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Russian artistic embroidery as a masterpiece admired by the world

Abstract. The article describes the creation of the “Maya” collection, which combines traditional techniques of Russian artistic embroidery and ornamental motifs found on frescoes, terracotta statuettes and ceramic vessels of the Maya civilization. The work examines the significance of embroidery as a means of cultural continuity and spiritual upbringing, as well as its role in preserving ethnic identity and cultural traditions. The educational process is described, including the study of historical samples, the creation of sketches, the selection of color schemes, the development of preliminary sketches and the implementation of the design in material. The “Maya” collection demonstrates the possibility of a meaningful synthesis of cultural traditions and shows how traditional Russian embroidery can be incorporated into the design of modern clothing models, preserving its authenticity and artistic imagery.

Keywords: collection, cultural heritage, design, stylization, Maya civilization, artistic embroidery.

Throughout history, artistic embroidery has occupied a special place in the embellishment of clothing and household items, transforming them into works of art and lending them expressiveness and individuality. Embroidery has played a crucial role in preserving the cultural identity and traditions of a people.

Contemporary art actively turns to tradition as a source of inspiration. For future artists of traditional art crafts, the study of traditional artistic embroidery techniques opens up possibilities for their thoughtful application in new forms. This fosters in students the ability to perceive the interrelation between structural form and ornament, and to consider regional, historical and artistic-technological traditions when creating contemporary works.

Artistic embroidery is capable of organically combining with elements of the artistic heritage of other civilizations. The stylization of ancient Mayan ornaments through the means of traditional Russian artistic embroidery allows one to assert that such a synthesis contributes not only to the preservation of the national techniques of this art form but also to its enrichment with new artistic content.

The historical region of Mesoamerica, inhabited by the Maya and Aztecs, represents a unique stratum of world culture. Despite the fact that many aspects of their life and culture remain insufficiently studied to this day, these peoples forged a distinctive art with their own ornamental principles, symbolism and aesthetic of form. The creation of the “Maya” collection is intended to convey these artistic features through the means of Russia's traditional applied arts.

Modern researchers of traditional art crafts emphasize the significance of artistic embroidery as a vehicle for cultural continuity and spiritual education. Academician of the Russian academy of education, doctor of pedagogical sciences, professor V.F. Maksimovich considers “traditional embroidery as a crucial component of Russia's cultural code and an instrument for introducing people to their ethnocultural heritage” [5]. In another of her works, the author asserts that “traditions, through the unique works they produce – which reflect their traditional essence through artistic and expressive means, compositional features and the high aesthetic of art – contribute to the familiarization of children, adolescents, youth and the older generation of our country with their own traditional culture” [4, p. 34].

In the work of N.N. Mikhailova, it is noted that “the ancient civilizations of the Near East and Egypt developed a system expressed through the stylistic canon of individual dynasties and entire regions” [6, p. 131]. These principles were manifested in architecture, costume, ornamentation and decorative embellishment.

I.Yu. Demicheva, in her article “In the feathers of Quetzal: costume and hairstyle of the Maya (based on terracotta)”, states that “a unique source remains the terracottas, which allow for the reconstruction of Maya costume not only in a two-dimensional format but also in the form of three-dimensional representations, thus providing an opportunity to view the Maya attire not only from the ‘front’ but also from the ‘back’” [2, p. 149].

Valuable observations are also found in the works of I.A. Zolotarevskaya, who highlighted the richness of the ornamental system of the Maya civilization, where zoomorphic and geometric motifs form a complex symbolic structure [3]. Thus, “masks of snakes and jaguars in highly stylized forms, celestial monsters, stepped and other geometric ornaments are very widespread. Additionally, masks of the rain god are frequently found, often forming entire series as large ornamental panels combined with spatial elements” [3, p. 91].

In the context of Russian artistic embroidery, it is essential to consider the works of N.P. Bozhyeva [1] and T.M. Nosan’ [7], which provide a detailed description of the techniques of traditional embroidery types, such as “Olonets stitching”, “Vladimir surface stitch”, “Kadom Veniz”, and others. Their research enables the development of a product design methodology based on the preservation of technological methods and regional stylistic features.

Thus, the analysis of scientific literature demonstrates that addressing the synthesis of cultural traditions through artistic embroidery holds methodological and educational value. It contributes to the development of students' intercultural competence, broadens their artistic horizons and allows for the implementation of continuity principles in the contemporary art of clothing design with artistic embroidery.

To expand students' artistic outlook and to form a systematic understanding of the interrelation between form, ornament and its meaning, it is advisable to study a specific civilization period. Within the framework of project work, students were tasked with examining the costume features of the Maya era, identifying key stylistic characteristics and exploring possibilities for their adaptation in modern clothing models. The objective was not merely to replicate historical motifs but to engage in

a thoughtful search for compositional solutions that would allow for the integration of traditional Russian embroidery and the aesthetics of an ancient civilization.



Fig. 1. Statuette of the Maya goddess of agriculture

In order to identify visual references, the students analyzed images of wall paintings, reliefs and sculptures (Fig. 1³⁸), as well as the symbolic attributes of the depicted characters. The artistic language of Maya civilization artifacts, characterized by a combination of archaic, zoomorphic and geometric ornaments, became the foundation for searching for decorative solutions for the future collection.

As a result, a conceptual idea for the “Maya” collection was developed, consisting of eight pieces, each presenting an interpretation of an ancient ornament through the techniques of traditional Russian embroidery.

This type of work enables students not only to develop their artistic and creative abilities but also to gain experience in research activities, from studying sources and symbolism to developing fore-sketches and realizing the concept in material.

The next step was to identify the artistic embroidery techniques that would best align with the collection's theme and the character of the specific designs. During the discussion, the following types of embroidery were selected: Vladimir surface stitch, Richelieu, goldwork, Olonets stitching, colored satin stitch in three-dimensional forms and Kadom Veniz.

These techniques are distinguished by their expressive texture, the plasticity of their lines and the richness of their decorative methods, making them ideal for rendering the stylized images of ancient Mayan ornaments.

To give the project educational significance, it was decided to distribute the creation of the pieces among the branches of the Russian university of traditional art crafts. This collaboration allowed for the unification of the creative efforts of the university's students and teachers, and demonstrated the continuity of artistic traditions as well as the diversity of regional types of artistic embroidery.

Students of the Russian university of traditional art crafts decorated a dress using a combination of satin and counted stitch techniques: artistic embroidery “colored satin stitch in three-dimensional floral forms” and “Kadom Veniz”. At the Mstyora institute of lacquer miniature painting named after F.A. Modorov, the dress model was embellished using the “Vladimir surface stitch” technique, which is logical, as Mstyora is considered the birthplace of this technique, which has preserved unique ornamental and technological methods.

At the Kholuy institute of lacquer miniature painting named after N.N. Kharlamov, under the guidance of E.V. Saifulina, a unique composition was developed that combines three types of embroidery: Richelieu, colored satin stitch

³⁸ Fig. 2. Aztec Figures // Latin American Studies – URL: <https://www.latinamericanstudies.org/aztecs/aztec-agriculture-goddess.jpg> (Date of access: 17.09.2025).

and artistic satin stitch, using traditional artistic and technological methods of artistic embroidery from the Ivanovo region.

Based at the Institute of traditional applied arts, three textile design projects were created: a poncho in the technique of goldwork (project developed by A.A. Nikolaeva), a dress in the “writing stitch” technique, also known as Olonets stitching (composition developed by O.V. Shvetsova), and a piece with elements of machine computer embroidery (project supervised by A.M. Rastorgueva).



Fig. 2. Dress sample

A special place in the collection is occupied by an item created using the Olonets stitching technique. This form of artistic embroidery is distinguished by its elegance, clean lines and strict harmony of design. In traditional Olonets stitching samples, floral ornaments often included multi-petaled flowers, lush bouquets, graceful winding stems and motifs. The refinement of Olonets stitching is achieved through exquisite patterns that stand out on a fine mesh background [7, p. 74], as well as meticulous detailing within the contours.

Researcher N.P. Bozhyeva notes that a distinctive feature of Olonets stitching is the predominance of abstract ornamental forms over figurative motifs (exceptions are rare, for example, depictions of birds on towels) [1, p. 91]. This lends this type of embroidery a special decorative quality and allows it to be easily combined with the ornamental motifs of products from other cultures.

In the process of designing the composition for decorating the dress, the most suitable areas for placing the ornament were identified: the cape-collar, detachable belt and hem of the garment. This choice is driven by the desire to emphasize the structural lines of the model while simultaneously maintaining the harmony of shape and artistic design (Fig. 2³⁹).

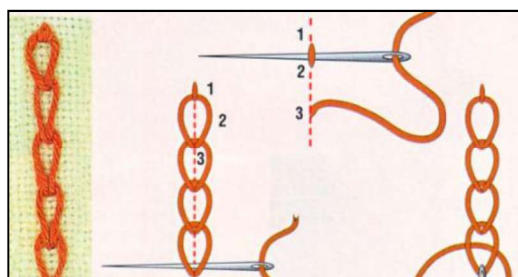


Fig. 3. Execution of the tambour stitch

To create the ornament, the tambour stitch was used, which visually resembles a braid. This decorative element is perceived not only as an embellishment but also as a symbolic continuation of cultural meanings. The woven “thread” evokes ancient ideas about the connection between worlds – the spiritual and the material (Fig. 3⁴⁰).

In Mayan culture, weaving held sacred significance: the patron goddess of textiles embodied the creative principle of the universe.

³⁹ Figs. 2, 4-18. Photo by the author of the article.

⁴⁰ Fig. 3. Tambour stitch embroidery. – URL: https://yandex.ru/images/search?img_url=https%3A%2F%2Fhobbyndom.ru%2Fwp-content%2Fuploads%2F9%2Fc%2F2%2F9c25e00b32860f5f2df056da7292a4e5.png&lr=213&pos=0&rpt=simage&source=serp&text=тамбурный%20шов%20вышивка (Date of access: 24.10.2025).

In Russian tradition, the “braid” also symbolized life force, fate and kinship ties. Thus, the decorative “braid” in the ornament becomes a point of connection between the two cultures, uniting them through shared archetypal images. This artistic technique gave the collection not only aesthetic but also profound semantic depth.

The creation of the item, decorated with the artistic embroidery known as “Olonets stitching”, was carried out within the framework of the “Performing mastery” discipline, involving students from the second year of secondary vocational education and the third year of bachelor’s studies at the Institute of traditional applied arts. This format allowed for the formation of a unified educational space, where each creative group addressed a common artistic task – through their own vision of composition, color palette and interpretation of the ornament. The collaborative design process became not only an educational but also a research experience, during which students learned to combine knowledge of artistic embroidery techniques and the principles of composition design with their personal style.

The development of embroidered items was carried out in stages, enabling students to master the methodology of product design.

Stage 1. Traditional techniques of artistic embroidery were studied and antique samples were copied with the transfer of technological and decorative features. The collected material was analyzed and creatively reworked to avoid direct repetition in the future, while maintaining a connection to tradition through stylization.

Stage 2. Fragments of the Olonets stitching ornaments were sketched, which contributed to the development of observation skills, sense of composition and rhythm among the students, as well as understanding the interrelation of form, color and texture. At this stage, there was a transition from the analysis of historical ornament samples to the search for coloristic solutions (Figs. 4, 5).

Stage 3. The ornament fragments were drawn at full scale, and a coloristic solution was selected.

Stage 4. Based on the collected materials, preliminary sketches of the future product were created. At this stage, the task was to find an expressive compositional and plastic solution, determine the placement of the ornament on the item and maintain proper proportions. The graphic elaboration of the sketches helped refine the concept and made it visually convincing (Figs. 6-9).



Figs. 4, 5. Colored ornament designs



Figs. 6-9. Preliminary sketches of clothing models with color search and ornament placement

Stage 5. After the approval of the graphic sketch, the composition was rendered in tone, details were refined, and color accents were selected (Figs. 10-15).



Figs. 10-12. Dress sketches with color selection

Stage 6. A dress sample was made from fabric with the composition drawn on tracing paper, which allowed for evaluating the correspondence between the size of the composition and the artistic concept, as well as the shape of the model. This also helped reinforce the understanding of the relationship between the artistic image and the real form of the product.

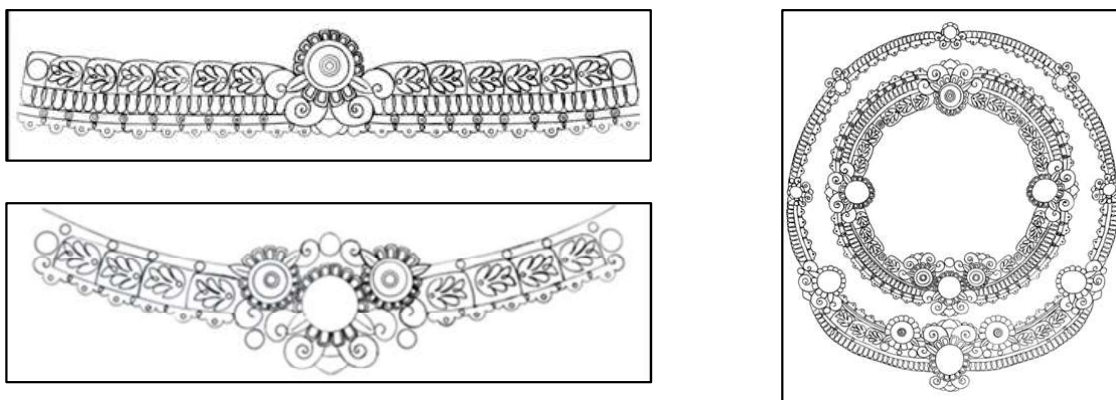
Stage 7. The composition of the artistic embroidery was developed at full scale, taking into account the laws of composition and the technological features of the chosen technique (Figs. 16–18). The graphic rendering was done on tracing paper with a marker, after which the ornament was transferred onto the fabric.

Stage 8. The item was executed in material in accordance with the project development (Fig. 19).

Thus, the Maya collection not only demonstrates a high level of performing mastery and a deep understanding of traditional embroidery techniques, but also serves as a vivid example of how elements from different cultures can be combined while preserving their uniqueness and authenticity. The project holds significant educational and cultural value, contributing to the development of intercultural competence and artistic horizons of students, as well as strengthening the connection between the past and the present in art.



Figs. 13-15. Embroidery sketches



Figs. 16-18. Graphic sketches of embroidery composition



a) b)
Fig. 19. Dress decorated with artistic embroidery “Olonets stitching”:
a) front view, b) back view

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