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Designing thematic compositions in jewelry

Abstract. The article is dedicated to the problem of developing and creating thematic artistic and graphic projects for jewelry by students in secondary vocational education. It presents a brief description of the principles and stages of creating thematic compositions in the development of jewelry design projects. The main methods of teaching design are analyzed, as well as examples of using a research approach in the learning process to create the concept of the artistic image of the product, as well as the selection of materials and jewelry techniques.

Keywords: student, artistic activity, idea, concept, artistic image, composition, design, jewellery, jewellery art, art and graphic project.

In the 1970s, new trends emerged quite distinctly in jewelry art, associated with the conceptualization of executed pieces, clearly manifested in the works of F. Kuznetsov and V. Goncharov [11]. Their fundamental idea was the need to conceptualize jewelry, which ceased to be positioned solely as ornaments but began to be interpreted as independent exhibition art objects, emphasizing the uniqueness and individuality of their owner. The embodiment of these qualities is impossible without developing the artistic image of the jewelry piece.

The solution to this problem involves the development of the content of education in jewelry design, aimed at creating an artistic-graphic project for a future product. In jewelry art, an authorial project of a highly artistic jewelry piece is considered to be a work created based on the concept of an artistic image.

The concept of an artistic image in jewelry art represents a set of interrelated systemic ideas, artistic means of their implementation, and the choice of materials and jewelry techniques that are best able to realize the author's intention [1, p. 93]. When forming the artistic image, the author "takes into account the relationship between the product and the person, determines the degree of correspondence between form, purpose, and functional expressiveness" [12, p. 140].

Before being embodied in material, the author's idea is realized in a project (thematic composition), in which the artistic intent is clearly and distinctly expressed through means of expression (form, lines, point, spot, tone, color, etc.) aimed at creating the expected impression or sensation.

The experience of creative activity associated with the creation of a graphic project is acquired and perfected during the mastery of the subject matter of the academic discipline "Design."

Design in jewelry art—the process of creating a project for a work—is linked to the development of an artistic image, understood as "a system of expressive

elements used as carriers of artistic meaning" [8, p. 95], allowing the author's intent to be represented in an artistic-graphic project.

In the process of creating an artistic-graphic project for jewelry, the following stages can be distinguished:

- Birth of the overall concept of the future jewelry item, formulation of the theme.
- Formation of the concept of the artistic image of the future product, selection of means of artistic expression.
- Selection of illustrative material (visual images related to the theme of the product) – analogues of jewelry intended to be copied for the study of their structural features.
- Creation of graphic and painted images of selected jewelry analogues (linear, tonal, color renderings) – copies of selected illustrations of jewelry pieces.
- Development of an association sheet (association map).
- Creation of search sketches based on the association sheet, drawings of the designed product first in an academic manner, then their decorative processing to transform them into jewelry motifs.
- Development of a thematic composition, combining search sketches.
- Selection of materials corresponding to the artistic image of the jewelry piece.
- Development of the construction of the jewelry item.
- Creation of a model of the jewelry piece (using plasticine, paper).
- Execution of a technical drawing of the jewelry piece.
- Copying and transferring the drawing onto a tinted sheet of paper and rendering it in tone and color.
- Completion of the clausura.

Throughout the design process, both artistic and technical aspects must be taken into account. Artistic aspects include creativity, the ability to generate new images, as well as the author's taste, style, sense of color harmony, and knowledge of painting techniques. Technical aspects encompass the laws of composition and drawing, rules of drafting, knowledge of artistic materials and tools used to create artistic-graphic projects, and the ability to apply them.

To successfully complete each stage of the jewelry project, students need a certain professional "foundation": knowledge of styles, traditions, contemporary and current trends; technical skills in drawing and detailed rendering of graphic representations of jewelry; knowledge of precious and colored metals, gemstones (natural and artificial, their properties), jewelry techniques, etc.

While developing and refining the algorithm for creating an artistic-graphic project, improving teaching methodology, and organizing student activities, it became necessary to identify and classify the main difficulties encountered during the work process. To this end, 78 projects completed by students between 2015 and 2023 were studied and analyzed from the methodological fund of the Jewelry and

Bone Carving Department of the Higher School of Folk Arts (the general appearance of the artistic-graphic project for jewelry is shown in figures 1²⁷ and 2).

The projects were analyzed according to the following parameters:

- Layout of the main views of the jewelry item and required captions within the format of the sheet;
- Compositional and artistic-technological solutions of the artistic-graphic project;
- Accuracy of execution of the technical drawing of the artistic-graphic project, reflecting the technological understanding of the realization process;
- Presence of a concept and artistic image in the project work;
- Existence of an artistic title for the project;
- Variety of artistic themes in the design of jewelry.



Figure 1. M.D. Pankova. Artistic-graphic project of a ring. 2020. Instructor: D.S. Dronov. Higher school of folk arts



Figure 2. D.V. Golubchikova. Artistic-graphic project of a necklace. 2017. Instructor: D.S. Dronov. Higher school of folk arts

The conducted study revealed that approximately 30% of the analyzed works contain errors in the layout of elements (main types of jewelry, captions) and decisions made in the artistic-graphic project when shading the product in color (glazing of the project image). Additionally, the analysis of some artistic-graphic projects identified possible challenges that may arise when transforming the flat image into a three-dimensional object; lack of an artistic title for the project, which reflects the uniqueness of the created artistic image.

The analysis of the artistic-graphic projects allowed us to identify the stages of work that potentially involve risks of inadequate quality execution of jewelry art

²⁷ Figures 1-8. Photo by the article's author.

pieces. This necessitated the creation of a work algorithm that includes three interconnected stages.

The first stage is an introductory conversation with students, during which the most important theoretical foundations and logic of project creation are discussed; clear and precise understanding of the essence of basic professional terms (rough sketch, sketch, drawing, technical drawing, artistic-graphic project, etc.) and scientific concepts (concept, aesthetic image, means of artistic expression, clausura, etc.); agreement on positions as a condition for successful work on the artistic solution.

Let's focus on four fundamentally significant concepts for executing an artistic project, whose essence needs to be explained and agreed upon during the conversation.

The concept of an artistic image in jewelry art—being the leading and foundational notion in design activity—is interpreted as a means of reflecting the author's studied and developed theme, ideas, and intentions of the artistic-graphic project for a jewelry piece [6]. Such an approach allows the learner to create an artistic-graphic project in which their individual style and originality of conception are clearly evident (we will later analyze how the concept is embodied in a jewelry piece using the example of designing the brooch "Secret of the Marina" (figure 7)).

Another crucial concept is the artistic image, whose essence lies in the fact that through it, the creator expresses their own "self," "... feelings, personal perception of an object, phenomenon, surrounding world" [2, p. 7]. The artistic image in jewelry art is an associative representation of the conceptual direction in design within a specific aesthetic framework. The image is created using symbols and the meanings embedded in them. An example could be the project work involved in creating the necklace "Forest Secret" (figure 3).



Figure 3. A. Makarova. Artistic-graphic project of a necklace "Forest Secret". Choker. 2023. Instructor: Gulchenko A.V. Higher school of folk arts.

The necklace project was created based on the rhythmic alternation of relief multi-layered links, embodying the stylized flora of a mysterious forest. The

centerpiece of the composition is what is called the "Heart" of the forest—a pristine and invisible part of wild nature hidden from human view. This mysterious symbol, made of quartz with rutile inclusions, is surrounded by fog in the form of a background grid and swirls. The author drew inspiration from the animated film "Secret of Kells," where the illustrations resemble drawings from an ancient medieval book. The choker perfectly outlines the mystery and individuality of its wearer.

To enhance students' ability to think unconventionally and imaginatively, a clausura is performed—a demonstration sheet with a graphic representation reflecting the artistic image (fig. 4), based on which the jewelry design project is developed (fig. 5). The term "clausura" originated in the 16th century, referring to practical-oriented creative work, serving as a source of project-artistic solutions. Today, the term is defined as a "finished artwork—visible embodiment of the author's creative ideas" [7, p. 676].

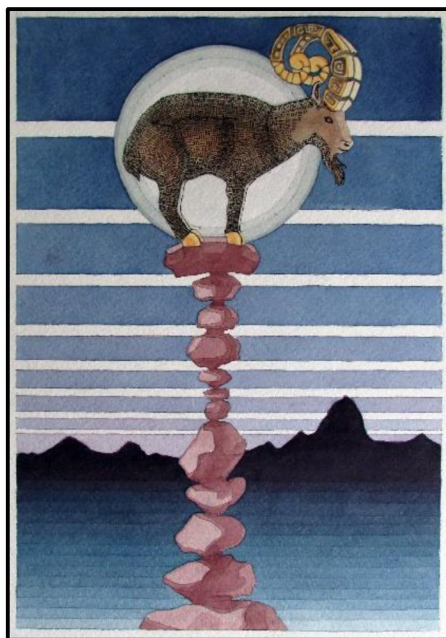


Figure 4. A.V. Gulchenko. Clausura for the project work on the topic "Harmony, Strength, Balance". 2018. Instructor: N.P. Kozina. Krasnoselsky College of Metalworking.

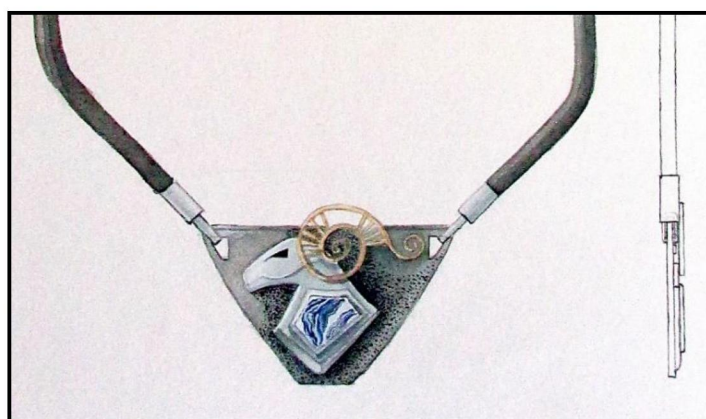


Figure 5. A.V. Gulchenko. Fragment of the jewelry project on the topic "Harmony, Strength, Balance". Pendant. 2018. Instructor: N.P. Kozina. Krasnoselsky College of Metalworking.

Figure 5 shows a fragment of the project work—a men's pendant on the theme "Harmony, Strength, Balance," inspired by the diversity, elegance, and beauty of the animal kingdom. The prototype for the male jewelry is the mountain goat, representing masculine traits like calmness, strength, perseverance, risk-taking, and more. To fully and accurately capture the artistic vision in the piece, a clausura was developed for the project (Fig. 4).

Artistic activity in jewelry art is understood as the process of creating a work of art [5]. The jewelry environment is closely connected to the design process and

encompasses abilities such as analyzing, combining, comparing, inventing, finding non-standard solutions, thinking creatively, and having spatial imagination [9, p. 10].

Following the introductory conversation explaining terminologies, task requirements, and work stages, the student can begin practical work. This entails examining different types of jewelry for the given assignment and their structural characteristics (movable connections, clasps). This procedure is known as gathering artistic material. For instance, if the task is to design a link bracelet based on a module, the student would need to select and copy appealing examples of jewelry; study and sketch various types of movable joints and locks commonly used in bracelets.

Gathering and studying theoretical and illustrative materials broadens horizons, fosters independence, develops artistic taste, analytical skills, and the ability to recognize interesting solutions. Copying jewelry pieces and patterns provides practical experience, helps understand proportions, identifies distinctive features of jewelry designs by different authors, enhances spatial visualization, and suggests directions for creative exploration, all of which contributes to the formation of the student's professional skills.

The second stage involves the following activities: defining the general concept of the future jewelry project, identifying the guiding conceptual idea and theme for the jewelry project. Finding an individual artistic image (subjective process); compiling an association list (associative map) aligned with the artistic image; generating exploratory sketches, drawings, and paintings based on the development of the map elements.

Choosing a theme is essential because it shapes the contours of the artistic image, sets the boundaries for material collection, encourages creative approaches, and sparks innovative ideas among those engaged in project work. As O.L. Golubeva notes: "Everything resides in your soul – it's your worldview, your life principles, your position and attitude towards certain phenomena or topics" [3, p. 35].

Creating a concept and an artistic image serves as the cornerstone of project-based activity. These components infuse the work with meaning, symbolism, and unconventional solutions via "unity of artistic reflection and expression, which is nothing less than a transformation of reality" [9, p. 17].

We'll illustrate the key points of the design process using the example of developing a marine-themed jewelry pin. The brooch was intended for someone who appreciates maritime culture, which posed the challenge of conceiving an artistic image that clearly reflects the wearer's passion for sea-related themes and marines in art (figures 7, 8).

Developing the artistic image and determining the graphic solution started with answering complex questions critical to creating an impactful image: under what circumstances will the ornament be worn? What feeling should it evoke in the wearer and observers? What materials and techniques will be utilized in its fabrication? Formulating the item's concept is facilitated by creating an associative map (figure 6).

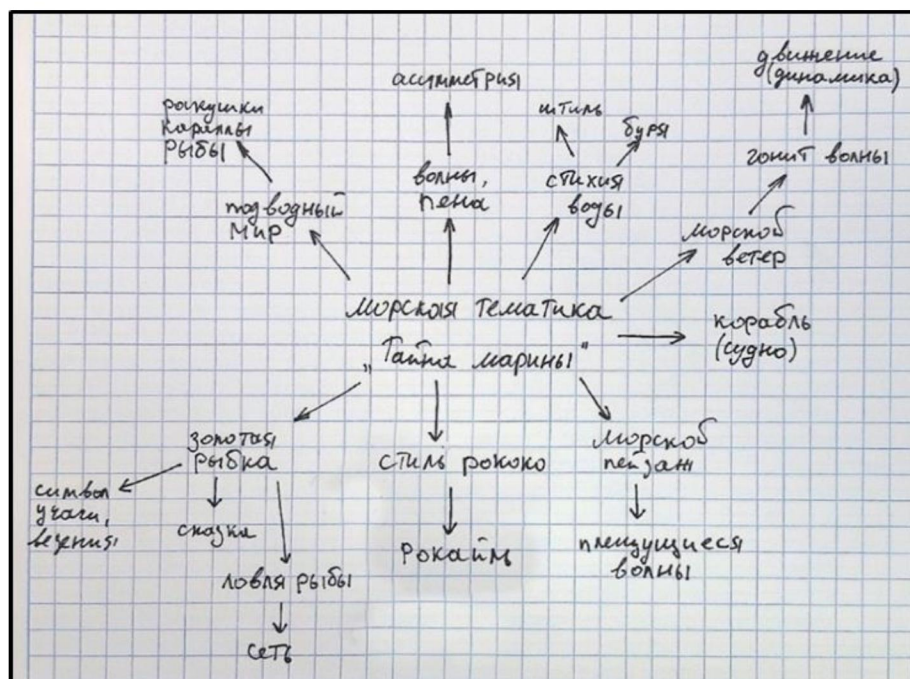


Figure 6. A. Makarova. Associative map for the project work (brooch) on the theme "Marine Mystery". 2023. Instructor: A.V. Gulchenko.

An associative map is a tool that aids in organizing and structuring thoughts and ideas related to a concept and artistic image. Creating an associative map enables the generation of a common field for contemplating the artistic image, connecting diverse elements and associations, which facilitates the generation of a conceptual artistic project for a specific jewelry theme. The associative map follows a sequence of four primary steps.

Step 1. At the center of the A4 sheet, the main idea of the project, the artistic image, and the preliminary artistic name of the jewelry piece should be fixed.

Step 2. From the central notation, arrows extend outward, leading to subjective associations and images that clarify and reflect the concept emerging from the core idea.

Step 3. From the established associations and images, new arrows emerge, pointing toward more concrete and refined images. If reading one of the images does not yield a new associative chain, proceed to the next step.

Step 4. Repeat Step 3, but with the emergence of increasingly narrow and specific associations, along with the identification of techniques and materials.

The third stage – the exploratory sketching and graphic portion of the project – involves the development of a unique jewelry composition using the results of the associative map. Designing allows combining parts of the associative map to create a unified image, the effectiveness of which depends on element combinations. The associative map itself can serve as a source of inspiration for the project.

Inspiration – a naturally occurring motivator inherent in humans, providing energy, enthusiasm, and concentration, encouraging goal achievement. Having a clearly formulated objective and tasks makes it easier for learners to execute project assignments [10, p. 112].



Figure 7. A. Makarova. Sketch for the project work on the brooch theme "Marine Mystery". 2023. Instructor: A.V. Gulchenko.



Figure 8. A. Makarova. Fragment of the jewelry project on the theme "Marine Mystery". Brooch. 2023. Instructor: A.V. Gulchenko.

The quality of sketches, drawings, and color renderings improves with repeated iterations, including the transition from quantitative changes to qualitative ones [4].

After composing the artistic arrangement and completing a detailed depiction of the jewelry piece in polychrome graphics, the jewelry structure is developed, followed by the creation of a technical drawing that adheres to all dimensional specifications (height, width, depth, thickness). Next, a mock-up of the piece is constructed using easily accessible plastic materials, demonstrating the student's ability to think in three dimensions and understand the construct's functionality. Finally, the necessary elements (technical drawing, signatures) are arranged on a tablet-sized format, and the main projection view (frontal or isometric) of the jewelry is rendered with light and shadow modeling.

In contemporary jewelry-making, the concept of the artistic image has become integral to the creation of unique pieces. This underscores the growing importance of the design process and the significance of the artistic-graphic project as a tool for bringing forth exclusive jewelry creations.

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