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The Aesthetics of Uzbek Ikat in Contemporary Fashion

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Design: direction of clothes and textiles

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Abstract

The article explores the aesthetics of Uzbek ikat as a phenomenon of national textile art and its role in contemporary fashion. The study analyzes the historical and cultural roots, ornament symbolism, color philosophy, and their reinterpretation in 21st-century clothing design. Special attention is paid to the synthesis of tradition and modernity, the preservation of cultural codes, and the artistic expressiveness of Uzbek textiles within the context of globalization in fashion.

Keywords: ikat, Uzbek textile, aesthetics, ornament, symbolism, color, tradition, contemporary fashion.

ЭСТЕТИКА УЗБЕКСКОГО ИКАТА В СОВРЕМЕННОЙ ОДЕЖДЕ

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена исследованию эстетики узбекского иката как феномена национального текстильного искусства и его роли в современной моде. Рассматриваются историко-культурные корни, символика орнаментов, философия цвета и особенности их интерпретации в дизайне одежды XXI века. Особое внимание уделяется вопросам синтеза традиции и современности, сохранению культурного кода и художественной выразительности узбекского текстиля в условиях глобализации моды.

Ключевые слова: икат, узбекский текстиль, эстетика, орнамент, символика, цвет, традиция, современная мода.

Introduction

Contemporary fashion is becoming a space for cultural dialogue, where traditional crafts and ethnic imagery acquire new meaning. Uzbek ikat is one of the most striking phenomena of Eastern textile culture, combining profound philosophy, symbolism, and aesthetic harmony. The revival of interest in ikat in the 21st century is associated with the search for national identity and designers' стремление to merge authenticity with current fashion trends.

The aim of the study is to identify the aesthetic and symbolic foundations of Uzbek ikat and to demonstrate ways of its creative interpretation in contemporary clothing.

Historical, Cultural, and Aesthetic Foundations of Uzbek Ikat

The art of ikat in Central Asia developed during the era of the Great Silk Road. The main centers of textile production were Bukhara, Samarkand, Margilan, and the Fergana Valley, where each school had its own stylistic and coloristic characteristics (Yusupova, 2008).

The term *ikat* derives from the Malay word *mengikat*, meaning “to tie.” In Uzbekistan, several types are known: *adras* (a silk-cotton fabric), *bekasam* (dense silk), and *alocha* (light cotton fabric). Each of them had its own social and artistic function and reflected the aesthetic ideals of its time.

Ikat ornamentation is based on the principle of fluidity—lines seem to vibrate, and color transitions create a breathing effect. As Ergasheva (2015) notes, “ikat is a philosophy of the movement of color.” The smooth rhythms and shimmering



of the fabric symbolize the variability and harmony of the universe, giving the material a spiritual and aesthetic dimension.

Symbolism and Philosophy of Ornament

Ornamental Motifs and Their Meaning

Traditional ikat motifs convey the mythological and philosophical ideas of the people:

Motif	Name and Meaning
Bodom	almond: femininity, fertility
Anar	pomegranate: life, abundance
Ilon izi	snake trace: protection
Kuvoch	jug: purification, water
Qush qanoti	bird wing: freedom and inspiration

These symbols were often used in wedding and festive fabrics, serving as protective talismans and expressing the spiritual essence of the culture.

Color Symbolism

Color in ikat carries deep associations: red represents the energy of the sun, blue symbolizes spirituality, green reflects nature, yellow signifies fertility, and black denotes stability. Their harmonious combination creates not only visual beauty but also psychological comfort.



Fig. 1–2 Samples of fabrics from a local market¹

Uzbek Ikat in Contemporary Fashion

In the 21st century, ikat has become an integral part of the global design language. Uzbek designers — Gulnora Karimova, Lola Saidova, Azukar Moreno, Zulfiya Sultan, and Dilbar Ataeva — adapt traditional ornaments into modern garment forms such as coats, dresses, and ready-to-wear suits.

International brands, such as Oscar de la Renta and Dries Van Noten, have also drawn inspiration from Uzbek ikat, incorporating it into their haute couture collections. Contemporary design interpretations strive to preserve the philosophy of ikat—movement, light, and harmony—while rethinking it through minimalism and new technologies. Designers use eco-friendly dyes, digital reproduction of patterns, and combine ikat fabrics with denim, leather, and knit materials.

¹ https://t.me/ikatistan_group



Fig. 3–4. Student work of the National Institute of Fine Arts and Design named after Kamoliddin Behzod (Rakhimova M., 2024).

An example can be seen in the collections of students of the Kamoliddin Behzod National Institute of Fine Arts and Design, where ikat is combined with modern streetwear silhouettes, reflecting the idea of “ethno-futurism” (Rakhimova M., 2024).

Philosophy of Fabric: Between Craft and Concept

Ikat represents not only a decorative technique but also a special type of artistic thinking, where fabric becomes a metaphor for the world. In the process of dyeing and interweaving threads, the artisan recreates the harmony of the universe—as an act of spiritual creation. Contemporary philosophers of art (Khakimov, 2020) note that “Uzbek ikat manifests the principle of cosmic unity: matter and spirit, form and energy merge into a single visual rhythm.” Thus, ikat is not merely an ornament, but a form of philosophical knowledge embodied in material.

Conclusion



Uzbek ikat is not only a textile heritage but also a living aesthetic system capable of inspiring contemporary design. Its artistic power lies in its ability to connect past and future, tradition and innovation.

In the 21st century, ikat retains its relevance as a symbol of national identity, artistic freedom, and cultural unity. It remains an expression of the harmony of color, form, and spirit—a philosophy of beauty embodied in fabric.

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