

The Application of Classical Elements in the Design of Women's Shoes

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Abstract: Classical elements are one of the most important sources of inspiration for the design of women's shoes and the market has presented a strong trend towards retro styles in recent years. Several well-known footwear brands, both foreign and domestic, have introduced a variety of women shoes with classic styles. However, there exists a misunderstanding and design blindness by some designers, with regards to choosing classical design elements and combining design styles with brand-positioning. This paper analyzed the inspiration and influence of classical elements on modern designs of women shoes, focused not only on classical design elements from the culture of clothing and shoes in both East and West since the 20th century, but on the relationship between the brand positioning and design styles. Finally, it summarized various techniques of applying classical elements to the design of women shoes, providing a wealth of material and theoretical basis for the design of women shoes which have a retro charm.

Key words: retro trend; classical elements; the design of women shoes

1 Retro trend in women's shoe design

Classical elements are one of the important inspirations in women shoe design, and the popular trend for women shoe design is retro designing in recent years, that is, re-using retro elements to design women's shoes.

Retro is a general terminology for a kind of designing direction: the previous design styles and ideas, which were very popular but then were replaced, are used again to design new products for further having themselves endorsed and accepted by the consumers with the mood of nostalgia. Retro design includes conventional design and innovative design. Conventional design is to imitate, to use the original classical style fully or partly to design the shoes. Innovative design would join the designer's creative inspiration based on the original classical elements to create timing and popular design work.

Retro trends have many kinds of women's shoe design, which could be either the expression of nostalgia or the rebirth of a design, and could be either a continuation of classic popularity or an innovation. For example, the style of military uniform in shoes, PRADA Moroccan pointed high-heel shoes and Scotland stripe high-heel sandals, and so on, are classical retro design.

All of the above fully indicate the importance of retro trends in women's shoe design; and applying retro elements properly can embody fashion and taste.

2 Designing status for applying classical elements to women's shoes

With the development of Chinese footwear, women's shoe design is stepping into the international fashion stage gradually. Various kinds of retro women's shoes have been produced, providing more choices to the consumer. But when looking through these design works, it is easy to find that there are

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some misunderstandings on the choice of classical elements, the combination of design style and brand positioning, and so on; the design ideas in some design works are not new enough and are blind. As the followings examples show in detail:

(1) Women's shoes introduced by different brands are more or less similar to each other, or too high-minded to be popular, which can not embody a brand style.

(2) The classical elements are used over-mechanically, and are even embezzled, not combining with fashion elements perfectly.

(3) The design inspirations from European designers are used too much and result in lack of our own characteristics.

Aiming directly at these matters, this paper focuses on the methods of designing women's shoes with classical elements for providing materials and theoretical bases for designing classical women's shoes.

3 Application of classical elements in women shoes design

Classical elements have a wide range of elements which could be pattern, decoration, shape, color, and so on. The application of classical elements in women's shoes design means that, with references to some past classic elements and designing characteristics of modern shoes, re-planning the shoes' shape for reflecting the classical charm of women's shoes. A designer should be good at learning and collecting both eastern and western typical elements in each age which should be applied practically in his own design work after analyzing the characteristics.

3.1 Expressions of classical elements

(1) Pattern: in the fashion world, ham stripes, dot patterns, cow patterns, leopard stripes, python stripes, zebra stripes, stripes, Scotland grids, Chidori grids, diamond-shaped pattern, and so on, are all the classics.

(2) Decoration: firstly, there must be a classic brand logo as a decoration to express the brand's positioning and style in shoe design, for example, the logo of Chanel is "double C", the logo of Gucci is "double G", the logos of Dior, Prada and Fendi, etc are exactly their letter. Secondly, the classical elements such as tassel, lace and horse chain have typical retro charm.

(3) Shape: in the shoe last design, the retro style is simple which includes pointed toe, round toe, and square toe, etc. in different ages; in the heel and sole designing, there are some retro styles such as wedge heel, Louis-style heel, flower pot sole, high-profile sole, and so on.

(4) Color: the most eye-catching color is retro red, followed by the main retro colors, for example, the warm color of earth, gray, pink, berry, black, dark metallic luster, etc.

3.2 Techniques of application

To apply classical elements in women's shoes design with the following:

(1) Designing with references to some classical shoe styles. For example, referring to eastern embroidered shoes and western Oxford shoes in upper design; referring to the classic wedge heel and Louis-style heel in sole and heel design; using silk and some materials with traditional patterns in material design.

(2) Applying some patterns which can embody classical style to decorate shoes. In upper, sole and heel design, the application of some classical patterns will bring the footwear a classical flavor.

(3) Through application of the associative design method, helping the designer to design creatively while associating some ancient classic designs with women's shoes design.

(4) Through application of the exaggerative design method, exaggerating the original retro style moderately in women shoes, such as the design of shoes with spring toes.

(5) Through application of the integrated design method, integrating Chinese classical elements with that of Western for designing new style women's shoes.

(6) Embodying the retro trend, that is, applying each nation's classical elements in the fashion women's shoe designs to embody the national spirit.

3.3 Examples of applying classical elements in women shoes design

(1) Traditional wood carvings and wedge heel design

As shown in Fig. 1, in these two women's shoes with Chinese flavor, the design inspiration of the heel and sole comes from the combination of Chinese traditional wood carving and western classical wedge heel. The designing styles are full of temperament of little puffs of smoke and light ink, unworldly and elegant in Chinese culture.



Fig. 1 Traditional wood carving and wedge heel

(2) Combination of Silk and Gothic art

As shown in Fig. 2, the design of this shoe trends towards the design art of Western Gothic, but Chinese silk materials are used in the upper, and soft and smooth characteristics of which bring the shoe a strong classical flavor.



Fig. 2 Silk and Gothic art style shoe

(3) Application of classical Ink Painting elements

As shown in Fig. 3, the Chinese ink painting with thick ink and splendor image draw the Chinese style vividly, in which the simple and elegant boot design express the pursuit of elegance, immanency and wealth in eastern spiritual realm.



Fig. 3 Ink painting style boot

4 Conclusions

This paper puts forward innovative design techniques of applying the classical elements in shoes according to the research on the application of classical elements in women's shoes, and provides new ideas for designing women's shoes with retro features. Following are the main conclusions:

- (1) To apply classical elements in women's shoe design is a kind of positive, active and innovative thinking, the methods of which are various but not fixed.
- (2) Analysis of the design intention of each classical element should be embodied in the design.
- (3) To be good at collecting and analyzing both Chinese and Western classical elements, find the breakthrough and the combination point of classical elements and times, and then create unique popular footwear.

The Application of classical elements in women's shoe design has a wide range of content, and only one part of that was studied in this paper. As a shoe designer, innovative design laws should be explored constantly, design ideas should be expanded, and more women's shoes of imaginative and vital inspiration should be designed.

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