

The Artistic Expression of Tie-Dye

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Abstract

Different living environments, lifestyles, customs, cultural traits and aesthetics have shaped the diverse growth of traditional handicrafts. Tie-dyeing is one of the most important non-heritage crafts in the composition of traditional Chinese culture, and its formation is closely related to the general environment in which it exists, and its artistic language is also formed and developed slowly in this historical environment.

Keywords

Tie-Dye; Tie-Dye Handicraft; Tie-Dye Art.

1. Tie-Dyeing Process

The process of tie-dyeing is as follows: choosing the fabric, drawing, carving, printing, stranding, desizing, soaking, dismantling, rinsing, drying and ironing.

Step 1: Selecting the fabric. There are many different fabrics that can be used in the tie-dyeing process, and the choice of fabric will give different dyeing effects depending on the fabric used. The quality of the fabric affects the quality of the tie-dye product. Secondly, the choice of tie-dye pattern and the technique of tie-dyeing should match the fabric. Usually, for traditional and modern tie-dyeing, most of the natural fibres used are hemp, cotton, wool, silk and so on.

Step two: drawing and type carving. Most traditional designs have some sort of regularity, and the design of a tie-dye pattern requires the craftsman to understand the characteristics of the tie-dye flower and to be able to determine how it should be tied, and at the same time, to combine the characteristics of the fabric with a solid cotton thread so that the pattern is better presented.

Step three: printing. The pattern is reproduced on the fabric by first drawing the design on the plastic film with a coloured pen, then using a needle to pierce the film along the lines drawn, hollowing out the pattern, then covering the plastic film with the fabric and using a brush with a dye solution to evenly brush the film and penetrate the fabric to form the pattern.

Step 4: Tie-dyeing. Tie-dyeing is one of the most important processes in the process. It determines the different effects of tie-dye products in terms of layout, colour, pattern and design, and is also an important process that reflects the level of skill of the tie-dye artist. There are many ways to tie the flowers, but basically they are all hand-stitched, sewn, tied or tied with the aid of instruments.

Step 5: Desizing. Before dyeing, the lumped fabric is desized and treated, in order to achieve a better dyeing effect. Soak the lumpy cloth in a bucket of hot, clear water to wash the pulp off the cloth and make it softer. The fabric is then dried and either wrung out by hand or placed in a water stripper. This process makes the fabric permeable for later dyeing and processing work.

Step 6: Dyeing. The dyeing process is divided into a cold dyeing method and a hot dyeing method. The dyeing solution used is a hand-made natural dyeing solution. The dyeing process involves putting the desiccated fabric into the dyeing vat and kneading it repeatedly, so that the fabric is fully and evenly coloured and the colour is good and not easily removed. As vegetable dyes are slow to take on colour, the heat dyeing method allows them to take on colour quickly.

The heat dyeing method involves heating the vegetable dyestuff and the auxiliary colour fixing substances, the optimum temperature being around 80°C.

Step 7: Remove from the vat. The dyed fabric is taken out of the vat and placed on a dyeing rod on the vat to filter the water, then the fabric is placed in the vat with fresh water, washed several times and wrung out to dry. Nowadays, most tie-dye factories use dryers for dewatering, which saves labour and facilitates faster drying.

Step 8: Remove the threads. After tie-dyeing, the fabric is tied with threads that have become raised and lumpy, so you need to use small scissors to cut the thin threads or cotton threads that are used to twist the "lumpy flowers", which then reveal the untouched fabric. After the threads have been removed, the fabric has a lot of white patterns, and this is the tie-dye pattern we get.

Step 9: Rinsing, drying and ironing. After the threads have been removed, the fabric is rinsed in a pool full of water. After rinsing, the fabric is dried so that it is dry. Finally the cloth needs to be flattened with a stone mill. This completes the entire process of making a tie-dye piece.

2. Characteristics of Tie-Dye Art

2.1. Characteristics of the Materials Selected for Tie-Dyeing

With the development of silkworms, hemp production techniques and textile skills, silk and hemp tie-dye fabrics have become one of the common fabrics used in tie-dyeing. Nowadays, however, with the rapidly developing level of technology, the fabrics used in tie-dyeing are not only limited to ordinary earthy cotton fabrics, but there are also many distinctive fabrics, such as pure cotton fabrics and new fabrics such as characteristic hemp, yarn and corduroy.

2.2. Characteristics of Dyes

Plant dyes have a long history of use in China. Traditional tie-dyeing uses the dyeing process of grass and wood dyeing, the raw materials for which are mainly slate, but also different coloured dyes. Among these are indigo grass for blue; safflower and cyperus for red; sumac for pink; yellow oak bark for aqua; comfrey for purple; gardenia fruit, acacia flowers and water hyacinth for yellow; sage and purple gold zephyr for green; water horse mulberry, soap dock and black-headed grass for black; and sesame chestnut shell for grey, and tread chasers (small persimmons) for colour fixation. The selection of more plants breaks up the directional use of the panicle, and the tie-dye becomes even more colourful. The local tie-dye masters have created new dyeing effects, such as "two-colour dyeing" and "multi-colour dyeing", out of the colourful plant dyeing colours. The dyed products have an ancient and elegant natural style.

2.3. Characteristics of Decorative Patterns

In terms of decorative patterns, traditional tie-dyeing is constantly innovating and developing from simple, regular geometric patterns to more complicated animal patterns, etc. The materials are taken from life, and the expression techniques pursue naturalness, simplicity and the integration of real personal emotions. The tie-dye products reflect the people's interest in life, local customs and the aesthetic feelings of the people. Common tie-dye geometric patterns include squares, circles, triangles, rhombuses, hexagonal flowers, octagonal flowers, etc., with symmetrical patterns as the main presentation. Traditional tie-dye patterns are also dominated by animal and plant motifs. There are also many cultural motifs that have been designed with a multitude of cultures.

Due to the nature of the tie-dye process, tie-dye products are unique hand-made products with a unique artistic charm.

3. Characteristics of Decorative Art

Tie-dye craftsmanship embodies the values and characteristics of craftsmanship, which is the way in which artisans use their wise hands to express the charm of life, changing the way of life and creating a new culture.

The aesthetic value of tie-dye craftsmanship is reflected in their uniqueness, with each tie-dye product being unique in its own right. Each tie-dye product is the result of a combination of factors, and in the process of making it, the choice and combination of each element affects the final presentation of the tie-dye effect, and therein lies the charm of tie-dye. Each tie-dye product embodies the concept of the harmonious coexistence of man and nature.

Secondly, the tie-dye process incorporates the aesthetic and emotional factors of the creator, and the artistic expression of its embodied antique beauty, the natural sense of colour, and the choice of natural elements are the most authentic and rustic expressions. It enables people to feel the beauty of nature and the comfort of emotions at all times, as if they were in the midst of tie-dye, with an immersive emotional experience.

The aesthetic value of tie-dye craftsmanship is not only reflected in its formal beauty, but also in its connotation of traditional beauty. Chinese tie-dyeing has been around for thousands of years, incorporating history, culture and customs, and has undergone a long life history, which has seen its fair share of ups and downs but still shines. With its unique design language and rich aesthetic form, tie-dye has reflected its own aesthetic value, and many people now enjoy the art of tie-dye and appreciate the artistic beauty it brings.

In addition to this, tie-dye craftsmanship has a humanistic value. The creative process of tie-dyeing reflects a certain amount of humanistic concern. The process of making tie-dye requires "three hearts and two minds", i.e. care, attention and patience, as well as intention and mood. The 'unity of heart and hand' is a form that reveals human emotion and the vitality of life. At the same time, it is a process of meditation and contemplation, which is a kind of character needed in today's fickle society. Secondly, the craft of tie-dyeing also has a nurturing value, as it affects the spiritual world with its philosophical beauty and influences human behaviour with its immersive production process, a reflection of the 'unity of knowledge and action'. In addition, the purely vegetable-based dyeing process embodies the concept of conservation and environmental protection, which also reflects the humanistic value of tie-dye craftsmanship.

Secondly, tie-dye craftsmanship has a practical value. From the original tie-dye cloth used by women to carry their children, to the current range of popular household items made from tie-dye, the tie-dye products produced by both the original workshops and the current tie-dye factories are highly functional and of practical value.

4. Conclusion

It is no coincidence that in the current climate, the traditional craft of tie-dyeing is gradually gaining attention for the beauty and uniqueness of its workmanship, as the emotions and purely handmade techniques and characteristic graphic patterns, as well as its abstract and mysterious artistic charm, show its unique cultural connotation and aesthetic value that cannot be reflected in today's mechanised products.

References

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