

Design furniture between the legacy of handicrafts and contemporary prospects

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Abstract:

Handcrafts are considered as one of the constants of our ancient Egyptian heritage, which cannot be erased from memory, no matter how old it is, as well as being one of the basic components of the national character. It distinguishes the specificity of Arab societies and create their identity. So, caring about handicrafts is a great responsibility for those who are interested in this cultural heritage.

The importance of crafts and handicrafts is reflecting the national identity of the state that produces them. In Egypt, many of these handicrafts are inherited through generations, bearing the genetic fingerprint of creativity, beauty, precision and mastery. It is still one of Egyptian artists' creativity marks, which are manually formed. Any country that is characterized by these handicrafts can make economic gains as a result of their care and support. Therefore, it is necessary to study how to promote this industry and benefit from it in the design and production of contemporary furniture, as well as benefiting from successful global experiences in handcraft development to overcome its position in Egypt. Furniture generally are considered as one of the most important elements of the interior spaces, including the functional and aesthetic components directly affect the formation of the internal vacuum, which can affect the inhabitants positively or negatively.

So, the problem of this research arose by the reluctance of designers of heritage in general and handicrafts in particular, and their influence by western design trends, which resulted in losing many of our cultural heritage and our handicrafts. The problem of the research concentrated in the departure of furniture design from handicrafts and not keep up with modernity and contemporary, which led to the decline of crafts until it almost reaches extinction. As a result, the research aims to revive handicrafts by integrating them with contemporary design lines for their development and continuity throughout the ages. This paper discussed the concept of handicrafts, their importance and the problems they face in the light of contemporary developments, and what are the handicrafts that are supporting the design of furniture. The paper was concluded with a suggested design that demonstrates the effect of handicrafts on enriching furniture design aesthetically, culturally and emotionally.

Introduction:

As a result of technological revolution and direct openness to the world and subsequent cries of modernity which are about to abolish our heritage and identity, it was necessary to think about how to revive this heritage, return to it and develop it to keep up with contemporary developments. Heritage is considered as the soul of societies, which forms its historical

memory and gives it a distinctive character. Handcrafts in Egypt are one of the most important sources of heritage, which varied among woodworks, embroidered textiles, glassworks, hand-made carpets, pits, copper and other crafts that occupy a large area of Egyptian heritage, which arose within it as a result of the succession of cultures and its melting which resulting in formation of craft organizations called "craft communities" where the manufacturer relied on his/her hand skills and environmental and local raw materials.

Area of furniture design is one of the most important areas in which the designer can confirm the heritage of handcrafts and their development and continuity through generations. However, the problem arises in how to combine the originality of the craft with contemporary design. Hence the "problem of the research" relies in the design of furniture based on handcrafts and non-modernity, which led to the decline of this profession until it almost reached extinction, as a result of the reluctance of many artisans for the lack of economic return, which threatens our cultural heritage and our heritage.

The aim of the research is to design contemporary furniture that seeks to revive traditional handcrafts in order to face the risks and challenges that have threaten their survival and to find ways to develop them. This will be reflected on the economic level of craftsmen in particular and the national income of Egypt in general, which opens a completion field.

"The research assumes that handcrafts are a national heritage and an attractive source of investment and development that improves the Egyptian economic situation. The development of handcrafts in the design and production of furniture helps in increasing the demand for it, which contributes to its export and the ability to compete in international markets.

Research Methodology The research follows the analytical descriptive method for exploring the elements of the research problem and analyzing it and hence reaching a proposed scenario for preserving and developing the heritage of handcrafts.

The task of the Arab interior designer in development of the art of handcrafts:

The hard task for Arab designers in the process of promoting and innovating handcrafts as a great art, resembles in, renewing and isolating the symbols and meanings of this art, to raise the experience of heritage. If we look at the modern design movements in the Arab world, we will find serious attempts to benefit from the heritage and handcrafts in different ages, but there must be some conditions that should be achieved to be updated, **the most important of which are:**

- * Connecting modernization with originality, heritage, civilizations, local and global cultures.
- *Connecting modernization with art, as aesthetic research.
- *Connecting modernization with the methodology of cultural research.

There is no doubt that these three conditions can be another entrance, which we call the heritage entrance, all of which are linked to the concept of authenticity and cultural heritage, which can be a style of research with an aesthetic approach. Culture includes human heritage, which is complementary to this approach, and we can add to the previous conditions several points that make them more effective in the process of updating handcraft arts:

- * The theory of modernization in its way for development and access to a contemporary artistic direction should begin using the technical output.

* Theory of modernization must respect the rights of the artist designer as an innovator and a free independent human being who can express his artistic ideas, which are inspired by heritage but with a contemporary vision in an atmosphere of freedom and safety. So that communities accept these results and encourage them, as these results are for the benefit of the society and its cultural and civilized progress.

* The values of heritage in the theory of modernization should occupy a wide aspect because of its importance in the formation of a belonging school.

Therefore, the call to revive the art of handicrafts does not mean imitating or simulating it. Rather, it aims to follow its growth and development in a manner consistent with the spirit of time and the state of society to produce a contemporary literal art, taking care of the inertia without development suitable for global variables, or drifting behind European tradition which imbue modern heritage traditional art.

At the end of this research paper, the results of the study were applied to several designs of different furniture units. The design philosophy was adopted on the integration of modern design lines and handicrafts. The applied study confirmed that the use of handicrafts in the design of contemporary furniture supports and sustains these authentic crafts. It also emphasizes the awareness of cultural identity, which is a revival of the past heritage in a present dress. On the other hand, harmony between them leads to enriching these designs with many aesthetic, cultural, emotional and economic values.

Here are some examples of the proposed applications:

Suggested Design: Craftwork has been combined with contemporary design lines to become a design that holds the legacy of handicrafts and contemporary horizons after being dominated by traditional lines and materials.



Figure (1) illustrates the impact of the harmony between handicrafts and the design of contemporary furniture in imparting aesthetic and cultural heritage values.

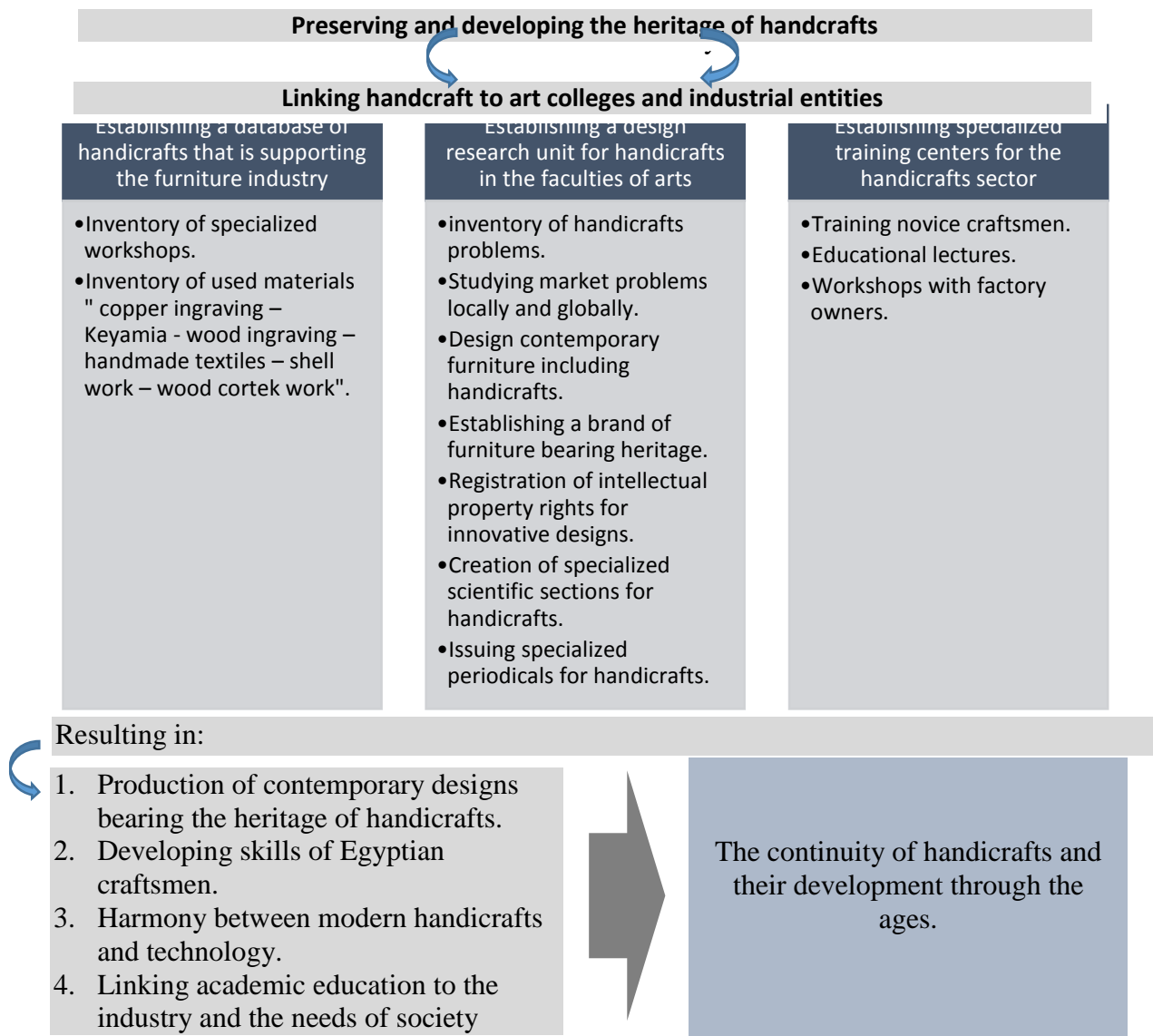
Proposed design: Combining the craft of the shell with modern design lines and traditional materials.



Figure (2) shows that craftsmanship is an added value to contemporary furniture design that gives the design a distinctive heritage value.

Summary:

We can summarize what has been studied and analyzed in this research, that handcrafts are among the most important legacies that characterize the specificity of the Arab societies which must be preserved and developed. Despite their presence in Egypt since ancient times because of its historical, social and cultural importance, it faces a lot of problems in the light of contemporary developments. So we must strive to revive it in a modern manner that commensurate with the requirements of the community by integrating them with the design of contemporary furniture. Beside maintaining and developing them by linking to faculties of arts and Egyptian industries. That can be achieved through the establishment of a database which supports handcrafts, and the creation of a design research unit to identify both of, handcraft problems, and market requirements locally and internationally. Also provide appropriate design and marketing support, link the academic side with the practical reality, and establish specialized training centers for the succession of this craft through successive generations. The research is concluded with a practical application that demonstrates the importance of handcrafts in enriching the design of contemporary furniture and a proposed scenario for preserving the heritage and continuity of handcrafts.



Through the above mentioned points in this study, the following results are shown:

- 1 - Handcrafts were born out of necessity and utilitarian function, and the contemporary developments have had a great impact on its continuity and instability.
2. Handcrafts are one of the outstanding tools of furniture design, which can be used to create contemporary furniture with a heritage style.
- 3 - Egypt has many handicrafts that can be included in the design of Egyptian furniture, such as the craft of "drilling on copper - hand weaving - Khayamia-shell crafts"
4. Nowadays, handicrafts alone are not the driving force behind creativity in furniture design, but they need modernity and innovation to ensure continuity and communication between the past and the present.
- 5 - Handcrafts heritage is a value added to the design of furniture giving it aesthetic - cultural - social - economic dimensions.

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