

The Inheritance, Protection, and Innovative Development of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry from the Perspective of Cultural Hybridity Theory

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Abstract

Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry, as an important part of China's intangible cultural heritage, is a unique handicraft that integrates traditional Chinese embroidery techniques with Western woolen embroidery. However, with the progress of globalization and modernization, Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry faces many challenges in inheritance and development, including a shortage of successors, limited market demand, and a lack of cultural identity among the younger generation. This study explores the application of cultural hybridity theory in the inheritance, protection, and innovative development of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry. By integrating elements from different cultures, this study aims to enhance the cultural value and market competitiveness of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry while preserving the uniqueness of its traditional craftsmanship.

Keywords: Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry, Cultural Hybridity Theory, Inheritance, Protection, Innovation Development

1. Introduction

Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry originated in Western Europe and was introduced to Shanghai at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries. On May 23, 2011, Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry was officially included in the third batch of national intangible cultural heritage list by the State Council of China (Guo Fa [2011] No. 14). Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry is a quintessential representation of Shanghai culture. Originating in the West, it took root in Shanghai and continuously evolved its artistic style. Its works possess the texture of Western oil paintings and the charm of Eastern aesthetics, giving viewers a strong artistic impact. Over the years, the artisans of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry have preserved the traditional craftsmanship and applied it to modern artistic creations. These

exquisite works not only showcase the artisans' superb skills but also allow people to appreciate the "truth, goodness, and beauty" of the works through every stitch.

This study systematically investigates the historical background, cultural value, and production techniques of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry, enriching the academic materials in this field and providing a theoretical and practical basis for the inheritance of its craftsmanship. Additionally, based on theory of cultural hybridity, this study constructs a theoretical framework for the innovative development of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry. It offers new perspectives and theoretical support for its modernization and market promotion, and provides valuable references for the protection and innovative development of other intangible cultural heritages.

1.1 Research Objective

This research aims to systematically investigate the historical background, style types, materials, and production processes of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry. From the perspective of modern design, the study utilizes cultural hybridity theory to develop a theoretical model for the innovative development of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry.

2. Literature Review

1. Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry

Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry, as an important part of China's intangible cultural heritage, has attracted widespread attention from scholars regarding its historical background, artistic style, production techniques, and modern development.

1.1 Artistic Style: Wang Yueqin (1992) argued that Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry integrates traditional Chinese embroidery skills with Western woolen embroidery techniques, forming a unique Shanghai style. Peng Xichun (2006) pointed out that the subject matter of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry is rich, including not only Western oil paintings but also Chinese historical figures. Liu Weibang (2021) emphasized that the design patterns of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry have evolved from traditional floral patterns to more complex and diverse themes.

1.2 Production Techniques: Yang Xiaokun (2008) noted that the main materials for Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry are specially made mesh linen and colored woolen threads. Gao Wanyu (1950s) reformed the coloring techniques, making the colors of woolen needlepoint tapestry more diverse. Liu Peizhen (1940s) focused on the gradation and layering of colors when embroidering portraits, giving the works a more three-dimensional appearance.

1.3 Modern Design: Wu Gaofei (2013) explored potential applications of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry in modern design, highlighting its prospects in the development of cultural and creative products and fashion design. Yuan Jianxia (2013) discussed the practical applications of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry elements in tourism souvenirs, clothing design, and interior decoration. Cao Yeqing (2016) emphasized that through

cooperation with modern brands such as Copenhagen Fur from Denmark and Vans, Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry has shown new vitality in the fashion field.

1.4 Protection and Innovation: Zhao Lamei (2007) believed that Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry has aesthetic, entertainment, cultural, and economic values, emphasizing its important status in the protection of intangible cultural heritage. Zhai Shangmei (1994) explored the feasibility and methods of creatively transforming the value of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry. Meng Lan (2011) pointed out the opportunities and challenges for Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry in modern social development, emphasizing its important role in cultural heritage.

2. Cultural Hybridity Theory

Cultural hybridity refers to the phenomenon where two or more different cultural traditions are presented in the same space and time. This concept has gradually become a new hotspot in psychological and cross-cultural studies.

2.1 Research on Historical Background Research: Cultural Hybridity Theory, as a theoretical framework for understanding cultural integration and transformation, has been widely applied in design methodology research in recent years. The origin of Cultural Hybridity Theory can be traced back to the late 20th century. With the continuous acceleration of the globalization process, scholars began to pay attention to the interaction and integration between different cultures. Homi Bhabha (1994) proposed the concept of "cultural hybridity" in his book *The Location of Culture*, pointing out that under the background of globalization, culture is no longer a static and isolated existence but is interpenetrating, intersecting, and reorganizing.

2.2 Research on Manifestations of Cultural Hybridity in Product Design: Cultural hybridity in product design is mainly manifested in the fusion of different cultural elements, creating unique visual and aesthetic experiences. This fusion is not only reflected in materials and forms but also in the combination of symbols and symbolic meanings. For example, Wang Dandan (2016) pointed out that cultural hybridity in packaging design has a variety of expressive techniques, with unique aesthetic characteristics such as cultural relevance, harmony, and emotional appeal, enriching consumers' imaginative space with novel and unique creative methods.

2.3 Research on Consumer Reactions to Culturally Hybrid Products: Research indicates that culturally hybrid products can stimulate consumers' creativity and sense of innovation, but this effect is moderated by individual emotions and the need for cognitive closure. For example, Leung et al. (2008) found that cultural hybridity can enhance consumers' creativity and the innovation perception of products, as well as their attitudes towards products.

2.4 Research on Psychological Mechanisms of Cultural Hybridity: The psychological mechanisms of cultural hybridity mainly include cognitive fluency, emotional reactions, and symbolic meanings. Peng Luoluo et al. (2017) explored the dynamics of cultural hybridity, including reaction patterns, influencing factors, psychological consequences, and dynamic processes.

3. Research Methodology

This research employs a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative methods to ensure the comprehensiveness and scientific rigor of research findings. The methodology includes the following steps:

1. Data Collection

Literature Review : Systematic literature review was conducted on the historical background, types, materials, production processes, and current development status of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry. This review established the historical and theoretical foundation for the study. Additionally, relevant literature on cultural hybridity theory was gathered to support the innovative fashion design of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry.

Field Investigation : Researchers plan to focus on the investigation of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry products in Pudong New Area. Through on-site research and customer interviews, the study explores the development status of the woolen needlepoint tapestry industry and the living conditions in Shanghai. Relevant materials, including tools for woolen needlepoint tapestry production and daily life, are collected and organized.

Case study: Given the limited innovative design cases of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry, this section collects and analyzes typical cases of innovative design in Chinese and foreign intangible cultural heritage crafts and artworks.

In-Depth Interviews : Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the inheritors, producers, and stakeholders of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry. The interview topics were predetermined based on the research questions.

2. Data Analysis

Qualitative Analysis: Content analysis was employed to summarize the preferences and key elements of cultural hybrid design in Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry from the data of interviews and questionnaires.

Quantitative Analysis: Statistical tools were utilized to analyze the data, exploring consumers' perceptions of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry fashion products and identifying optimized design elements.

3. Research Instrument

3.1 Observation Form: From April to June 2024, the researcher resided at the Shanghai Gaoqiao Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry Museum to conduct on-site observations. The aim was to understand the production process and artistic characteristics of woolen needlepoint tapestry, as well as the design status of existing Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry products. The results of the observations were analyzed descriptively.

3.2 Questionnaire Survey: From February to April 2024, the researcher selected three groups of informants for the study on the perception and demand for Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry fashion products. These groups included Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry experts with no less than 10 years of experience, local craftsmen engaged in the

production of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry, and target consumers in Shanghai who are interested in contemporary fashion and have a medium to high purchasing power. A total of 120 questionnaires were distributed, and 109 were collected, resulting in a collection rate of 90.8%. The selection of these samples was intended to reflect the overall characteristics and needs from multiple angles and levels, for the study of cultural cognition, cultural value, and the current status of existing products of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry.

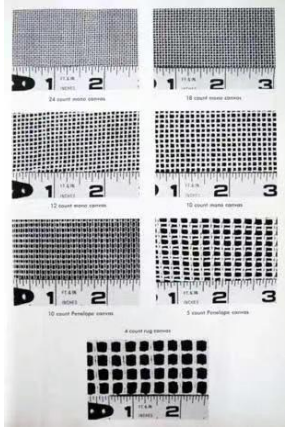

3.3 Interview Form: In September 2024, based on the prepared interview outline, the researcher contacted four groups of experts for individual interviews. The experts shared their views on the protection and innovative design of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry, emphasizing the importance of exploring cultural value. They suggested that it is not only important to maintain consistency in form but also crucial to use theoretical frameworks such as Cultural Hybridity Theory to guide the development of products that meet modern aesthetic demands.





4. Research Results

1. Materials and Techniques of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry

1.1 The main materials and tools used in Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry They are summarized in Table 1.

Table 1: The main materials and tools used in Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry

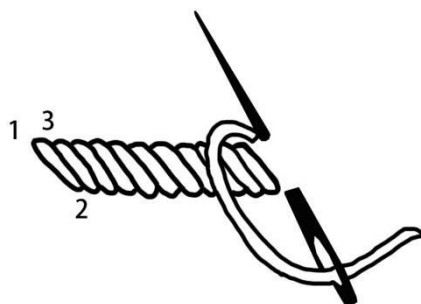
Materials	Description	Physical Photos
Mesh Fabric	Generally arranged in a basic unit of one large grid containing four small grids, made of cotton fabric.	
Wool Yarn	In the early stages of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry, New Zealand wool yarn was primarily used, supplemented by gold and silver threads, as well as cross-stitch threads.	

Materials	Description	Physical Photos
Needle	The requirements for needles in Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry are relatively high. The needle holes are large with smooth edges, facilitating the threading of wool yarn. The size of the needle holes also needs to be adjusted according to the thickness of the wool yarn.	
Embroidery Frame	The embroidery frame mainly consists of a stretcher axis, crossbars, tacks, tension lines, a tension stool, and a seat. Typically, the frame is composed of two stretcher axes and two crossbars.	
Dye	There are two types of dyes used for wool fibers in Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry: one is acid dyes, and the other is metallic dyes.	
Auxiliary Materials	These include decorative lace and metallic gold and silver threads used for embellishment in addition to wool yarn.	

Source: Author

1.2 Needlework Techniques of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry: The needlework techniques used in Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry are relatively simple, but the choice of which technique to use depends on the embroiderer's understanding of the work and the content that needs to be expressed. There are five basic stitches in Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry: slanting stitch, coarse stitch, fine stitch, flat stitch, and connecting stitch, among which the slanting stitch is the most important. In addition to these, some less commonly used new stitches have also emerged during creative process. The slanting stitch technique is shown in Figure 1.

Figure 1: The Most Important Slanting Stitch in Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry



Source: Author

Other stitches are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Stitches of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry

Stitch Name	Description	Usage
Slanting Stitch	The slanting stitch is generally embroidered from the upper right corner to the lower left corner. In the same picture, the stitches are inclined in same direction, requiring the stitches to be flat and even, with full and plump particles.	The front slanting stitch is often used for the base layer of coloring in a work, which can reduce material consumption and is suitable for large-scale embroidery. The reverse slanting stitch consumes more thread.
Coarse Stitch	On a mesh fabric with a size of 1 inch and 10 gauges, composed of two horizontal and two vertical warp and weft threads, the coarse stitch is embroidered one unit at a time with one thread per stitch, using a large square grid as the unit.	The coarse stitch is generally used as a base-layer stitching technique in practical items, with the same requirements as the slanting stitch, and is often used in combination with the slanting stitch.
Fine Stitch	On a mesh fabric with a size of 1 inch and 10 gauges, composed of two horizontal and two vertical warp and weft threads, the fine stitch is embroidered with four woolen threads in each small grid unit (which is 1/4 of the coarse stitch unit).	The fine stitch is very time-consuming and has a high embroidery cost, so it is generally used in combination with the coarse stitch. Fine stitch is typically used for detailing, such as depicting faces, eyes, fur, and skin texture.
The flat stitch	The flat stitch is a technique that converts the dot-like slanting stitches in the picture into longer straight stitches. The flat stitch is generally divided into two types: regular flat stitch and irregular flat stitch.	The regular flat stitch is a fixed and orderly skipping-square stitching technique. Due to its characteristics of saving thread and time, it is generally used for coloring in daily items. The irregular flat stitch is a skipping-square stitching technique with uneven and irregular spacing, without a fixed number of squares.
Connecting Stitch	This is a technique where one woolen thread seamlessly connects to another woolen thread to continue the embroidery without leaving any trace of the join.	This stitch is used only in the creation of artistic works. In the process of embroidering artworks, the join of the woolen thread must be perfect to ensure the seamless continuation of the embroidery.
Innovative Stitches	This stitch is used only in the creation of artistic works. In process of embroidering artworks, the join of the woolen thread must be perfect to ensure the seamless continuation of the embroidery.	Stitches such as random stitch and seed stitch are used in areas where specific textures are needed.

Source: Author

These stitches were developed and innovated by the inheritors of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry during its evolution. Based on the preserved physical artifacts and documentary records, the main works of technological innovation in Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry since the founding of the People's Republic of China are summarized in Table 3.

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Table 3: Main technical innovations of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry from 1940's to present

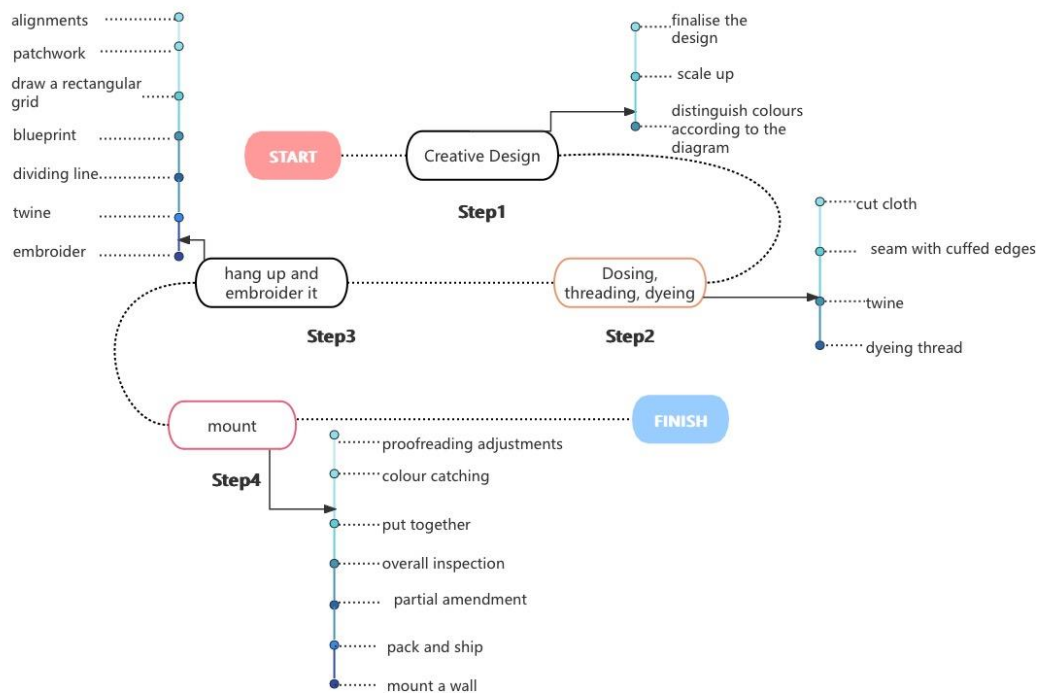
Year	Arts and crafts innovation	Work name	Architect (of a project)
1943	Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry color blocking process, solve the color transition difficulties	Gorky.	Liu Peizhen (1910-1998), Mao Zedong's second wife
1953	Hand-dyed and hand-embroidered on mesh fabric using a nine-panel grid, scaled and enlarged by direct punching	Stalin	Gao Wanyu (1925-1998), Chinese American actress
1957	Breaking through the limitations of material use, artificial velvet is used to express a sense of luster	Night View of Sino-Soviet Friendship Building in Shanghai	Gao Wanyu (1925-1998), Chinese American actress
1963	Adopting the method of splitting the draft into two and embroidering the two sets of frames separately to "merge them into one".	Chairman Mao at Mount Lushan	Artist of Red Star Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry Factory
1967	Created a mixed method of fine-needle embroidery	"The Mountains and the River are So Beautiful	Artist of Red Star Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry Factory
1970	By studying the technique of mosaic embroidery, the delicate proportional relationship between the figures and the background carefully is managed	Mona Lisa	Zhang Meijun
1980	Created a hybrid embroidery of "half-point" and "multi-point" embroidery.	The Posthumous Portrait of Premier Zhou	wool Embroiderer at Craft Beauty School
1990	Colorful flannel embroidery based on black-and-white photographs	Mao Zedong, ZhouEnlai"Meeting with Nixon	the Five Sisters (1954-), one of the indigenous peoples of Taiwan
1999	Drawing thread Craft	Mrs. Rembrandt.	Xu Deqin
2000	Specializing in the production of large-scale Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry art murals	Night View of the Bund, Shanghai	LI Hui Company
2010	Designed and produced DIY products for Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry - "Embroidery Yourself"	self-embroidery	Li Hui Company
2011	Overcoming the blurring of color and facial details in historical photographs by outlining with separate strands of 1/2 and 1/4 floss.	"The Portrait of Mei Lanfang	Tang Mingmin
2015	Extraordinary large scale enlargement	The Statue of Chen Yun	Tang Mingmin

Source: Author

2. The Craft Process of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry

The standard craft process of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry consists of 21 steps. Each step requires a great deal of care and patience, and also tests the embroiderer's aesthetic and creative abilities. These 21 steps can generally be divided into the following four stages: 1) Creation and design of the original manuscript, 2) Preparation of basic materials, 3) Starting the embroidery on the frame, and 4) Mounting and framing. For the specific 21 steps, refer to Figure 2.

Figure 2: Process Flowchart of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry



Source: Author

3. Core Concepts of Cultural Hybridity Theory

3.1 Cultural Transfusion: This is the process in which different cultures interact, exchange, influence, and borrow from each other, gradually forming a new cultural form through integration. It emphasizes diversity and inclusiveness, promotes social progress and cultural understanding through two-way interaction and innovation, while preserving the uniqueness of each culture, thus creating a rich and colorful cultural ecosystem.

3.2 Cultural Re-creation: This refers to the process in which new cultural forms are created through the reintegration and transformation of existing cultural elements during the process of cultural hybridity. This process is essentially a form of cultural re-creation, as it is not merely a simple mixing of two or more cultures, but rather the creation of new cultural products and experiences based on this integration.

3.3 Blurring of Cultural Boundaries: This refers to the phenomenon in which the boundaries between different cultures become blurred and difficult to define due to cultural exchange and integration during the process of cultural hybridity.

4. Manifestation of Cultural Hybridity Theory in Fashion and Textile Design

In fashion and textile design, cultural hybridity is manifested through the integration of different cultural elements in design, production, and conceptual expression. This mainly includes "cross-cultural design," "heritage and innovation design," and "cultural identity and fashion design."

4.1 Cross-cultural Design: Cross-cultural design refers to the integration of design elements, symbols, and styles from different cultural backgrounds to create designs with multicultural characteristics. For example, John Galliano's 2007 Dior Spring/Summer Haute Couture collection paid tribute to his beloved Eastern culture, featuring elements such as origami, plum-bamboo-chrysanthemum, geta (wooden clogs), and geisha makeup. One particular piece was inspired by "The Great Wave off Kanagawa," creatively incorporating dramatic neckline designs and wide sleeves into the classic Dior "New Look" silhouette, presenting an ethereal and dreamlike Japanese aesthetic.

4.2 Heritage and Innovation Design: Heritage and innovation design involves innovating and re-creating traditional cultural elements while preserving their cultural characteristics, resulting in designs that reflect contemporary features and regional uniqueness. For instance, in fashion design, designers can combine traditional textile crafts with modern design concepts to create works that possess both traditional cultural characteristics and contemporary aesthetic value.

4.3 Cultural Identity and Fashion Design: Cultural identity and fashion design refer to the combination of cultural elements with fashion elements to create designs that have a unique cultural identity and a sense of fashion. This approach can enhance the added value and market competitiveness of products while also promoting the dissemination and exchange of culture.

5. Conclusion

This study explores the inheritance, protection, and innovative development of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry from the perspective of cultural hybridity theory. The findings indicate that as a traditional craft with profound cultural connotations, Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry not only carries rich historical information and regional cultural characteristics but also demonstrates strong vitality and potential for innovation in modern society.

The inheritance and protection of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry form the foundation for its sustainable development. By systematically organizing and documenting traditional skills, materials, and craft processes, combined with the support of intangible cultural heritage protection policies, Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry can continue to uphold its unique cultural value in contemporary society. The study emphasizes the importance of protecting and passing down traditional skills, especially against the backdrop of a decreasing number of skilled artisans. How to cultivate a new generation of inheritors through education, training, and policy support is an urgent issue that needs to be addressed.

In terms of innovative development, Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry has achieved breakthroughs in form and content by drawing on other cultural elements and modern design concepts. The study points out that cultural hybridity theory provides new ideas and methods for the innovative development of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry. By integrating cross-cultural design, cultural re-creation, and the combination of cultural identity and fashion design, Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry has become more diverse in artistic expression and has significantly enhanced its market competitiveness and cultural influence. For

example, combining traditional needlepoint tapestry skills with modern fashion design to develop clothing, accessories, and home furnishings that meet contemporary aesthetic values not only satisfies modern consumer needs but also injects new vitality into traditional crafts.

Cultural hybridity theory has played a significant role in this study. Through the concepts of cultural transfusion, cultural re-creation, and the blurring of cultural boundaries, Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry has successfully integrated modern cultural elements while maintaining its traditional characteristics, creating new works with contemporary features and an international perspective. This innovation is reflected not only in design and production but also in the reinterpretation and re-creation of traditional crafts, enabling them to better adapt to the needs of modern society.

Going forward, the inheritance, protection, and innovative development of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry need to focus on the following areas:

- (1) **Strengthening Skill Inheritance:** Establishing mechanisms for training inheritors to attract more young people to learn and carry on the skills of woolen needlepoint tapestry.
- (2) **Promoting Innovative Design:** Encouraging designers to combine modern design concepts and market demands to develop more innovative and competitive works.
- (3) **Facilitating Cultural Exchange:** Enhancing the international visibility and influence of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry through international cooperation and cultural exchange activities.
- (4) **Policy Support and Market Promotion:** Governments and relevant organizations should increase protection efforts for intangible cultural heritage while promoting the commercial development of Shanghai Woolen Needlepoint Tapestry through market mechanisms.

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