

LIFE

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EMBROIDERY

Ethnic art gets designer boost

Chinese fashion brand Eve takes inspiration from the Miao group to add a rare touch to its products. This, in turn, is helping an old tradition survive. Sun Yuanqing reports.

Tucked away in the mountains, Jidao village is a three-hour drive from Guiyang, the provincial capital of Guizhou province. Here, the ethnic Miao people maintain their traditional lifestyle. They live in wooden houses, preserve meat in early winter and hold gatherings at the riverside to remember their ancestors every year.

On the face of it, all this might seem to have no connection with high fashion, but the community has been a source of inspiration for many designers and fashion houses, including fashion brand Eve.

The Chinese brand recently made a trip to the village to make an advertising campaign for its 2017 spring/summer collection, which features Miao embroidery.

Inspired by the sea, the collection features shades of blue on its suits, sweaters and coats. A smattering of embroidery adorns the classic suit silhouette.

The women's collection includes sleek *qipao* (traditional Chinese women's dress) and dresses that highlight nature-inspired embroidery.

While traditional Miao embroidery is intricate, Wu Chahui, creative director of Eve's menswear line, says the brand has simplified it to cater to customers' modern-day needs.

"Traditional Miao embroidery is usually very rich and exaggerated, while modern menswear is understated. So we try to use it (the embroidery) in a selective, moderated way," he says.

"We want to revive this heritage by offering it to an urban clientele, and we hope this tradition will live on."

Eve has been working on a project to preserve Miao embroidery over the past 15 years with a dedicated team that documents the traditional craftsmanship.

It has established a network of craftspeople and their work, and this has been used extensively in their collections and shown at exhibitions and runway shows in Milan, London and Paris in recent years.

Separately, Eve has also formed an alliance with local brands, so that all its members can make use of the database.

In a related development, it has also helped build a museum in Guizhou to exhibit the works of the embroiderers.

Xia Hua, founder and chairwoman of the Eve Group, says: "These people are preserving their heritage with their hands. I want to share their craftsmanship with the world,"



Models for Eve show off the brand's new collections with embroidery patterns inspired from ethnic Miao works in Jidao village, Guizhou province. PHOTOS PROVIDED TO CHINA DAILY

BOOK

Entertaining romp through a century of perfumes



Perfume: A Century of Scents, by Lizzie Ostrom, examines influences of perfumes. AP

By ASSOCIATED PRESS

Fragrance has always been wrapped in social and economic issues, controversy, memories and history as Lizzie Ostrom so persuasively shows in the lively *Perfume: A Century of Scents*.

The 10 chapters — each devoted to a single decade — examine 10 different perfumes that influenced that decade.

A sharply focused introduction to each chapter further puts the decade — and its fragrance fashion — in perspective.

Advertising fragrances is not a new idea.

While *Perfume* is by no means an encyclopedia about

scents, it is a solid pop culture guide that incorporates fragrance fashion into the shifting tides of society.

Many of the perfumes mentioned through the decades have disappeared — a mere whiff of a memory — no matter how popular at the time. This is true not just of those from the 1920s but also those manufactured in the 1990s. Others such as Chanel No. 5 have been classics from the first day and remain favorites of all generations.

Advertising fragrances is not a new idea.

In 1908, the British firm Gos-

nell's launched a hot air balloon shaped like the bottle of its Cherry Blossom to fling out flyers over crowds — an idea that seems modest next to perfume fountains that threw fragrance into the air during the Victorian era in England. What has changed is the rise of the internet and certain sites that curate myriad scents in one-stop shopping, making exotic perfumes even more accessible.

Celebrities' influence on fragrance also goes back decades. Compare the Gibson Girls of the 1900s mentioning the "utterly obscure" Poinsettia with the avalanche of current

pop stars such as Taylor Swift or Justin Bieber hawking their scents.

Technology and chemistry gave companies new ways to produce scents, taking it away from the rich and elite of society and making it available to the masses.

Ostrom shows that each decade had certain scents that define it.

During the global depression of the 1930s, Joy by Jean Patou, "the most expensive scent ever released," was introduced and is still available today.

World War II brought a new

challenge as many perfumeries urged their customers to "treasure your last pinch" of fragrance as advertisers urged against buying until after the war.

As a result, France ceased being the epicenter of fragrance production as more began to be manufactured in America.

The return of fragrance during the 1940s was seen as a symbol of hope. That's a far cry from the "big, bad, loud-and-proud perfumes of the 1980s" when many restaurants put up signs banning Giorgio Beverly Hills, along with smoking.

Briefly

Tencent party for Victoria's Secret



Tencent held a party in Beijing to mark its live broadcast of the Victoria's Secret fashion show earlier this month. This is the second year that the platform has broadcast the Victoria's Secret show live. More than 10 million people viewed the show on Tencent this year. Supermodel Xi Mengyao, who walked the ramp for the show joined the afterparty.

These people are preserving their heritage with their hands. I want to share their craftsmanship with the world."

Xia Hua, founder, Eve Group

and to let it see the beauty of our country."

Xia was a teacher at the China University of Political Science and Law before founding the Eve Group in 1994.

Eve is best known for making men's suits, and it has dressed Chinese magnates Jack Ma and Liu Chuanzhi. The company now has five brands — Eve de Uomo, Notting Hill, Kevin Kelly, Jaques Pritt and Eve Cina.

The prices of its outfits range from a few hundred to more than 10,000 yuan (\$1400).

The group currently has more than 500 stores in China, including a designer space in Beijing's Parkview Green mall that showcases its collaborations with international and local designers.

The growing interest in Miao ethnic culture is also changing the lives of villagers.

In Jidao village, embroiderers now hold workshops to teach children the craft.

There are about 50 embroiderers in the village, with the oldest being more than 80 years old.

With regard to overseas exposure, the embroiderers were taken by Chinese designer Xie Feng to Paris Fashion Week in 2012 to exhibit their skills.

As their craftsmanship has gained more exposure over the years, orders have flooded in.

Now, looking to secure their future, the embroiderers have formed a foundation, and they contribute 3 percent of their revenues to it.

The foundation now has a fund of around 6,000 yuan, which they intend to use to promote their art, says Chen Qin, an embroiderer and one of those behind the foundation.

"It (the foundation) is like a seed. We will use it to spread our heritage," she says.

Contact the writer at sunyuanqing@chinadaily.com.cn

French store's festive flare



Galerie Lafayette Beijing unveiled its Christmas decorations recently. They tell a story of how polar bears are leaving their melting homes in the North Pole. It also features an installation that shows polar bears climbing a replica of the Louvre Museum.

Rolex puts out new models



Rolex has unveiled two new models for the festive season. The Oyster Perpetual Pearlmaster 39 highlights its use of rose gold and diamonds, while the Oyster Perpetual Cosmograph Daytona uses its patented Cerachrom bezel.

Larusmiani's first China store

Italian luxury brand Larusmiani opened its first China store at Beijing SKP mall recently. The store has a complete ready-to-wear lifestyle collection, which is handmade in Tuscany, in Italy. It also has men's accessories like grooming kits, smoking accessories, collector knives and other special items.

Bottega Veneta's 2017 collection

Bottega Veneta introduced its 2017 spring/summer collection recently. The new collection features innovative fabrics and reinterprets the brand's signature butterfly decoration. The brand also introduced 15 handbags for the new season.

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