

Creations of women in Upper Egypt in hand-embroidered textiles in Akhmim village as a source of inspiration for printed upholstery design

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Abstract:

Egypt has many villages which are rich in many arts and crafts that are nearing extinction, including the village of Akhmim, which is one of the oldest villages in Upper Egypt, famous for its hand-weaving crafts over the different ages, It is located north of a group of the most important Egyptian historical cities such as Dandara, Taybeh and Qeft and is located on the eastern side of the Nile and follows the governorate of Sohag, It has been distinguished by its high-quality textiles made of linen and wool since the time of the ancient Egyptian Pharaonic state until now, especially in hand-woven and hand-embroidered hangings, in which women of this village excelled in creating themes and artistic elements with aesthetic values inspired by the Egyptian environment. The research focuses on some of the creations of this village's women in hand-embroidered textile hangings, which was produced under the auspices of (Upper Egypt Association for Education and Development), which is a school to develop the artistic talented women of this village and establish generations of artists capable of creating artistic textile products from contemporary view of Egypt. This craft, which is on the verge of extinction, especially with the increasing trend of modern digital technology in design, was thus the problem of the research in the question: How can we benefit from the artistic heritage inherent in handmade embroidered textiles in Akhmim village as a source of inspiration for printed upholstery designs? The research aims to study some aesthetic values in hand-embroidered hangings of Akhmim women and the extent of their impact on the heritage of their community to create designs that suit modern printed textile for furniture. The importance of the research is in documenting the creations of Egyptian women in one of Upper Egypt villages to preserve and develop the Egyptian folklore through studying and analyzing the aesthetics of this handicraft which is about to disappear and benefit from it in providing modern textile printing designs with an Egyptian identity. The artistic analytical approach of the subjects of hand embroidery hangings for the women of Akhmim was followed to study the impact of the surrounding environment on their arts and its role in enriching the artist's imagination.

Keywords:

Folk Art, Textile tapestry, Hand Embroidery

- Research problem:

How can we benefit from the artistic heritage inherent in handmade embroidered textiles in Akhmim village as a source of inspiration for printed upholstery designs?

- Research importance:

The importance of research in documenting the creations of Egyptian women in one of Upper Egypt villages to preserve and develop the Egyptian folklore through studying and analyzing the aesthetics of this handicraft which is about to disappear and benefit from it in providing modern textile printing designs with an Egyptian identity.

- Research objectives:**The research aims to achieve:**

- 1- An analytical study of the aesthetic values of some models of hand-embroidered hangings of Akhmim women in terms of (subject - color - lines - composition) to rediscover the aesthetics of this type of folk art, which is about to disappear.
- 2- To create designs that suit modern printed textile of furniture.

-Research hypothesis:**The research assumes that:**

- The aesthetic of hand-embroidered textile in Akhmim didn't receive adequate artistic studies showing the richness of this art as a kind of Egyptian folk art as a source of contemporary printing textile design.
- Taking advantage of the artistic study of hand-embroidered textile that may be a source of inspiration to create designs suitable for printed textile of furniture.

-Research Limits:

The spatial limit: women creations of hand-embroidered in Akhmim

The temporal limit: since the establishment of (Upper Egypt Association for Education and Development 1960 until now).

Objective limits: An analytical artistic study of some handcrafted textile hangings in Akhmim village that could inspire innovative designs from the aesthetic values from motifs of hand-embroidered hangings of Akhmim to suit the contemporary printed fabrics of furniture.

-Research methodology:

Descriptive and analytical method: an analytical study for motifs of hand-embroidered hangings of Akhmim (subjects- aesthetic values of line, color, composition).

Experimental method: Innovate some experiments of designs inspired from the analytical study to be suitable for a contemporary printed upholstery fabric.

(1): Theoretical framework.**(1-1): Textile in Akhmim:**

Akhmim is the capital of the ninth region of Upper Egypt and was known by the name of the god "Maine" and was of a great importance in the modern Pharaonic state. In 1527, it was famous for its high-quality linen textiles and the spread of horizontal looms and spread of the fabric industry and it was called Akhmim Center in 1890" (Lola leham, 2018, p9). The art of embroidery has been known as a craft that has historically spread in Egypt and was made by

craftsmen who used to embroider linen, silk and cashmere fabrics with gold and silver threads. The art of embroidery has been linked to religious beliefs, as well as Egyptian customs and traditions. It is still present in small villages and hamlets and in most of the rural areas with its distinctive style, tools and threads. The people of Akhmim have practiced the weaving craft over different ages ^(net, 14, feb2019). The city received a huge fame with its textiles and embroidery, and it is known that it had retained a special fame in the Coptic era because of the accuracy and beauty of the embroidery that was carried out by its people on fabrics known as the Coptic fabrics, which had many Christian symbols and footage of the lives of saints and martyrs and some subjects of the Bible.

The Egyptian craftsmen were doing this needle and thread by hand to add more beauty and luxury to fabrics and clothing, and that have been happening since the ancient Egyptian state and delivered the ancient Egyptians to the finest artistic levels. The art of embroidery continued in a series of episodes throughout the different ages passing through the Roman and Greek eras. Then excelled in the Coptic era and continued in the third and fourth centuries AD then continued in the era of Islamic Egypt starting from 641 AD where the art of embroidery appeared as silk threads and silver on linen fabrics ^{“(Lola leham, 2018, p14)}.

(1-2): Establishment of Upper Egypt Association for Education and Development:

In 1960, the Upper Egypt Association for Education and Development was established in the city of Akhmim with a long history. It is a civil society that was registered in the Ministry of Social Solidarity and has succeeded to a great extent to contain these talents and develop them, it has provided the opportunity for them to showcase their creations in local and international exhibitions to show the products, which were characterized by a distinctive style, they live in a closed community of craftsmen in Akhmim which is considered as a large city, and over the ages most of them became traditional and kept their rural customs and traditions.

(1-3): Features that characterize Akhmim's creations in textiles:

(1-3-1): Spontaneity style of expression:

The female artist relies on the Spontaneity technique of using simple and understandable elements in presenting themes inspired by her environment in a simple way that is not rigid or subjected to specific laws or templates, and is governed only by simplicity, customs and traditions and relies on imagination and personal style in the expression of daily life ^(Roshdi Saleh, 1960,p14) it is called as Folk art, it is the art production practiced by the public people, issued by their conscience, and expresses their cultural, artistic and social heritage. ^(Akram Konswah, 2005, p20) Oxford defines folk art as a term describing objects and decorations made either for daily use or decorations or for special occasions. Folk art is influenced by patterns of the group and their taste and is inherited from generation to generation. ^(Rawya Abd el Baqi, p89).



Fig (1): freehand sketch on paper- Fig (2): freehand sketch on the cloth directly.

In Fig. 1,2, we can notice the Spontaneity technique of hand-sketching, the elements of the painting are shown either on paper and then transferred to the cloth or directly on the canvas from their imagination.

(1-3-2): The influence of the ancient Egypt art and using symbols:

The spread of ancient Egyptian monuments and inscriptions in the village has an impact on their imagination and conscience and appeared in the style of simplification and the use of symbols, which is one of the most important elements of folk art, it is found in the content and the subject of the work of art, as symbols represent the basic value. The artist transforms the decorative units of art chosen by his/her environment and expresses the idea and feelings in order to embellish his/her artwork to let it earn a distinctive character. ^(Dalia Ali, p28) Folk art is a realistic art that derives its visual reality from conformity or direct transmission, so it cares about the overall form and not the details. The symbol is used in folk art to express national identity and show its features. ^(Sama ahmed Waheed, p 60) Every symbol has a meaning and a myth related to the life of the Egyptian and a belief that reflects the way of life. Folk symbols are distinguished by their cultural, intellectual and social value. They are not just a symbol but also an expression of the environment ^(Mona mohamed Anowar, 1999, p 270)

(1-3-3): Expressing ideas simply:

They are drawing their instincts without restrictions, where the role of the association was limited to providing the necessary means and materials for women to work without imposing any kind of restrictions or criticism of their work and encourages them to carry out what they love in the inspiration of their own imagination. Rosalyn de Villene who was an official at the association, wrote in her diary in August 1990 "In general, every painting is a beautiful painting with a special creativity not because this is our principle, but every painting carries some of the artist's spirit that have been brought into existence, and the only criticism that is allowed comes about haste and diarrhea, or because of the imitation of other artists.

(2): Descriptive and analytical Study:

An analytical study for motifs of hand-embroidered hangings of Akhmim (subjects- aesthetic values of line, color, composition):

(2-1): Subjects in the textile hangings of Akhmim:

The emergence of Akhmim ladies in an unspoiled natural environment played an important role in the development of all the ingredients of their creativity, it provided Sources of inspiration as artists were inspired by the details of everyday life and the manifestations of rural life in the rediscovery of the beauty of its elements in a simple and distinctive style.

^(Danforth, 2010) **The subjects of folk art in Akhmim's works can be divided into:**

(2-1-1): The natural environment subjects:

It includes all the paintings that reflect the specificity of the rural environment in its vocabulary of trees, rivers, flowers, palms or animals and birds in all forms, and also landscapes of fields and farms have had a profound impact on enriching the visual experience of these artists.



Fig (3): Mai Azmy, celebrations in the village, 2007.

In Fig (3) A scene from the village on the banks of the Nile with several scenes of daily life in Upper Egypt shows the impact of the artist elements of her environment and converted to simplified symbols with delightful color details.

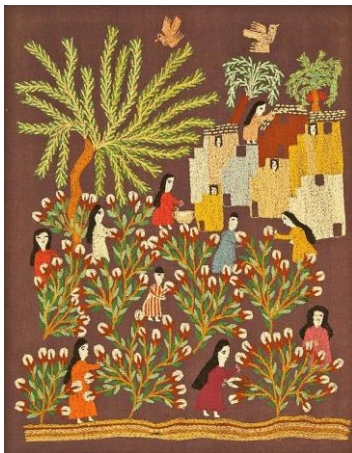


Fig (4): Ayda Kamal, Cotton harvesting, 1997- Fig (5): Cotton harvesting in the village.

In Fig (4) It shows the interest of the artist in the subjects of agriculture and cotton harvest, which is one of the most important crops of the village of the international fame, and call it as white gold or the fourth pyramid of Egypt, as well as the artist's style in simplifying the forms, elements and color spaces with indifference to perspective and the focus on the expression of the subject which is linked to the culture of her environment.



Fig (6): Noura Khalaf, the Beautiful life,2010- Fig (7) the grain harvesting in cemetery Minta

In Figure (6) Shows many elements of colorful plants and trees, and the Nile River with a fishing trip to the Nile with the style of storytelling which tells a story or a novel with drawings, the same style was found in the ancient Egyptian art, which was the subject series in successive stages in transverse slides influenced by the style of the ancient Egyptian artist in the murals of the ancient Egyptian temples Fig: (7).

(2-1-2) Animal subject:

They show interest in some birds and animals in the environment around them, especially those elements that have symbols in common with the ancient Egyptian paintings that are found on the walls of temples and monuments that are spread in their environment, such as the bird Cattle egret (Abu Qardan) (ibis), which had a holiness during the Pharaonic era, as well as some types of ducks, Pigeons, sparrows and fish as a symbol of goodness, and palm as a symbol of giving that still affect their conscience and are linked to many aspects of their daily life to this day.



Fig (8): Maryem Azmy, Buffalo cows,1975-



Fig (9) the grain harvesting in cemetery Minta

(Figure 8) The artist was interested in dealing with the subject of pets in their environment, the most important of which is the buffalo cows, which is associated in their culture with good and livelihood and helps the peasant who gives them much attention, the same belief that was prevailed in Pharaonic Egypt and is still inherited until now.



Fig (10): Maryem Azmy, Geese,1989-



Fig (11) geese of Mudeum in the Egyptian museum.

Fig (10) The artist dealt with the element of geese birds which have been available in the original Egyptian environment since the times of ancient Egypt and till now, the same element had been expressed by the ancient Pharaonic artists on the walls of the temples in Fig (11).

(2-1-3) Social environment subjects:

They use imagination to express themes that reflect the culture of this society inspired by customs and traditions, political or religious events, celebrations and daily activities. We note the frequency of the emergence of women as an essential part of the components of society, as she works in the field and at home and has an active role in all details of social life. The works that express religious beliefs and symbols are spread in many pieces of Akhmim and their themes are carried out according to what is told in mosques or in the church or according to the artist's realization of historical stories, legends and novels. Influenced by the religious themes that spread on walls of ancient Egyptian temples, they generally carry within them many aspects of the ancient Egyptian heritage (Lola leham, 2018, p42).



Fig (12): Ekbal Tawfeek, Eid al-fitr Feast, 1991.

(Fig. 12) Celebrations of Ramadan and Eid al-Fitr are the topics liked by Akhmim ladies even with different religions, and they are expressed with a sense of delicate and small details about the manifestations of joy in this day with parks, children, colorful flags and dancing on the melodies of trumpet and drums.

(2-2): The aesthetic values of some models of hand-embroidered hangings of Akhmim women in terms of (color-lines- composition):

(2-2-1): Hand-embroidered hanging no (1):

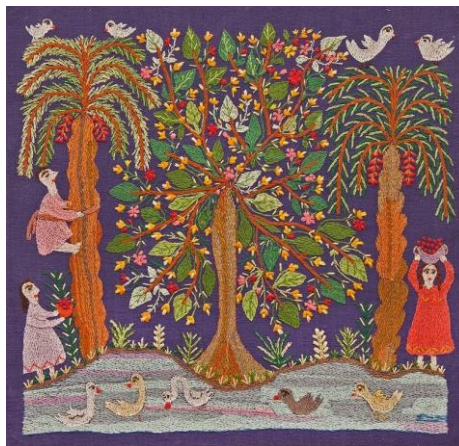
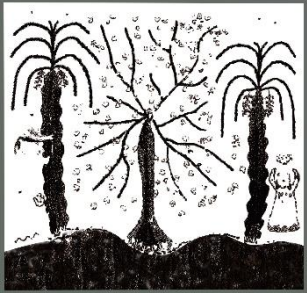
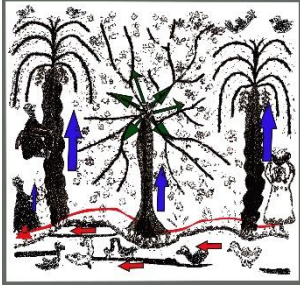



Fig (13): Amal Elia, On the river Nile, 2010.

(Figure 13) The work shows people life in the village and what the Nile represents for them and their role in enriching their imagination.

composition	lines	colors
 <p>Fig (16): sketch shows the motifs compositions in the art work fig (13).</p> <p>Distribution of motifs and elements: Balanced and spontaneous, that the main motif, the Nile comes at the front of the composition to include the base of the composition, topped by huge trees to indicate the symbol of virtue of the Nile and fertility.</p> <p>symmetry: in the distribution of the two palms in the right and left to achieve balance, while the middle tree occupies most of the composition area in a way that makes the viewer's eye in a circular tour inside the panel starting from the center point of the branches of the tree to spread towards the rest of its parts with birds that are being spread up and down the composition at different points.</p>	 <p>Fig (15): sketch shows the line directions in the art work fig (13).</p> <p>Line directions: Diverse across the board to inspire vitality and spread of the blue arrows suggest stability and pointing up while the Nile path is in horizontal lines to express the horizon and wide line.</p> <p>Motion illusion: Through the spread of wavy and sloping lines and the distance from stillness, as in the Nile water give a suggestion of movement and central depth that appear in the green arrows of the lines that are spread from the center point in the branches of trees that cover most of the area of the painting to focus on the main element in the composition.</p> <p>Flattening: It is noted the indifference towards the simulation of proportions and perspective and embodiment.</p>	 <p>Fig (14): the color group used in the artwork.</p> <p>Color gradations of green in all parts of the tree to create variations in the shadows and dimensions, with a variety of colors yellow orange and red to give the elements a delightful form that reflects the subject. distribution of color spots in yellow permeate the details of the tree next to the green color in the antagonist brings glow and lighting to the painting.</p>

(2-2-2): Hand-embroidered hanging no (2):



Fig (17): Huda Fawzy, The Spring, 2007.

Fig (17) entitled “The spring” and shows the value of trees, flowers and birds and generosity of the palm trees.

The research addresses the artistic analysis of the work in terms of:

composition	lines	colors
<div data-bbox="264 1084 475 1281" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="220 1290 520 1391">Fig (20): sketch shows the motifs compositions in the art work fig (17)</p> <p data-bbox="220 1413 520 2036">Equilibrium: It distributes its elements within the composition to occupy all the surface of the plate evenly. It begins with the mass of trees from the base of the cadre and escalates to the center of the cadre and then draws it with the mass of buildings above the composition in solid boxes form.</p>	<div data-bbox="662 1088 919 1344" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="563 1352 1021 1420">Fig (19): detail shows the line directions in the art work fig (17)</p> <p data-bbox="555 1447 1031 1861">Simplification: It comes from spontaneity and vision combined with imagination. Looking at the components of things distorted in some lines, shapes either enlarged or amplified or minimized or deleted in order to give them some meanings that can provoke the conscience and expressing the shapes and elements in abbreviated lines</p> <p data-bbox="555 1870 1031 2036">Movement: Draw lines in parallel arcs emanating from a central point in the branches of the trees to inspire the movement and diffusivity in the</p>	<div data-bbox="1161 1088 1273 1344" data-label="Image"> </div> <p data-bbox="1075 1368 1362 1435">Fig (18): the color group used in the artwork.</p> <p data-bbox="1059 1458 1378 2036">The painting deals with the scenery of the village, a color group of cold colors was used, choosing the blue color in the floor topped by a variety of bright color to maintain the characters of joy and movement, which are one of the most important colors in popular art, although folk art is universal, where folk arts converge</p>

<p>Symmetry: It appears in the style of drawing the branches of the trees left and right as if they were in the reflection of a mirror.</p>	<p>form of circular, spiral sequential, gain lines dynamic.</p> <p>Flatness: Lack of attention to perspective and embodiment. She draws squares and triangles to reflect houses and buildings, while animals and birds are depicted in brief linear inscriptions of a decorative nature.</p> <p>using symbols: the reduction of some forms that were developed while retaining its basic features.</p>	<p>in their symbols, colors, forms and essence because they are linked to society and human. There is a difference between the elements of society, environment and man (Hany Gaber, 2005, p35)</p>
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(3): Design ideas:

In the light of the previous artistic analytical study, it was possible to apply a set of designs to print upholstery fabrics inspired by the paintings of embroidery art for Akhmim ladies.

(3-1): Design idea no. (1)

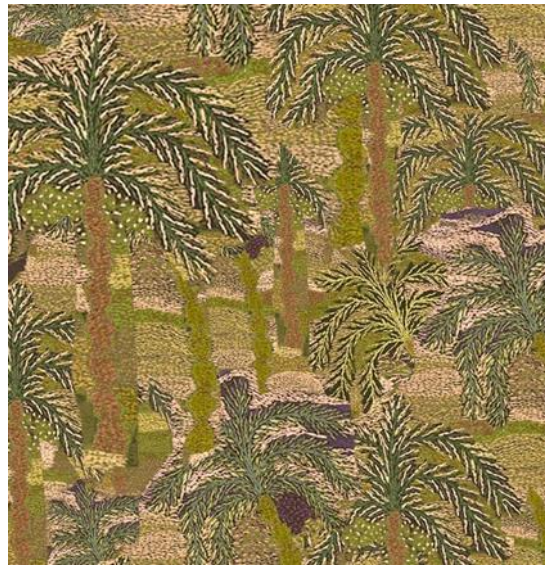


Fig (21): The original hand-embroidered hangings

- Fig (22): Design idea no. (1)



Fig (23), (24): ideas of application for design no (1) on printed textile of furniture

<p>Source of inspiration: Motifs:</p> <p>Design idea: (color – lines- composition)</p> <p>Technique:</p>	<p>Fig (21) The original hand-embroidered hangings</p> <p>Motifs of palms and plantations in the environment of Akhmim village and redesigning it in new compositions, in which the details of the elements have been shorthanded as symbols which distinguish the rural environment, for printing designs for upholstery fabrics.</p> <p>Addressing the main element in the design by adding different texture and size with distribution in a diffused style, overlapping with the floor in a way that achieves some features of folk art with degradation of green color as a symbol of agricultural areas and with the preservation of the texture of the printing design over color spaces in the floor to enrich the visual appearance of embroidery.</p> <p>Silkscreen printing – digital printing</p>
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(3-2): Design Idea no. (2)

Fig (24): The original hand-embroidered hangings



Fig (25): Design idea no. (2)



Fig (27): ideas of application for design no (2) on printed textile of furniture

<p>Source of inspiration:</p>	<p>original hand-embroidered hangings Fig (24)</p>
<p>Motifs:</p>	<p>Inspired by the theme of the bird Cattle egret (Abu Qerdan) scattered in the environment of the village of Akhmim, which is considered by the people of the village as a sacred bird that have an important role in the agricultural environment, as a motif in the design it has been drawn with curvy lines and different composition, to be applied in Innovative printing designs for upholstery which feature a type of folk art.</p>
<p>Design idea (color – lines- composition)</p>	<p>The color range of blue shades was chosen with the advantage of the aesthetic element of the bird's distinctive white color as a symbol of purity with its distribution within the composition in a rhythm that achieves a balanced element in the design. The reciprocal role between the element and the floor and its distribution with balance.</p>
<p>Technique:</p>	<p>Silkscreen printing – digital printing- for repeated prints of furniture textile.</p>

(3-3): Design Idea no. (3)



Fig (28): The original hand-embroidered hangings



Fig (29): Design idea no. (3)



Fig (30): ideas of application for design no (3) on printed textile of furniture

<p>Source of inspiration:</p>	<p>original hand-embroidered hangings Fig (28)</p>
<p>Motifs:</p>	<p>Design inspired by the theme of the animal and plant environment in the village of Akhmim, especially the camel and huge prosperous trees and some overlapping houses as simple motifs scattered in the village with different composition.</p>
<p>Design idea: (color – lines- composition)</p>	<p>Choosing multiple bright colors with contrasts give the impression of joy and vitality and the overlap of hot and cold colors in a balanced exchange between the elements, it also gives simplification of elements lines and brief distribution within the composition in a unique balance.</p>
<p>Technique:</p>	<p>Silkscreen printing – digital printing- for repeated prints of furniture textile</p>

(3-4): Design Idea no. (4)

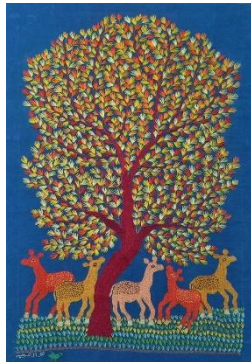


Fig (31): The original hand-embroidered hangings



Fig (32): Design idea no. (4)



Fig (33): ideas of application for design no (4) on printed textile of furniture

<p>Source of inspiration:</p> <p>Motifs:</p> <p>Design idea (color – lines- composition)</p> <p>Technique</p>	<p>The original hand-embroidered hangings Fig (31)</p> <p>Motifs of domestic animals and deer amid agricultural areas that are related to the rural environment.</p> <p>The color range was chosen for the blue shades with the rose color that fits with the color range of modern furniture textiles, with its distribution inside the composition in the form of broad beacons where lines vary between lines in the form of successive ribbons and the composition in general convey a scene for a group of domestic animals in spontaneous movement amid rural agricultural environment in Akhmim village.</p> <p>Silkscreen printing – digital printing- for unrepeated prints of furniture textile.</p>
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(3-4): Design Idea no. (4)



Fig (34): The original hand-embroidered hangings



Fig (35): Design idea no. (5)



Fig (36): ideas of application for design no (5) on printed textile of furniture

Source of inspiration:	Original hand-embroidered hangings Fig (34)
Motifs:	Motifs of wheat plant with its various sizes as a symbol of good and livelihood that have spread in all agricultural environments in most of the villages of Egypt, using abstraction of plant elements in a decorative style.
Design idea: (color – lines- composition)	The color range from violet shades overlapping with red and moving on a blue color floor that was chosen to create a kind of color contrast that distinguishes folk art for its delightful appearance and vitality, which is in line with some modern furniture designs with parallel lines and variety of sizes of stripes overlapping with geometric motifs, interchangeably between the element and the floor.
Technique:	Silkscreen printing – digital printing- for repeated prints of furniture textile

(4): Results:

- The possibility of benefiting from the folklore artistic abounding heritage by some of the handicrafts that are about to disappear. It is the art of hand embroidery in the village of Akhmim as a source of inspiration for modern printing designs that match the needs of consumers.

-Documenting the creations of Egyptian women in one of Upper Egypt's villages, Akhmim village, to preserve and develop the Egyptian folk arts and rediscover this kind of art that is about to be extinct.

-Achieving an artistic analytical study of the aesthetic values of some models of hand-embroidery textile of Upper Egypt women in Akhmim village in terms of (subject - color - lines - composition) and studying the impact of the surrounding environment on their imagination and creativity and the impact of that in creating designs for furniture fabrics and furniture with an Egyptian identity characterized by authenticity and contemporary, bearing the thought and features of the Egyptian folk artist and culture inspired by the creations of ladies of Akhmim.

(4): Recommendation:

-The research recommends the need to pay attention to the various folklore scattered in the villages of Egypt in general as a rich source of the designer to inspire designs for distinctive textiles that combine both authenticity and contemporary.

-Preserving heritage through the production of contemporary designs of Egyptian identity bearing the features of folk art, which is on the verge of extinction, using advantage of the possibilities of modern technology.

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