

Resonant Traditions: Reconceptualizing Heritage through Cross-Cultural Collaboration

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Keywords: Zero-Waste Design, Cross-Cultural Collaboration, Heritage and Innovation

Concept: This project investigates how cross-cultural collaboration can catalyze intra-cultural rediscovery of traditional design practices. While design scholarship has extensively explored Western designers drawing from non-Western traditions (Craik, 2020), there remains a noticeable gap in research addressing how such collaborations might also prompt native designers to re-engage with their own cultural heritage. For instance, Mamp and An (2016) explored this dynamic through a collaborative gown project between American Jewish and Korean designers, demonstrating how cultural partnerships can reveal and celebrate cultural diversity. Building on this precedent, we engaged in a cross-cultural collaboration between a Western designer with a longstanding interest in Hanbok, Korea's traditional attire, and a Korean designer who had not previously explored their cultural fashion heritage in depth. This dialogue fostered a critical re-evaluation of cultural identity, authorship, and design value in traditional Korean attire. The collaboration centers on a rare Ramie textile from Andong, South Korea, a material passed down through matrilineal inheritance. Ramie is historically significant in Korea's global textile legacy (Mee, 1984). This decades-old fabric served as both material and conceptual foundation for a design that intentionally merges past and future. Traditional forms and meanings were revisited through sustainable strategies and advanced construction techniques, including laser etching, zero-waste patterning, and 3D printing. Grounded in Bhabha's theory of the "third space" (2012), this work contributes to design scholarship by modeling how cultural artifacts can become sites of innovation when approached through both intercultural and intra-cultural dialogue. The project demonstrates that heritage is not static, but activated through relational and methodological hybridity, offering new directions for sustainable practice and cultural continuity in contemporary fashion design.

Aesthetic Properties and Visual Impact: The garment's aesthetic centers on the reinterpretation of traditional Hanbok elements, particularly the *otgoreum* (ribbon), which serves as a focal point of visual balance and symbolic elegance (Geum & Delong, 1992). The design emphasizes duality—combining softness with structure, fluidity with geometry—echoing the visual harmony historically embedded in the traditional Hanbok. The integration of modern textures and finishes enhances the tactile and visual contrast, producing a look that is both poetic and contemporary.

Methods: Process, Technique and Execution: To amplify the inherent beauty of Hanbok, the design process applied a series of rigorous, deliberate techniques rooted in traditional Korean philosophies. The process began with zero-waste patternmaking, a method that aligns with Hanbok's traditional fabric efficiency. A continuous panel layout was constructed using a thoughtful combination of black silk Habotai, knitted textiles, and Ramie fabric, each selected for their material contrast, sustainability profile, and cultural resonance. To achieve a refined and fitted silhouette, areas requiring contouring were draped using mock-up stretch fabric. The remaining areas were draped with woven fabric (see figure 1 for pattern layout). The contoured

patterns were transferred to a Brother KL-116 knitleader mylar sheet; the pieces were knitted on a Brother KH-970 manual knitting machine following the draped patterns. Two distinct yarn types were used to enhance both texture and structure: the central front and back panels were knitted with a silk/wool blend, the remaining pieces contained a mohair/wool blend to add loft and visual depth. To reinterpret traditional embellishment, laser etching was used in place of *Geumbak* (gold leaf ornamentation). A custom vector design of the *Bonghwang* (see figure 2)—the mythical phoenix representing virtue, peace, and grace—was digitally rendered and laser etched into the surface (see figure 3), embedding symbolic depth into the garment through contemporary precision. For ornamentation, a 3D-printed *norigae* was designed and used the remaining silk yarn as the tassel; this modernized accessory pays homage to the symbolic functions of traditional Hanbok jewelry while demonstrating digital fabrication. Each stage of the design process underwent iterative prototyping, followed by critical assessment for aesthetic harmony, material behavior, and cultural sensitivity. The final artifact demonstrates a high degree of technical execution and conceptual depth, merging heritage with innovation in a tangible, wearable form.

Cohesion: All aspects of the design—from concept to execution—are unified by the project’s central inquiry: how heritage can be re-contextualized through cross-cultural design methodologies. Material choices, form, and symbolism are in constant dialogue, resulting in a cohesive artifact that reflects both deep cultural inquiry and experimental making.

Design Contribution: This work presents a novel contribution to the fields of fashion and design by offering a hybridized design model that combines traditional Korean forms with Western sustainability practices and digital techniques. Through the lens of collaboration, the design process not only enabled the Korean designer to re-engage with traditional aesthetics but also generated new frameworks for interpreting heritage through contemporary methods. Rooted in tacit knowledge and reflective practice, the project demonstrates how culturally grounded garments can be transformed without erasure, offering practical strategies for designers seeking to balance innovation with cultural continuity. The final outcome is more than a garment—it is a platform for cross-cultural education, research, and design innovation. Looking ahead, this model holds potential for broader application in design pedagogy, sustainability curricula, and heritage-based industries, inviting future explorations into how globalized design practices can operate ethically and meaningfully within cultural traditions.

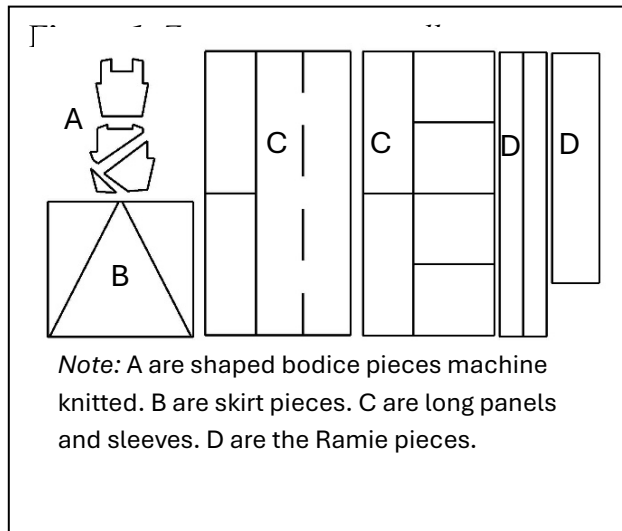
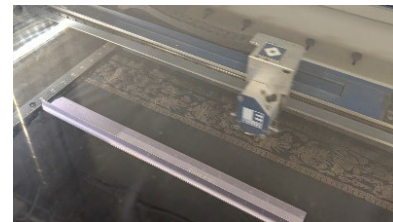


Figure 2: Vector File created for laser etching.



Figure 3: Laser Printing the vector file on black silk.



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