due to the variety of weather conditions, geographical situation, different ethnic groups, and most important of all, artistic people (Yavari, 2013; Yusofifar, 2003).

It is important that one should know what is meant by traditional art and its position in art and tradition. According to the immortal wisdom perspective, there is a fundamental difference between traditional art and secular art. Secular art is the art with no coded language or superhuman source of inspiration. This is also true about secular art whose subject is religion (whose samples can be seen in religious art of Europe after medieval age). However, “traditional art is used due to its harmony and compliance with universal laws. This can be said about traditional art based on the coding rules of images as well as the formal originality of the world in which it has been created, and also because of the naïve method of this art, its harmony and compliance with the nature of materials, and eventually regarding the special attention it has to the facts” (Nasr, 2003; Frithjof, 1998). “Now, if such an art considers religious issues and looks at it as a responsibility, it will be a sacred art” (Rahmati, 1995).

### 1.2. Modern Art

Historians and researchers disagree on the history of modern art emergence. It started in 1905 and early 20th century which coincided fauvism exhibited in Paris as the outset of this art (Lenten, 2014, p.7). However, researchers such as Christopher Vicomte, the American art researcher, believe that modern art evolved in 1860s with exhibition of “Le déjeuner sur l'herbe” by Édouard Manet in Salon des Refusés of Paris. Therefore, the use of this term was not limited to 20th century.

There is no clear boundary between contemporary and modern art. How and under what conditions contemporary art replaced modern art which in turn Avant-guard in connection with the concept? The term contemporary art has been used since the 80s and includes present art, with time span of 1960-1969. Contemporary art is essentially formed due to postmodernism being a vague concept, and widely transcends the boundaries of visual arts. Contemporary art finds its meaning through the clear boundary between classic training of the art and the emergence of new techniques such as mix and multimedia which can expand artistic atmosphere and complicate artistic expression (Hellmanzik, 2016).

### 1.3. Fabric Making

Initiative, creativity and being unconventional are the characteristics of fashion industry and creation of new fabrics using recycled materials. Specific techniques are used by designers for cosmetic changes in the fabric to create unique and special clothes, so that the textile is not similar to any other materials in the market. Making use of textile techniques provides choices for the

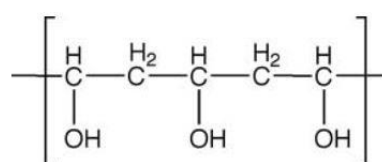
designers to create various clothes. Given that today some people seek unique clothes with no identical items, application of changes in the clothes can lead to differences in them.

Fabrics can be made using different techniques and materials such as yarn, threads, nets, guipure, suede, leather, metals, metal fibers, recycled materials, and so on, all of which help to create new stuff. These new fabrics can be applied in various clothing such as dresses, shawls, bags and shoes, as well for interior decorations, pendants, decorative stands, table clothes, and similar things. The use of hand stitching, such as needlework, hand prints and so on makes the designers use fabric which they buy indirectly. Moreover, changing the fabric can help to reshape it. In this method, small stitches are created on the fabric to give it different geometric figures, flower patterns, or irregular shapes and wrinkles. Uncommon ways of using fabric reflect the clothes in a new image. One type of fabric which is familiar to everyone is stitching pieces of cloth together to make clothes. This is known as patchwork and has been used in Europe to reuse old clothes, but later they did it with new textile ([www.tar-o-pod.com](http://www.tar-o-pod.com)).

#### 1.4. Water Soluble Fabric

Water soluble fabric was first applied in medical industry. Laundry bags were made with this fabric, so that infection or diseases could not spread. Now, this kind of fabric is used to design textile and clothes. Sewing is an art well associated with nature. There are many artists who have worked with subjects associated with animals, plants, or natural landscapes such as Meredith Woolnough, the Australian artist inspired by nature who was experienced in providing beautiful needle works in water soluble fabric. To work with the fabric, first the desired design is sewn on the cloth and then washed with water. The parts which undergo sewing will remain and other parts are removed to achieve a beautiful and clear design (Kim, 2016; Qiu, 2017; Xu, 2017).

There are a number of parameters, such as correct stitching to improve this technique; all stitches should be connected so that the work is not destroyed while being washed. Nature is an infinite source of inspiration, and artists such as Meredith Woolnough, whose works could be seen as a good example, have benefited from it ([www.geradli.com](http://www.geradli.com)). Poly vinyl alcohol (PVA) is one of the common water soluble fabrics with chemical structure of  $C_2H_4O$  (fig 1). In this research, PVA is used as water soluble fabric.



**Fig 1** PVA structure

## 2. Method

Initially, it was necessary to be familiar with traditional colors and patterns along with modern art. This was addressed through referring to scientific articles and books in this field and also visiting historical places, carpets, and other traditional works. The objective was to recover Iranian art not to repeat the past, and to lead to innovation and initiative in the design so that new values and novel conversation could be created.

## 2.1. Testing Stitches on the Fabric

It was essential to perform tests on the fabric before final implementation of the design. The first test was done using household sewing machines. One of the positive points of working with these machines is the freedom of hand while doing needle work and implementing the desired design. However, there were some problems; for example, embroidery thread was torn, and the needle broke due to the hard and fragile fabric. This usually led to consumption of time, accompanied by extreme fatigue; on the other hand, the work was not possible at a larger scale. However, small needle work fabric samples were submerged in water so as to remove the fabric. Unfortunately, the fabric was not removed completely and the samples did not provide good results. In the second test, different tools and materials such as glue and beads were used, resulting in some problems. For example, the glue did not stay on the fabric and was separated while washing, leading to unfavorable results. Therefore, this test was not approved.

The third test was carried out using industrial sewing machines to deal with some above mentioned problems. However, these machines had some problems. In industrial sewing machines the designs were created by computer software, which limited their implementation. It should be noted that these machines have some advantages such as saving time, and they are applicable to a large extent for mass production. Satisfactory results were not obtained by these methods. Therefore, it was decided to change the material. Accordingly, researches and studies were performed to find a suitable fabric. Success was eventually achieved through using softer fabric material that could address most of the above mentioned problems.

After preparing the fabric, the first test was performed using household sewing machines due to the freedom of hand during implementation, but because of the delicate fabric the results were unfavorable.

Therefore, industrial machines were used to address this problem, and few samples were prepared leading to favorable and satisfactory results. Initially, the desired patterns were designed as computer files for the machine. The machines implemented the design on the fabric.

To achieve favorable results and strength, a network with sufficient flexibility was located on the fabric and then the sewing machines were ready to work.

Eventually, each pattern was implemented.



**Fig 2** Designs while being implemented



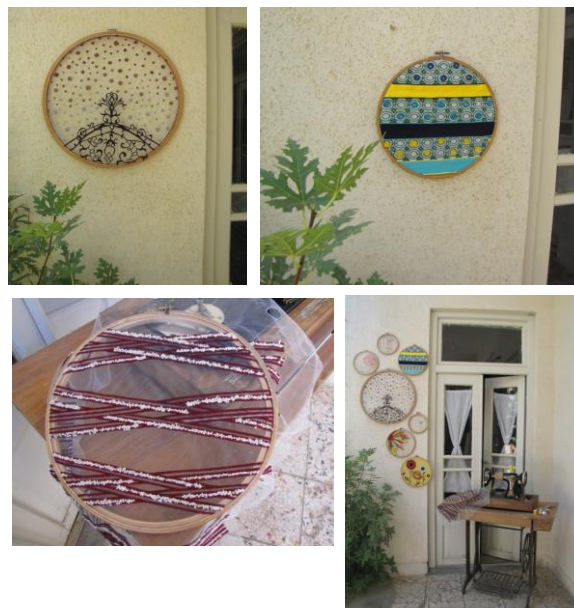
**Fig 3** Design samples

According to the significant characteristics of these fabrics, each sample was submerged in water to separate the sewn designs from the fabric.



**Fig 4** PVA fabric dissolving in water

## 2.2. Samples of Final Works



**Fig 5** Final implementation

### 3. Conclusion

In this study, traditional art, particularly used patterns and colors, were investigated along with modern art. Later, with the interference of modernity, these traditional patterns and designs were transformed into innovative ideas which combined traditional and modern patterns and provided new background for making novel fabrics. Therefore, this study aimed to use PVA fabric due to their solubility in water in order to achieve the objective, since using this method could lead to more delicate designs on the fabric with lower percentage of error. Finally, the fabric obtained in this method was a delicate and original work, by combining both modern and traditional arts, which represented the characteristics of both styles. The combination of modern and traditional styles was used to start the study, it is suggested that other artists in the field of fabric design can evolve styles such as Pop art to create new background to design modern clothes. Finally, the new design was created using poly vinyl alcohol fabric, through a combination of modern and traditional arts.

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