

# Interpretation of the Bulgarian National Costume in the Collections of Native Designers and Fashion Brands

Tanyo Hristov, Margaret Sivova

**Abstract** — The report presents a survey among Bulgarian designers, fashion brands and trademarks creating national style clothing. The selection was made according to the following groups of criteria: First group – conceptual - imagery component, which reflects what idea and essence are embedded in the philosophy and positioning of the brand; The second group - means of expression used in the design of garments, namely: shape and silhouette of the products; proportions; colour design; construction solutions; type and structure of the textile materials used; type of ornamentation; consumer segment. The significance of the brand and its role in forming national consciousness, preserving and promoting the sustainable elements of the Bulgarian national costume are described.

**Keywords** — Fashion brand, fashion design, fashion collection, Bulgarian national costume.

## INTRODUCTION

Ethnic style, as one of the main stylistic trends in fashion, has in recent years become not only another fashion trend, but also a social tool that is designed to remind of the importance of preserving national characteristics in today's globalized world.

Today fashion is returning to true values, designers draw inspiration from folk traditions. The national costume is comfortable, simple, logical and individual. The new interpretation of the traditional costume is achieved through the application of modern technologies, the use of new diverse materials, fresh ideas and images.

Traditional Bulgarian folk costume, as an object of national culture, is closely linked to the history and traditions of our people. With its unique ornaments, colours and motifs, it represents an inexhaustible creative source for specialists in the field of designing and making contemporary clothing models.

The aim of the study is to analyze the collections of contemporary Bulgarian brands and fashion designers, who apply elements of the Bulgarian national costume in the design of their clothes, to determine the means of expression used to interpret the national style in contemporary products.

The accumulated database will serve to identify the

Bulgarian cultural code and identify trends in the design of high fashion clothing in national Bulgarian style.

## BULGARIAN FASHION BRANDS OFFERING PRODUCTS IN NATIONAL STYLE

Distinguishing features of contemporary garments built in ethnic style are the following:

- stylization based on folk costume;
- convenience;
- using natural materials;
- a straight or trapezoidal silhouette, emphasizing the waist, small volumes of the form;
- borrowing certain elements from national costume;
- use of embroidery, knitted elements, appliqués, cords, embroidery ornaments.

The selection of Bulgarian fashion brands working in the category "contemporary costume with a national identity" was made according to the following two sets of criteria:

- First group - conceptual component, which reflects what idea and essence are embedded in the philosophy and positioning of the brand;
- The second group - means of expression used in the design of products as a way to interpret the national style in contemporary clothing.

TABLE I presents some of the most popular Bulgarian brands and fashion designers, including in their assortment products with elements of Bulgarian national costume and offering a contemporary sound of traditional folk clothing.

TABLE I  
BULGARIAN BRANDS WORKING IN NATIONAL STYLE

Brand / Designer	Idea, philosophy of the company
1. „Askia“ [1]	The company's designers draw inspiration from the elegance and diversity of Bulgarian embroidery, from its artistic merits and transform them into contemporary clothing, enriching it with beautiful and original elements. "Askia" strives to use only natural fabrics such as linen, cotton, wool, etc. The clothes of the company have their own design, which accentuates the beauty of Bulgarian embroidery in everyday and formal wear.
2. „Vezba“ [2]	Vezba's main goal is to intertwine tradition with modern vision. Each stitch, colour, figure, composition symbolizes something specific, through which in the past people were able to express themselves without words. The brand's mission is to tell the story of the symbolism and meaning embedded in Bulgarian embroidery and bring it to contemporary clothing in an accessible way.

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3. „Ethno Bul Design“ [3]	Goal - restoring traditional Bulgarian motifs from the past by combining them with modern fashion concepts. In this way, every user will carry a piece of Bulgarian in his everyday life.		at least one garment with embroidery. The aim is to raise the self-esteem of Bulgarians, to promote clothes with Bulgarian embroidery in Bulgaria and abroad. Through the uniqueness of Bulgarian folklore, in particular Bulgarian embroidery, Bulgaria to be recognized worldwide.
4. „Diva Ethno Fashion“/ Dragomira Ognyanova [4]	Dragomira Ognyanova's clothes combine tradition and modernity, bringing Bulgarian embroidery to life. The designer successfully reveals the application of embroidery in contemporary fashion through her own design brand. Her conscious life is connected with the scales, embroidery, colours and fabrics. She researches, preserves and makes clothes with elements of Bulgarian embroidery from Elhovo so that they will not be forgotten and will be promoted.	10. Fashion house – Elena Hristova [10]	Offers women's boutique dresses and garments with folk elements. Elena Hristova's ethnic clothes evoke pride, strength, freedom, elegance, uniqueness and uniqueness. The designs are inspired by folk art. The designer's message is for everyone who chooses her clothes to carry Bulgaria not only in their heart.
5. „Moriana“ / Moriana Filipova [5]	What is authentic about her designs is the weaving of Bulgarian embroidery into contemporary garments, allowing the tradition to be preserved for the future. The designer embroiders her own clothes by hand. She draws inspiration from different parts of Bulgaria, but her latest collection is inspired entirely by Sofia embroidery. The designer's designs are aimed at the modern working woman.	III. ANALYSIS OF COLLECTIONS OF BULGARIAN BRANDS WITH SUSTAINABLE ELEMENTS OF THE BULGARIAN NATIONAL COSTUME INCORPORATED IN THE DESIGN SOLUTION	
6. „Veza“ / Boyka Panteleva [6]	"Veza" is a unique symbiosis between "modern then, to modern today". Designer Boyka Panteleva creates modern garments that carry history and traditions. It has a unique and innovative approach to combining the traditional with the contemporary and modern. The concept of "Veza" is to create a unique and limited single item, perfectly made of quality and natural fabrics combined with authentic elements of traditional Bulgarian costumes. The offered author models are different, unique and comfortable. Stylish, with modern cuts and looks. At the same time, they are traditional because of the authentic elements on them. Cleverly embedded embroidery shows hidden messages.	An in-depth study has been made of the means of expression /artistic expressions of composition/ used in the design of the products of the respective brand from TABLE I based on the following criteria: shape and silhouette; proportions; colour and colour design; construction; type and structure of textile material; ornament; additions to the costume; assortment. As a demonstration of the analysis carried out according to the above criteria, data for the following brands are provided: <b>Company "Veze" and "Fashion House - Elena Hristova"</b> .	
7. „Meme More“ / Veneta Raykova [7]	The products of the brand "Meme More" carry the Bulgarian spirit and beauty of the Bulgarian woman and combine classics and style. The foundation of the brand is the history, the strength of the Bulgarian spirit, the cultural and ethnographic heritage of Bulgaria, combined with the modern understanding of style. The fashion brand unites symbolism, colours and embroidery, cut, look and high quality fabrics into a single whole. The designer combines the timeless from the world catwalk with the timeless from the beautiful Bulgarian costume. The clothes are distinguished by the fact that the embroidery is interpreted with a technique to complement the print with embroidery.	<i>A. Distinguishing features of women's clothing in national style of the company "Veze" (Fig. 1):</i>	
8. „Veze“ [8] Designer Nikolaeta Palakarcheva, Master of needlework Daniela Valkova.	"Veze" main mission is to add symmetry, rhythm and contrast to contemporary urban design from hand-embroidered folk embroideries. All items are fully hand embroidered and are sewn directly onto the fabric from which the garment is subsequently cut and sewn. This way of working preserves the authenticity of the embroidery and gives uniqueness to each model, which is why it takes several weeks to make a model. Wool, silk or cotton threads are used for embroidery. "Veze" mission is to find the place of an age-old tradition in contemporary styling.	<b>Silhouette:</b> erect, semi-erect and trapezoidal.	
9. „Richmart“ [9]	The philosophy of "Richmart" is that Bulgarian embroidery is unique and deserves its fame. The desire is every Bulgarian to put in his wardrobe	<b>Shape:</b> rectangle; trapezoid.	
		<b>Volume:</b> moderate fit to the figure at the bodice; classic fit or voluminous bottom;	
		<b>Sleeves:</b> Attached - single seamed long close fitting or with moderate volume and slight set at the oval and cuff; sleeveless or short sleeved dresses are permitted; raglan sleeves.	
		<b>Constructional features:</b> the modelling is based on modern basic constructions. Emphasizing the waist by horizontal shear or vertical embossed seams; transformed shoulder and waist rolls to give silhouette shape.	
		<b>Details:</b> flounces, flat, collar-neck in tunic dress.	
		<b>Decorative elements:</b> handmade authentic or author's stylized Bulgarian embroidery, positioned around the neckline, along the front middle vertically, along the front of the bodice centrally, along the hemline, rarely asymmetrically in the front. Decorative seams - kept to a minimum, exactly in colour with the base material.	
		<b>Fabrics:</b> high quality, natural fabrics - wool, cotton, silk, linen; artificial and synthetic silk - viscose, polyester.	
		<b>Colour range:</b> for fabrics - white, black, ecru, red, burgundy, green, purple, blue, silver, natural linen. For embroidery threads - white, red, yellow, blue, light green, ecru, light red, silver, grey, brick, dark brown, orange, dark blue, wine red, butter green.	
		<b>Fabric design:</b> monochrome; classic fabrics without colorful patterns and prints.	
		<b>Waist:</b> Mostly in its natural place or slightly elevated.	
		<b>Length:</b> of dress or skirt - just above/below or mid-knee; maxi; midi; asymmetrical.	

**Accessories:** belts with tails, with tassels, with hand embroidered authentic or stylized embroidery.

**Assortment:** casual, cocktail, evening dresses; blouses, tunics, jumpsuits.



Fig. 1. Assortment of company "Veze" [8]

*B. Distinguishing features of women's clothing in national style of "Fashion house - Elena Hristova" (Fig. 2):*

**Brand motto:** "Carry Bulgaria not only in your heart!"

**Silhouette:** Mainly semi-fitted or fitted, with the waistline accentuated by a belt. A-line silhouette.

**Shape:** rectangle, triangle, trapezoid.

**Volume:** close fit to the figure in the bodice; classic fit and flare to the hem in the skirt, or volume obtained by a set or baste at the waist.

**Sleeves:** Attached - one seam long or  $\frac{3}{4}$  with moderate volume; long tapered from elbow line; sleeveless or short sleeve dresses.

**Structural features:** modern basic structural foundations are used. Sufficiently snug fit of the bodice to the figure on account of the application of minimal structural additions for freedom; shoulder and waist seams transformed into vertical relief seams. A horizontal cut along the waistline contributes to an X-shaped silhouette. Original design solutions in shaping the neckline. The asymmetry in some of the models highlights the dynamics of the form.

**Details:** flounces; flat; cuts; asymmetrically placed deep slits at skirts; asymmetrically shaped necklines; additional built-in belt second maxi-length skirt, not closing in front.

**Decorative elements:** hand-made original embroideries, ornaments, stylized elements and folk motifs mainly using gaitan in white or black, serge shirring. They are made on the neckline, on the front of the bodice, on the hem and the open parts of the skirt and sleeves.

**Fabrics:** quality soft natural fabrics - cotton, silk, linen; artificial silk; combined fabrics.

**Colour range:** for fabrics - deep warm colours - bright yellow, red, orange, pink, ochre; deep cool colours - violet, sky blue, dark blue; neutral green and purple. Extremely rare - black. For embroidery - white, black, golden.

**Fabric design:** monochrome fabrics without prints.

**Waist:** In its natural place.

**Length:** of dress or skirt: short version - from mid-thigh to just above or to the knee; long version - to the ankle. Asymmetrical hem shaping is also found. For trousers - long or short.

**Accessories:** belts with ponytails, beautiful flowers in the hair, wide-brimmed hats in tone with the models.

**Assortment:** casual, cocktail, evening, formal and strictly formal dresses; two-piece suits - blouse/pants, jacket/dress, blouse/skirt; jumpsuits.

Fig. 2, Fig. 3 and Fig. 4 present part of the first collection of "Fashion House - Elena Hristova" "Ethno Dream", built in three themes: Classics in Ethno, Business in Ethno and Ethno Summer.



Fig. 2. Ethno Dream Collection - Classics in Ethno [11]



Fig. 3. Ethno Dream Collection - Business in Ethno [12]



Fig. 4. Ethno Dream Collection - Ethnic Summer [13]

#### IV. CONCLUSION

Based on the analysis it can be concluded that the reflection of the Bulgarian national style in the contemporary fashion products offered by Bulgarian designers and brands is achieved through a combination of different means of expression:

- Silhouette - constructive solutions based on the traditional form of the authentic Bulgarian national costume, skillfully woven into modern constructions used in the design of clothing;
  - Combining traditional colours with current fashion colours;
  - Decorating the products by handmade or machine-made authentic or original stylized embroidery ornaments;
  - Complementing the costume with accessories borrowed or as close as possible to the authentic ones.
- By combining modern design with national traditions,

unique garments can be created that give a contemporary sound to traditional folk costume and accentuate Bulgarian national identity.

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