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(IJHAM)**www.ijham.com**RESEARCH ON THE STYLE OF SHE ETHNIC COSTUME
PATTERNS BASED ON WÖLFFLIN'S FORMAL THEORY**Zhou Yi^{1*}, Norakmal Abdullah²

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DOI: 10.35631/IJHAM.827002**This work is licensed under** [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)**Abstract:**

The five pairs of formal categories proposed by Heinrich Wölfflin, namely linear and painterly, plane and depth, closed and open, multiplicity and unity, and clarity and obscurity, constitute a systematic framework for style analysis in art history research. This paper takes Wölfflin's formal theory as the analytical perspective, and conducts structural and visual research on the patterns of She ethnic costumes, aiming to break thru the research path limited to pattern classification and cultural symbolism in the past, and explore its esthetic logic and visual mechanism from the perspective of formal ontology. The study found that the She ethnic patterns are not a single static style form, but present a continuous spectrum extending from "linear rationality" to "painterly sensibility". The formation of this spectrum is not only rooted in the totem belief, psychological structure and craft tradition of the She ethnic group, but also reflects its visual acculturation in the process of interaction with the Han culture. The research in this paper not only reveals the formal evolution logic of the She ethnic costume patterns, but also provides methodological inspiration for the reinterpretation of Wölfflin's theory in the context of oriental ethnic art.

Keywords:

Wölfflin; Formal Theory; She Ethnic Costumes; Pattern Style

Introduction

The patterns of the She ethnic group's costumes embody the historical memory and cultural identity of the ethnic group as the core carrier of the visual system of the "Phoenix Dress." Previous research has achieved fruitful results, mostly focusing on its totemic connotations (such as the relationship between the phoenix and the Panhu myth), cultural symbols (such as the protective implications of the canine tooth pattern), and the inheritance of craftsmanship techniques. However, these research approaches still fall short in delving deeply into the ontological question of "why do patterns exist in this form?" which concerns aesthetic logic and visual mechanisms. In other words, the academic circle has accumulated profound experience in explaining what patterns "are" (symbolic meaning) but has rarely systematically analyzed how they "constitute" (formal essence).

The five pairs of formal categories proposed by Heinrich Wölfflin, although derived from the comparative study of European Renaissance and Baroque art, construct an aesthetic grammar concerning the "universal laws of visual perception," possessing theoretical potential that transcends specific regional cultures. This framework focuses on the dynamic relationships within forms and the logic of style generation, providing structured tools for cross-cultural art analysis. Introducing it into the study of She ethnic costumes is not intended to mechanically apply Western theories but to establish a cross-cultural visual dialogue mechanism. Through its category lens, it aims to deeply interpret the inherent laws of She ethnic patterns in terms of form organization, spatial composition, and visual psychology.

The core research question of this article lies in: First, how can Wölfflin's five pairs of formal categories effectively reveal the visual structure and style characteristics of the patterns on She ethnic costumes? Secondly, these formal features reflect the cultural mindset and aesthetic logic of the She ethnic group. To this end, this paper will first establish a research perspective and analytical framework, then successively analyze typical patterns from five pairs of categories, and ultimately explore the interconstruction relationship between form and culture as well as the implications of the cross-cultural application of theories.

Research Perspective and Analytical Framework

This study adopts qualitative research methods and takes Wölfflin's form theory as the core analytical framework to conduct a systematic visual form analysis of the patterns on She ethnic costumes.

Theoretical Framework

Wölfflin's theory reveals the fundamental logic of the evolution of artistic styles through five interrelated binary categories: Art gradually shifts from clearly defined outlines and more tactile "linear" expressions to "pictorial" expressions that tend to integrate boundaries and rely on the relationship of light and shadow and visual perception. Its spatial construction has also evolved from a strictly parallel layering arrangement to a visual effect that emphasizes depth orientation and spatial extension. The composition has evolved from a self-sufficient, balanced, and closed system to a form with extended structure, open momentum, and seemingly capable of transcending the boundaries of the picture. The overall organizational approach has also shifted from a diversity where each part is relatively independent and coexists in parallel to a unity that tends to achieve internal integration around a single dominant atmosphere. In terms of the ultimate effect of visual presentation, art gradually moves from the "clarity" where all elements are clearly distinguishable and stably presented to the "fuzziness" characterized by

softness, haziness, and incomplete forms, reserving space for viewers to understand and imagine. The five pairs of categories together form a deep structure that describes the differences in visual experience, enabling the changes in artistic style to be systematically explained at the level of formal logic.

Analysis Of Objects and Methods

This article selects typical patterns in the costumes of the She ethnic group in the eastern part of Fujian Province (such as Fu'an, Xiapu, Luoyuan, Gutian, and other places) as the main objects of analysis, including the canine tooth pattern, phoenix and peony pattern, sun pattern, eight treasures pattern, etc. During the analysis process, the patterns are first observed in detail through high-resolution images; subsequently, Wölfflin's five pairs of categories were transformed into specific dimensions that could be directly applied to visual structure analysis, making indicators such as contour clarity, spatial layering, the integrity and stability of composition, the way elements are associated, and the visual certainty of images the analytical basis for judging the style characteristics of patterns. Finally, a systematic description, comparison, and induction are carried out around these dimensions, thereby extracting the inherent laws of the formal language of She ethnic patterns and further revealing the deep connection between them and the cultural context of the ethnic group.

Analysis of She Ethnic Patterns within the Category of Form

The "Analysis of She Ethnic Patterns in the Form Category" in this study aims to conduct a pure visual structure and modeling rule examination of the pattern system of She ethnic clothing. The core approach lies in precisely analyzing the composition rules, morphological features of the patterns and their organizational logic on the clothing carrier.

Linear And Painterly: The Way to Perceive the Outline of Patterns

"Linear" and "painterly" constitute the foundational categories of Wölfflin's formal theory. The former emphasizes the clear definition of shapes and rational order, while the latter focuses on the integration of light and color and the flow of sensibility. The two are not opposed to each other but constitute a continuous spectrum from rationality to sensibility in visual expression. In the patterns of She ethnic costumes, this spectrum is manifested in the form of multi-level formal characteristics: from geometric linear composition to painterly expression rich in light and shadow changes, it presents a dynamic balance between tradition and modernity, order and vitality in ethnic art.

Linear Order: Clear Structure and Visual Rationality

The linear characteristics of the She ethnic group's patterns are reflected in geometric and plant patterns, reflecting a deep cultural preference for structure, order, and inheritance.

Firstly, the patterns exhibit a clear boundary and a well-structured form. Taking the dog-tooth pattern on the collar of women's clothing in the Fu'an area as an example, its triangular unit forms a rigorous rhythm and symmetry through precise lockstitch embroidery and flat needle embroidery. The stitches are fine and even, and the edges are sharp and distinct, presenting a visual beauty of rationality and order. Similarly, the bamboo joint pattern strengthens the regularity of the joint through the outline of the segmented straight line so that the viewer can obtain a formal experience of stability and controllability visually. This clear linear logic makes the pattern like a "bas-relief" carved on the surface of the fabric, strengthening its tactile sense and materiality.



Figure 1: Women "s Wear of Fu'an Style



Figure 2: Women "s Wear of Xia'pu style

Secondly, the linear order conveys significant cultural meaning. The swastika pattern decorated on the cuffs in the Luoyuan area constructs a rigorous closed loop with continuous broken lines, and its regularity corresponds to the social organization structure and totem belief system of the She ethnic group. The linear expression of symmetry, repetition, and order is not only the embodiment of technological rationality but also the visual symbol of the "stability and constancy" values in the national psychology. The linear form here becomes the "visual grammar" of the She ethnic.

The Infiltration of Painting: The Generation of Dynamic Sense and the Breakthrough of Aesthetics

With the long-term exchange between the She ethnic group and the Han culture, the characteristics of painting gradually appeared in the complex theme patterns, injecting new vitality into the traditional linear system.

Initially, the outline dissolves and the color becomes more fluid. The "Phoenix Peony" pattern on the apron of women in the Xiapu area is a typical representative. The phoenix wings adopt the techniques of "mixing needle" and "set needle," and the gradient effect is formed through the hierarchical transition of adjacent color systems such as dark red, pink, and orange-red, so that the feathers present a rich three-dimensional sense in the interweaving of light and shadow. The peony petals are embroidered with "virtual and real needles," and the edges are naturally integrated with the background, breaking the tradition of taking lines as the boundary and creating a visual experience of "spatialized plane."



Figure 3: The "Phoenix Peony" Pattern on The Apron

Secondly, the overall perception is enhanced by the painting. The "Double Dragons Playing with Pearl" pattern in the costumes of the Fuding area uses the extension of curves and the change of color brightness to create a flowing momentum. The cloud gas is embroidered with

"scattered needles" to create a vague sense of diffusion, making the picture full of the rhythm of rotation and rising. What the viewer experiences when watching is the overall dynamic impression, rather than the decomposed line cognition. The intervention of this "painting thinking" transforms the viewer's perception.

Plane and Depth

The spatial organization of the She ethnic costume patterns embodies the unique principle of "taking the plane as the basis and the depth as the hint." This visual logic not only originates from the physical properties of clothing as a two-dimensional decorative carrier but also reflects the dual balance of function and esthetics in the artistic expression of the She ethnic group. Different from the way Western paintings construct space with perspective, She ethnic patterns imply depth through proportion, occlusion, and color levels within the plane framework, forming a visual order with decorative rationality and symbolic meaning.

The Dominance of the Plane: The Combination of Decorative Rationality and Structure The plane is the central spatial feature of the She ethnic group's clothing patterns, demonstrating strong decorative and structural coordination. First, the establishment of the plan order. Regardless of the complexity of the subject matter, the She ethnic group's patterns mostly maintain a visual plane parallel to the surface of the clothing. For example, the "Eight Treasures Pattern" on the chest of women's tops in the Gutian area arranges patterns such as Ruyi, Fang Sheng, and ancient coins in a symmetrical and equidistant manner, which are independent of each other and do not overlap, forming a visual structure with a distinct rhythm. Even the narrative "Cowherd and Weaver Girl" pattern is simplified into a flat silhouette effect, which strengthens the decoration rather than the spatial reproduction. Second, the design adapts both the plane composition and the structure of the clothing. The clothing of the She ethnic group is typically designed using cross-shaped plane tailoring, with the pattern layout adhering closely to the logic of the clothing's edge lines and central composition. Taking the "Phoenix Dress" as an example, the two-sided continuous patterns on the neckline, cuffs, and placket are arranged along the edge of the clothing, and the central area is configured with square or circular main patterns in the center, forming a decorative pattern of "boundary linearity + central focus." Such a composition not only conforms to the structural.

The Implication of Depth: The Symbolic Presentation of Spatial Awareness

Although flatness constitutes the visual basis of the She ethnic patterns, in some complex themes with strong painting properties, the craftsmen create a symbolic sense of depth through the subtle processing of proportion, overlap, and light and dark contrast. This "non-perspective space" not only reflects the esthetic exploration of the She ethnic artists on spatial expression but also reflects the creative transformation in cultural interaction. First, the depth is created by the difference in proportion. In the "Hundred Birds Facing the Phoenix" pattern in the Xia Pu area, the central phoenix is deliberately enlarged, and the surrounding birds are reduced in proportion and distributed around the picture, forming a significant "large and small" relationship. The viewer thus obtains the psychological implication of the sense of front and rear levels, so that the picture presents a shallow spatial effect on the two-dimensional plane. Second, the picture conveys the spatial implication of occlusion and overlap. In the "Pine and Crane Longevity" pattern in the Fu'an area, the pine branches are interspersed with each other with staggered lines, and the crane body is partially covered by the branches; only the head and wing tips are exposed. This "symbolic occlusion" breaks the absolute flatness of the plane,

making the picture produce the spatial illusion of "a crane standing among the pines." It is worth noting that this depth is not a real perspective but a visual hint.

Coordination of Plane and Depth: Dual Logic of Practicality and Esthetics

The patterns of the She ethnic group demonstrate a remarkable understanding of how to balance plane and depth dynamically. The plane ensures the pattern's fit with the structure of the clothing, while the depth hint injects narrative and vitality into the picture. The former reflects the rational order of the craft system, while the latter highlights the open exploration of esthetic awareness. The combination of the two makes the She ethnic group's clothing achieve harmonious coexistence between "practical decoration" and "visual art"—it is not only functional but also full of the tension of formal creation. It can be seen that the core of the She ethnic group's pattern space construction lies in realizing the infinite extension of vision through a limited plane. This expression of "planar depth" not only retains the traditional decoration of ethnic clothing but also reflects the unity of cultural consciousness and formal innovation at the visual and psychological level.

Closed and Open Forms

The composition system of the patterns on She ethnic costumes has both closed and open forms. The former emphasizes the integrity of the structure and the balance of vision, while the latter reflects the extension of the form and the flow of life. The coexistence of the two not only reflects the dual orientation of "order and freedom" in the She ethnic craft aesthetics but also reveals the tension between static rationality and dynamic sensibility in its art.

Closed Form: Balanced Order and Self-Sufficient System

The closed composition is the most representative organization method of the She ethnic patterns, especially common in the edge decoration parts of clothing. Its basic characteristics lie in the integrity, self-sufficiency and rhythm of the shape, reflecting the She ethnic culture's pursuit of order, harmony and perfection. First of all, the cyclic structure of the two-sided continuous. The "back pattern" of the collar of women in Lianjiang area is a typical example. The pattern units are arranged in the rule of "one positive and one negative", connected end to end, and repeated in a cycle, forming a self-sufficient visual closed loop. The lines between the units are closely connected, and the rhythm is constant, forming a stable and rhythmic decorative order. This form not only defines the boundary of clothing but also symbolizes the cosmic concept of "eternity and reincarnation" in the She ethnic culture.



Figure 4: The Cyclic Structure of the Two-Sided Continuous

Secondly, the principle of central symmetry structure. The "sun pattern" on the chest of the upper garment in Luoyuan area takes the circle as the basic framework, and the center point radiates eight groups of equidistant triangular patterns outward, showing a high degree of consistency in proportion and angle. The stability and balance of this kind of composition convey the symbolic understanding of the "harmonious universe" of the She society—the

integrity of the closed form corresponds to the order and sacredness in the world outlook of the ethnic group. Therefore, the closed form is not only a visual layout but also a formalized expression of the national spiritual structure.

Open Form: Flowing Momentum and Symbol of Life

Compared with the static equilibrium of the closed form, the open form is characterized by free extension, dynamic tension and sensual flow, and often appears in the central pattern or thematic decoration of clothing. It reflects the openness of emotional expression and the poetic mapping of the natural life view in the She ethnic art creation. First, the dynamic extension of the radial composition. The "peacock opening screen" pattern on the apron of women in Xiapu area is representative. The phoenix tail feathers are radiated from the body as the center, the lines are from thick to thin, the colors are from strong to light, and gradually integrated into the background. The wings seem to extend beyond the boundary of the fabric, producing a visual dynamic that transcends the entity of the clothing. This open composition symbolizes the tension of life and the freedom of spirit, showing the esthetic recognition of the natural vitality of the She ethnic female artists. Secondly, the free generation of the curve trend. The "entwined lotus" pattern in Fuding area runs thru the whole picture with winding branches and vines, and the distribution of flowers and leaves is flexible and orderly, forming an asymmetrical and non-repetitive natural rhythm. The ups and downs and rotation of the lines are like the growth trajectory of plants, full of the rhythm of life flow. This open composition gets rid of the shackles of geometric order, and turns to emotion and intuition.



Figure 5: The "Peacock Opening Screen" Pattern on The Apron

Mutual Construction of Closure and Openness: Balance between Order and Vitality

The composition logic of She ethnic patterns is not divided between closure and openness but forms a dynamic balance in the interaction between the two. The closed form ensures the stability of the structure and the symbolism of the culture, while the open form gives the picture the vitality of life and the creativity of art. The two complement each other: the former is the rational cornerstone of national craftsmanship, and the latter is the perceptual overflow of folk art. This "flow in order, breakthrough in balance" is the core characteristic of the aesthetic of She ethnic costumes. It reveals the unique wisdom of She ethnic art in the formal composition—it adheres to the traditional geometric order and constantly absorbs the dynamic rhythm of natural life, realizing the infinite visual and emotional tension in the limited space.

Diversity and Unity: Pattern Organization's Overarching Principle

The costumes of the She ethnic group are renowned for their meticulous and well-organized compositions as well as their wide range of themes. The visual features of their formal system demonstrate "maintaining a high degree of unity in the ultimate diversity." This dialectical link between diversity and unity symbolizes the spiritual framework of "multiple coexistence and

harmony as one" in the national culture, in addition to the exceptional modeling and organizational skills of artists.

Diversity: Broad Themes and Juxtaposed Styles

The patterns on the She ethnic costumes are extremely broad, covering multiple levels, such as natural objects, myths and legends, religious symbols, and daily life scenes, forming a rich system of visual vocabulary. The diversity of these themes comes from the multiple dimensions of ethnic narrative and also reflects its open cultural mentality.

First, the breadth of the subject matter and the difference in modeling. Taking the "Three Red Clothes" in the Xiapu area as an example, dozens of pattern types are often juxtaposed on one piece of clothing: geometric patterns (dog tooth patterns, return patterns), plant patterns (peony, lotus), animal patterns (phoenix, dragon, fish), figure patterns, text patterns, etc. coexist in parallel. Even for the same subject matter, changes are deliberately pursued in the modeling details—such as the phoenix wings being either "fish scale-shaped" or "flame-shaped" and the peony petals being either "single-layer flat" or "multi-layer overlapping"—creating visual richness in a unified context. Second, the integration and symbiosis of cultural symbols. In many composite patterns, the deep integration of She and Han cultures can be clearly seen. For example, in the "Phoenix Peony" pattern, the phoenix represents the core symbol of the She totem belief, while the peony symbolizes wealth and auspiciousness in the Han culture. The juxtaposition of the two not only expands the symbolic level of the pattern but also reflects the active absorption and re-creation of foreign cultural elements by She art. This formal strategy of cultural integration reveals the inclusiveness and dynamic generation characteristics of She culture.



Figure 6: The "Phoenix Peony" Pattern



Figure 7: The Combined Pattern

Unity: Formal Integration and Visual Coordination

Despite the complexity of the subject matter, the She ethnic group's patterns do not appear chaotic but maintain overall harmony through a strict visual integration mechanism. The realization of unity mainly depends on three aspects: the planning of the color system, the consistency of the process techniques, and the overall control of the structural lines. First, the main tone of the color is controlled. She ethnic group's clothing often uses red, blue, and black as the main tone, supplemented by gold, silver, or yellow as embellishment colors. For example, the "Three Red Clothes" in Xiapu take dark red as the core main color, supplemented by indigo blue and gold thread to form a contrast between light and dark, so that the overall color maintains visual stability in richness. The planned distribution of colors makes the

patterns of different subjects visually obtain a unified sense of rhythm and emotional temperature. Secondly, the consistency of craftsmanship and texture. The ethnic group's embroidery mostly adopts traditional techniques such as flat stitch, mixed stitch, or set stitch, and usually maintains the unity of embroidery methods on the same piece of clothing. The consistency of the techniques ensures the coordination of the surface texture so that the patterns form an overall visual texture at the material level. Finally, the implicit control of the structural lines. The ethnic group's craftsmen often hide "skeleton lines" in the pattern organization—a visual framework composed.



Figure 8: Narrative Pattern

Dialectical Symbiosis of Diversity and Unity: The Organic Logic of the Visual System

The visual system of the She ethnic patterns does not achieve unity by suppressing diversity but forms an overall harmony in the juxtaposition of differences. Diversity reflects the creative potential and inclusive spirit of ethnic art, while unity ensures the stability of visual order and cultural identity. The interweaving of the two makes the She ethnic costumes both decorative and complex and overall balanced, showing a strong "system beauty." This organizational logic of "diversity and unity" echoes the spirit of "ethnic integration" in the She ethnic social and cultural structure. It is not only a visual strategy but also a formal manifestation of the ethnic mind, maintaining the overall order in the complex forms and achieving a common identity in the diverse cultural symbols. The She ethnic costumes thus serve as a visual metaphor for cultural integration, illustrating the nation's capacity to self-construct within this diversity.

Clarity and Ambiguity: The Ultimate Effect of Pattern Expression

"Clarity" and "ambiguity" constitute the two poles of the esthetic expression of the She ethnic group's costume patterns—the former pursues the clarity of the image and the recognizability of the symbol, while the latter presents the temperature of manual creation and the poetic nature of time precipitation. The tension between the two not only reflects the transformation of the She ethnic group's visual culture between "symbolic" and "sensual experience," but also reveals the dynamic balance between functionality and aesthetics in ethnic art.

The Pursuit of Clarity: Symbol Recognition and Cultural Communication

The "clarity" of the She ethnic patterns first comes from the communication function of its cultural symbols. The linear, planar, and closed formal structure jointly ensures the recognition and symbolic accuracy of the patterns so as to realize the effective transmission of cultural significance. First, the visual form is clarified. Each constituent element in the She ethnic patterns has a clear symbolic function—the "Wanzi pattern" means "longevity without borders," and the "fish pattern" symbolizes "more than enough every year." Therefore, the accuracy of the form is directly related to the readability of the meaning. For example, the

details of the "auspicious eight treasures pattern" in the Zherong area, such as ancient coins, Ruyi, and Fang Sheng, are all depicted with precise lines, with balanced proportions and rigorous structure, so that viewers can quickly identify and understand its auspicious meaning. This emphasis on details and clarity makes the pattern a "visual text" of national culture. Second, the pattern serves as a visual symbol of social identification and identity. The clothing patterns in various parts of the She ethnic group have significant regional differences and branch characteristics, such as the dog tooth pattern in Fu'an, the phoenix peony pattern in Xiapu, and the sun pattern in Luoyuan. These identifiable patterns not only reflect the local style but also become visual symbols of social identity. On ritual occasions such as weddings and ancestor worship, thus, clarity is not only a formal choice but also a principle of the social symbolic system.



Figure 9: The "Auspicious Eight Treasures Pattern" In the Zherong Area

The Generation of Ambiguity: The Poetics of Manual Temperature and Time

In contrast to the rational clarity, ambiguity represents the perceptual dimension of the She patterns. It originates from the natural changes of stitches, the transition of colors, and the traces of time brought by the wear and tear of years in the process of manual embroidery, giving the patterns a unique esthetic charm and historical temperature. First, the natural ambiguity in the process of craftsmanship. The patterns with strong painting tendency, such as "Phoenix Peony" in Xiapu, often realize the gradient color levels thru techniques such as mixing needles and overlapping needles. The subtle gaps between the stitches and the slight differences in the reflection of the silk threads make the shape produce a soft and blurred boundary. The non-mechanical transition of colors brings the "imperfect beauty of manual work", making the patterns show the breath of life. This ambiguity is not a defect, but a "temperature esthetics" full of humanistic sense.

Secondly, the visual softening of time. The old She clothes that have gone thru the years have faded stitches and worn edges, but have formed a softer visual effect. For example, the "Phoenix Costume" from the late Qing Dynasty to the early Republic of China, the natural fading of the silk thread made the original bright red and blue present a warm transition level. The blurred boundaries and faded tones allow the patterns to obtain the "time patina" and become the material carrier of national memory. At this time, ambiguity is no longer just a visual feature, but a symbol of cultural memory, reflecting the esthetic philosophy of She art "taking time as beauty".



Figure 10: "Phoenix Costume" from the late Qing Dynasty

The Symbiosis of Clarity and Ambiguity: The Unity of Visual Perception and Cultural Wisdom

The clarity and ambiguity of the She ethnic patterns are not opposed to each other but are interdependent aesthetic mechanisms. Clarity ensures the readability of cultural significance and the stability of social functions, while ambiguity introduces the dimensions of sensibility and time, making the form transcend function and reach poetry. The interaction between the two constitutes the core of the visual system of She ethnic art: between precision and implicitness, the cultural mind of the nation is embodied. This dialectical relationship of "clarity-ambiguity" reveals the dual character of She ethnic esthetics: it emphasizes both rational order and natural generation; it emphasizes both symbolic norms and cherishes manual traces. It is in this tension that the She ethnic costume patterns realize the leap from "cultural symbol" to "artistic image," showing the unity of formal beauty and humanistic spirit.

Discussion

Based on the above analysis, it can be seen that the patterns of the She ethnic group's costumes are not a homogeneous and single-style whole but rather present a formal spectrum composed of the five pairs of categories of the Wolverlin, which is full of internal tension and fluidity. The core of this lineage is not a binary opposition of either-or, but rather the dialectical symbiosis of various visual logics in a specific cultural context: the linear aspect reflects the rational adherence of the ethnic group to totem beliefs and clan order, while the formation of the visual aspect stems from the perception of natural life, the expression of aesthetic emotions, and the open absorption of surrounding cultures. The flatness ensures the rationality of the clothing structure and the stability of the decorative function, while the symbolic depth treatment reflects the exploratory consciousness of the She ethnic art in the visual presentation method. The closed composition symbolizes a kind of cultural self-sufficiency and sacred order, while the open extension contains the flow of life, the outward release of emotions, and the freedom of creativity. The juxtaposing of diversity demonstrates the vigorous creative potential and inclusive attitude of national art, while unity plays a stabilizing role in maintaining visual order and cultural identity. As for clarity, it enhances the visibility of symbol recognition and ethnic boundaries, while fuzziness carries the warmth of craftsmanship, the poetic charm accumulated over time, and the softening power of life aesthetics.

The formation of this form spectrum is deeply rooted in the psychological structure and historical practice of the She ethnic culture. It is the result of the combined effect of their craftsmanship traditions, aesthetic ideals, and ethnic experiences, and more importantly, it is

the visual crystallization of the continuous contact, mutual infiltration, and reconstruction between the She ethnic group and Han culture in the historical process. Therefore, these formal features are by no means external decorative additions but rather the visual presentation of the ethnic group's cultural mindset and the concrete embodiment of the She people's way of "viewing the world, organizing the world, and expressing the world" in the patterns.

Meanwhile, this study also examines Wolflin's theory in a cross-cultural context. It can be seen that this theoretical framework has significant explanatory power in revealing the internal structure and aesthetic logic of the She ethnic group's patterns, indicating that formal analysis, as a kind of "visual grammar," has universal value across cultures. However, the unique visual strategies in She ethnic patterns, such as "flattened depth treatment" and "symbolic occlusion," suggest that in the process of cross-cultural application, we must maintain the reflective and flexible nature of theoretical usage. These "atypical" features precisely enrich our understanding of the connotations of the five pairs of categories and also demonstrate the diverse possibilities of form creation in different cultures.

Conclusion

The Cultural Mind Behind the Form

Through the analytical perspective of Wölfflin's formal theory, this paper conducts a systematic study on the form and style of the She ethnic costume patterns, revealing the cultural mind and esthetic logic behind its visual structure. The study shows that the She ethnic patterns are not a simple decorative system but a visual field that combines order and vitality, rationality and sensibility. Its form shows a significant binary symbiosis feature: it not only adheres to the "classical order" derived from national tradition and craft rationality but also absorbs the "Baroque vitality" brought by foreign culture and natural images.

The Formal Genealogy of Binary Coexistence

In the formal category, the She ethnic patterns present a genealogical structure of multiple contrasts and coexistence. "Linearity" reflects the rational adherence to totem belief and clan order, while "painting" represents the open spirit of coexisting with nature and absorbing other cultures; "planarity" ensures the structural rationality and decorative function of clothing, while "depth" shows the exploration consciousness of ethnic art in visual expression; "closedness" symbolizes cultural self-sufficiency and sacred order, while "openness" contains the flow of life and the freedom of creation; "clarity" strengthens the recognizability of symbols and ethnic identity, while "ambiguity" carries the poetic image of manual temperature and time precipitation. This binary system constitutes the unique formal genealogy of She ethnic costume art, which keeps it in a dynamic balance between tradition and modernity.

The Relationship Between Form and Culture

The form of the She ethnic group's clothing patterns is deeply rooted in the psychological structure and technological logic of the ethnic culture. The linear order reflects the ethnic group's attachment to social stability and patriarchal norms; the fluidity of the painting reflects its adaptability and creativity in the natural environment and cultural exchanges. The rigorous expression of the closed form expresses the cosmology of the "order of heaven and man," while the free extension of the open form symbolizes the praise of vitality. These visual forms are not external decorations but the figurative presentation of the national mind—they constitute

the way the She people "view and organize the world" and are the result of cultural identity being conveyed and continued through visual language.

Cross-cultural Enlightenment of Wölfflin's Theory

The introduction of Wölfflin's formal theory into the study of She ethnic costumes not only expands the scope of application of its methodology but also provides a new theoretical interpretation path for non-Western art. Wölfflin's formal framework, originally used to distinguish Renaissance and Baroque art, has been reactivated in the study of She ethnic patterns, becoming an effective tool for understanding the evolution of oriental ethnic art forms. This cross-cultural theoretical transformation shows the universality of formal analysis as the "universal grammar of visual language" and also proves the potential of local art to reconstruct the meaning in the global art history discourse. Therefore, this paper not only reveals the formal aesthetic characteristics of She ethnic costumes but also provides a new academic path for the study of ethnic minority art through the methodological practice of formal analysis—starting from form and arriving at culture, taking visual structure to see the structure of mind. This research idea helps to break through the limitations of excessive reliance on semiotics and anthropological interpretation in previous studies of ethnic costumes and makes the art form return to its core position as a "cultural thinking pattern."

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