

TRADITION TO MODERNITY – CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT FOR FASHION ILLUSTRATION SYSTEMS INSPIRED BY SRI LANKAN DRAWING TECHNIQUES

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INTRODUCTION

Evidence of art evolution in Sri Lanka goes back to pre-historic time periods. Oldest mural paintings found in Sri Lanka date back to 2nd century BC during the first kingdom of Anuradhapura. From the available visual evidences it is possible to identify seven main types of art styles that had been developed throughout the Sri Lankan history. They are pre-historic art style, classical school art style (Sigiriya), late classical school art style (Polonnaruwa period), Gampola and Kotte period art styles, Central Kandyan school art style, Provincial Kandyan school art style, Southern school art style, and modern transitional school art styles (Bandaranayake & Jayasinghe, 2006).

In comparison to other periods, plenty of evidences of mural paintings belonging to the Kandyan and Southern school art styles are available and accessible for study. According to Manjusiri (1977) the late period temple paintings of Sri Lanka are of remarkable achievements, the best of them being done in the 18th and 19th centuries related to shrine-rooms, and preaching halls of Buddhist temples. These painters have carried with them the vitality of an artistic tradition which has survived and developed over centuries.

Kandyan art style began to form during the kingdom of Kandy with different influences. Later on Southern art style emerged and was practiced parallel to Kandyan style. Provincial Kandyan art style is a continuation of Kandyan art with less guidance and skilful technicality related to that tradition. Study of Kandyan and Southern art styles shows clearly the transition that happened in Sri Lankan society during those time periods. These paintings communicate the accepted illustration practices and the new social orders of that time (Bandaranayake & Jayasinghe, 2006).

Illustration is practiced in fashion as a mode of visualizing an idea and to get the idea across to others. Fashion illustration is not only shows garment drawing but also expressions of the mood, feelings, colours, practicability and so on. Every aspect in the illustration such as lines, shapes, forms and colours communicate ideas. Fundamentals of fashion illustration are based creativity and certain theories. It is common to use the theories of fashion figure illustrations as guidelines to construct fashion illustrations. Fashion illustrations continually evolve inspiring social requirements and cultural concepts mainly related to the human body beauty (McKelvey & Munslow, 2005). Beauty of human body appearance is defined differently, relating to the cultural context (Yu, Fan, Harlock, & Ng, 2006). As a result, theory of figure drawing has different approaches with respect to the cultures from time to time.

This paper presents the results of an exercise to derive a concept to develop a fashion illustration system and add additional features to the existing fashion illustration system, based on the techniques used in the Sri Lankan mural paintings.

METHODOLOGY

A study on the concepts of past Sri Lankan art styles was undertaken to incorporate them in

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fashion illustrations in the present context. Further, studies were conducted to visually examine the Sri Lankan mural paintings of Kandyan and Southern drawing traditions to derive conceptual approaches. Case studies were undertaken to visually examine the mural paintings of *Gangaramaya temple, Lewella, Kandy* and *Subodaramaya temple, Karagampitiya, Dehiwala*. Drawings were analyzed with reference to the line, drawing techniques, scale, shape of elements, painting arrangements, figure proportions, drawing composition and colours. Finally the gathered information was analyzed to derive concepts to be used to modify existing fashion illustration.

CONCEPT DEVELOPMENT

By examining the Sri Lankan drawing traditions, especially related to the Southern and Kandyan art traditions, following conceptual inferences could be made.

Drawing arrangement

- Sri Lankan and Indian drawing style have been practiced through six main drawing steps. Sequences of these steps are sketching, line drawing, colour application, shading and tone variation, final outlining and adding finishing touches (Sivaramamurti, 1996). These steps are also followed by the Kandyan and Southern mural painting techniques in Sri Lanka.
- Drawings show contemporary society influences through Buddhist *Jathaka* stories.
- All figure drawings are composed between two narrow bands of lines in the wall; width of the band varies. Southern art paintings show more space in bands compared to Kandyan art.
- All items are drawn in flat, two dimensional forms. Evidence of the beginning of the practice of light and dark shading can be seen in Southern paintings.
- Fabric patterns and garment designs are drawn to similar scale of that of figure scales.
- All figures are clearly composed in drawings. Forms, shapes and figures are clearly separated by lines and colours. Curly, untidy lines, overlapping multiple lines and messy cross hatching techniques were not practiced in the drawings.
- Scale among drawing items does not match with natural figure proportions. Figure 1A shows that the horse and the man have been drawn in nearly the same size.
- Space is used as a part of the drawing. Some symbolic or decorative items have been used to fill spaces to change the monotony. Southern art paintings leave little space and they are packed with many items in comparison to the Kandyan art.

Design elements & principles

- Repetition in lines, forms and shapes are used to emphasize and stabilize the idea. Alternation and gradation techniques have also been practiced in many different places in the drawings.
- Rhythm is interestingly practiced to change the monotony in drawing series. Rhythm in lines forms and colours add stylistic and eye catching look to the drawing.
- In the Southern art, continuous overlapping action figures are used to convey additional ideas to viewer (Figure 2). Through these, movement, motion and direction are shown.
- Emphasis techniques are used to enhance important characters among the group of people in the drawings.
- Different qualities of lines are used to express various ideas. Figure 3-A illustrates the fabric quality through lines. Curvy (Figure 3-B), wavy (Figure 3-C) and varying line distance (Figure 3-D) are used to add three dimensional form into the drawing. Lines have been used to show the garment wrapping style (Figure 3-A) and different textural effects in the fabric (Figure 3-E).
- Different types of lines are used as outlines, constructive lines, filling lines and detailed lines. Outlines are highlighted with thick dark colours. Thin fine lines are used to fill and decorate drawings.

- Limited selective colours have been used. Southern art practice has more colours, shadings and mixed colours than Kandyan art. In these drawings, colours have been used symbolically in drawings.

Figure appearance

- Figures are drawn in miniature and two dimensional forms in narrow bands.
- Figure action, poses and hand gestures are commonly used in drawings to convey ideas and drag the attention towards the drawing.
- Figure appearance is clear and simple to understand. Some figure details are eliminated and some are stylistically exaggerated.
- Figure scale deviates from natural figure appearance. According to the human figures in mural paintings, they show nearly four or five heads heights in total figure height. As an example, total height of Figure 1-B is nearly 4 ½ heads.
- Face height is used as an accepted scale to measure important figures such as Buddha images and statues. It was the accepted measuring system to construct Buddha figures, which derives from the Indian influence.
- Figure drawings have been drawn with unnatural figure poses. Figure 1-B, the head pose is in an unnatural position with respect to the body position.
- Clothing is used to convey the figure characteristics. Face and body features have been used to enhance the character’s qualities.
- Symbolic items have been used with figure drawings to convey different figure status.



A: Gangaramaya

B: Karagampitiya

Figure 2: Motion & direction

Figure 1: Line drawings showing scale, proportion and symbolic representations

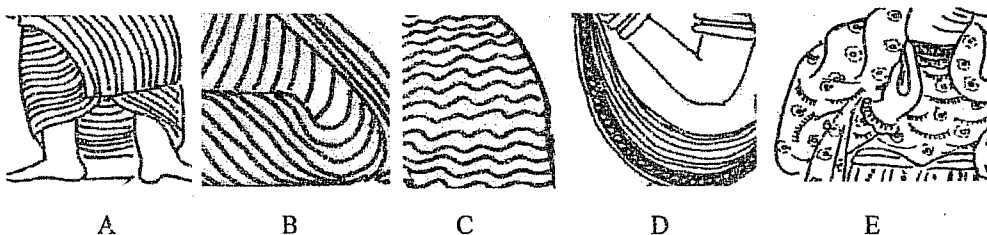


Figure 3: Line used in drawings to show rhythm, pattern and depth in drawing.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the above findings, concepts to derive a fashion illustration system, based on past Sri Lankan drawing techniques to match with the present context are presented here.

Fashion illustration is developed through the six steps: sketching, line drawing, colour application, shading and tone variation, final outline and finishing touches. Garment drawing is the main component of emphasis. Two dimensional human figure forms are used as a guide grid to form garment design.

Human figure form in fashion illustration needs to allocate wider space for garment design while maintaining good look in figure proportions. Considering the Sri Lankan traditional drawing techniques, it is possible to add unnatural human figure scale and poses in drawings. Face height can be used as the main unit in human figure drawings. It is more convenient to practice about ten face height figures in fashion illustration to maintain proportionate look. This would also accommodate adequate space for the garment design. Action or moving figures can be introduced by using overlapping techniques in drawing.

Garment and accessories are used in fashion illustration with or without fashion figure. These items can be drawn by adding three dimensional look through line drawings. Garment drawing can be chiefly used to convey many details; fabric quality differences, textural effects, surface decorations are all conveyed through line drawings and colours. Colour setting and scale are used to emphasise these ideas. It is important to use selective, limited and essential colours only to the drawing otherwise it will mislead the focussed idea.

Background can be interestingly used to enhance fashion illustration and it plays a vital role to describe it. It can be set as a backdrop to understand specific characteristics of the fashion figure using different symbolic items. Different unrelated figures or items can be placed in the background of the fashion figure to break the monotony or to add interest to it. Garment related items or special detailing items or fabric decorations can be set in the background to demonstrate matching.

By using the art techniques discussed above, it is possible to derive a number of fashion illustration systems giving with a traditional Sri Lankan identity. One such system is illustrated in Figure 4.

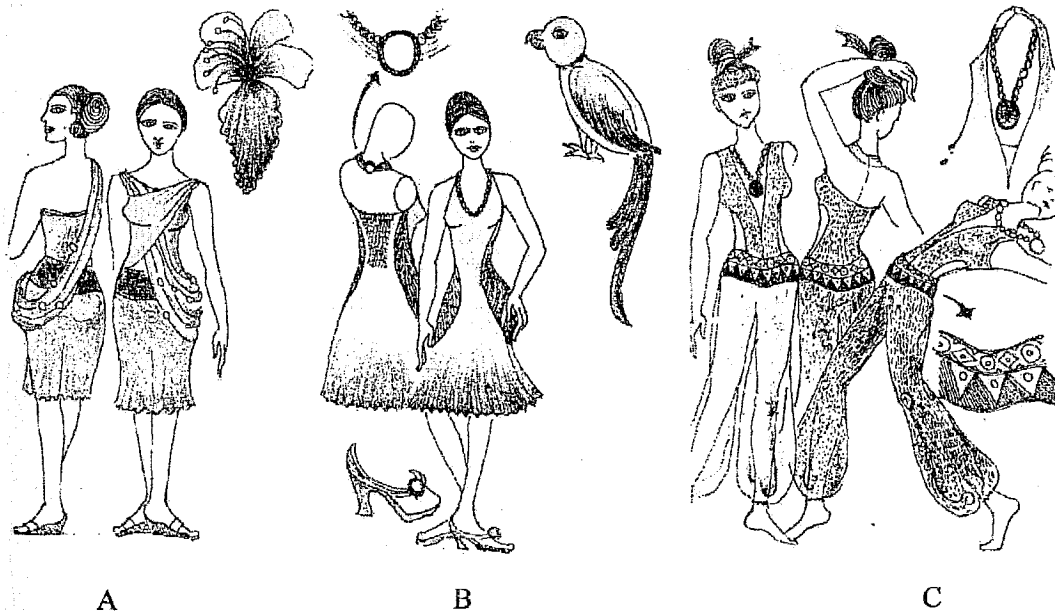


Figure 4: An example of contemporary fashion illustration based on the concepts of Sri Lankan drawing techniques

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