



Architecture Sheikhpura Fort as Preservation of Art

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Abstract

This study explores the integration of art preservation and fashion design, emphasizing architectural history, particularly the Sheikhpura Fort in Punjab, Pakistan. Originally constructed as a royal hunting lodge by Emperor Jahangir in 1607, Sheikhpura The fort represents the ultimate example of Mughal magnificence, which was later embraced by Sikh rulers and then by British officials. The fort demonstrates the evolution of architectural creativity and cultural shifts, ranging from Sikh frescoes and ornamental themes to Mughal miniature paintings and white marble constructions. By utilizing cutting-edge methods including resin art, laser acrylic embellishments, fabric painting, and 3D textile design, the research seeks to preserve these vanishing architectural features by turning them into fashionable clothing. The clothing, which will depict historical narratives and revive cultural heritage in a modern fashion, will draw inspiration from Sikh-era frescoes and Mughal-era hunting clothes. By fusing traditional art forms with contemporary design, the initiative creates wearable stories that increase awareness and appreciation for Pakistan's historical riches and highlights the significance of preserving neglected cultural places. It concludes by offering creative solutions for restoring and conserving historic structures. This approach fosters cultural pride and hereditary continuation while keeping conserving art and architecture through creativity.

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Introduction

Preserving art helps to protect our heritage (Sablier & Chapoulie, 2017). Incorporating art into fashion design adds technique, and combining fashion with art can create stunning designs by blending traditional art with modern fashion (Chudi-Duru, 2024). The present study focused to preserve and promote Pakistan's architectural and artistic heritage particularly the neglected Sheikhpura Fort through innovative fashion design. By drawing inspiration from Mughal and Sikh-era architecture, paintings, and cultural symbols, the study intended to reinterpret historical elements into wearable garments.

Sheikhpura Fort, known as a Royal hunting resort which is located in Sheikhpura city, Province Punjab, Pakistan, built by Emperor Jahangir in 1607. Jahangir built the fort as a hunting retreat and had many visits during his time period. This Mughal fort structure has walls that are approximately five meters high and half a meter thick. Sheikhpura Fort is a large rectangular structure with bastions at each corner. The fort has a large gateway that leads to the haveli (mansion) inside. The walls feature stone panels that have deteriorated over time (Bansal, 2015). The fort was used as an imperial camp as a royal residence, where the emperor would set up camp with his attendants and employees (Nadiem, Ihsan, 2011). He stayed in the fort due to his passion

جلد نمبر 06، شمارہ نمبر 01، جون-2025

for hunting. Jahangir used various methods to capture or kill wild animal. Jahangir, a skilled marksman, was fond of hunting and had killed 86 lions by age of 50 (Bhat, 2020).



Figure 1 (a): Shahi Gate



Figure (b): Defense minaret



Figure (c): Shahi residence fort

Source 1 (a, b): photograph by self.

Source c: <https://www.dawn.com/news/1129629>



Figure 2: Jahangir hunting with a falcon. Hunting scene with imperial portrait. From an album of Indian paintings.

Source: | Mughal paintings, Indian paintings, Harvard art museum (Discover over a million images of rare books, manuscripts, and other treasures from the Bodleian Libraries and Oxford college libraries)

This is one of the most impressive buildings within the fort, with incredibly strong structures and walls so thick that they have withstood the test of time. The Fragile fort, requires careful conservation and protection from damage. Our cultural heritage, to preserve it (Mughal, 2011). The Mughals created new styles and technologies for decorating and designing their grand buildings, reflecting their love for art and architecture. Mughal monuments are known for their unique architectural decorations, showcasing their artistic sense and refined taste in architecture. The decorations on Mughal buildings blend Iranian, Persian, Indian, and Islamic styles.



Figure a



Figure b



Figure c

Figure 3: 2Dimensional arches on wall, 3Dimensional balcony.

Source 3 (a, b, c): by self-photography.

Jahangir was a connoisseur of art, with a special fondness for miniature painting. During his reign, Mughal painting reached new heights of excellence. Inspired by the beauty of miniatures, Jahangir incorporated this art form into Mughal architecture, adorning white marble panels with intricate designs. Delicate patterns of plants, flowers, and vines were crafted with precision, often embellished with precious stones Koch,2014). This distinctive style, influenced by Persian art, featured curved lines, arabesque scrolls, and vibrant motifs. The use of birds, butterflies, and colorful flowers became a signature element of Mughal buildings, reflecting the era's refined aesthetic sense.” Jahangir's era marked a significant shift in architectural style. Red sandstone gave way to white marble, and a new technique called intarsia was introduced, where precious stones like topaz, onyx, and lapis lazuli were intricately inlaid to create exquisite patterns (Srivastava, 2001).

جلد نمبر 06، شمارہ نمبر 01، جون-2025



Figure 4 (a): Markhor, mountain goat, Jahangir period c. AD 1607, Salarjung Museum, Hyderabad

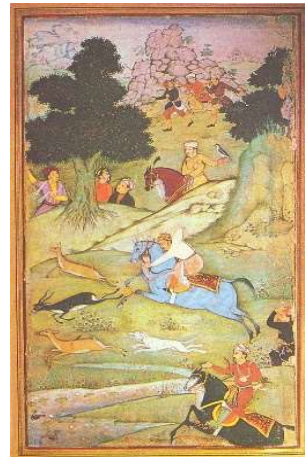


Figure b: Prince Salim hunting with his companion, Walters Art Gallery, Ballimore.



Figure c: Jahangir entertains Shah Abbas, circa 1618-1622. Gallery of Art Washington.

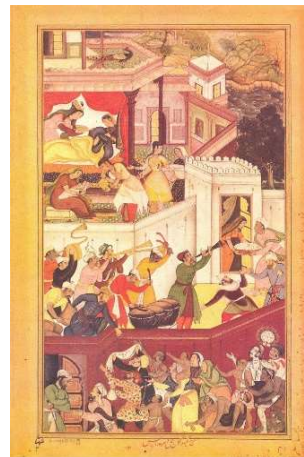


Figure d: Birth of Prince Salim (Akbar-nama), ca. 1590, Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

Source 4 (a, b, c, d): Srivastava, S. P. (2001). *Jahangir: A connoisseur of mughal art*. Abhinav Publications.

This period saw the construction of iconic buildings like the Tomb of Akbar and the Mausoleum of Itmad-ud-Daula. Jahangir's reign was a time of transition, moving from bold red sandstone to elegant marble surfaces, resulting in a more refined and sophisticated architectural aesthetic (Khan et al, 2024). Uncolored drawing, around 1620, Emperor Jahangir commissioned a series of paintings featuring himself. He praised two exceptional artists: Abu-l-Hasan and Ustad Mansur. Mansur, known as "Nadiru-l-Asr" (Wonder of the Age), was particularly skilled at drawing animals. One of his notable works is a painting of a beautiful falcon, which Jahangir himself

جلد نمبر 06، شمارہ نمبر 01، جون-2025

described in his memoirs. It also has paintings of a zebra and a ram that might be Mansur's work.” (Rice, 2011).



Figure 5: Sikh Haveli.

Source: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/151494312@N06/>

Over centuries, Punjab's craftsmanship has been shaped by various influences, traditions, and rituals, giving rise to a unique artistic expression. This craftsmanship has influenced the art found in buildings such as tombs, houses, neighborhoods, and forts. as rulers changed, they absorbed and transformed existing art styles, contributing their unique touch. The Mughals and Sikhs, in particular, made significant contributions to this evolving art form. Under Maharaja Ranjit Singh's patronage, the Sikhs developed their distinct style (Farooqi, 2019). In the 19th century, wall paintings became popular in Punjab, not just among royalty, but also among ordinary people. Rani Nikayan, who oversaw the Sikh haveli at Sheikhpura Fort, was a big supporter of art. Sikh queen Rani Nikayan was inspired by Mughal miniature paintings and architectural designs. She decorated the empty walls of the fort with wall paintings. She stayed there and had paintings made that reflected the Mughal lifestyle and time period. She decorated the living quarters with beautiful floral and pictorial designs, Frescoes within the fort. The Fort arches beautifully decorated with paints and different type of shapes. The Mughals loved Fresco painting, and this art form influenced the Sikh queens Nikayan, who then decorated walls with paintings (Kaur, & Viranjan, 2023).

جلد نمبر 06، شمارہ نمبر 01، جون-2025



Figure 6(a): Floral design or crockery full with fruits painted on wall. painted arches on wall.



Figure b: Arches on wall

Source 6 (a, b): by self-photography.

Fresco painting involves applying colors to fresh plaster while it's still wet. As the plaster dries, the colors become a part of the wall, creating a long-lasting and vibrant artwork. The colors look super vibrant and almost glow because they get absorbed into the plaster (Mahmud, 1981).



Figure a



Figure b



Figure c

Figure 7: Emperor or Empress view in wall painting.

Source 7 (a, b, c): by self-photography.

Methodology

The goal of this project was to preserve our art and legacy while also safeguarding local culture. The core concept of this work was designing clothing based on architectural sites of Mughal buildings that have been forgotten or ruined. These buildings are not well-known, and many people are unaware of their existence. The project aimed to raise awareness and revive this neglected treasure via drawing and fashion design.

Sample: While many architectural sites in Pakistan face deterioration, the project only focused on Sheikhpura Fort Lahore. For this project, special attention was given to Sheikhpura Fort in Punjab, with the intention of using its rich architectural and historical elements as the primary inspiration for design.

Visit: A visit to Sheikhpura fort was made on February 8, 2025.

Inspiration: Visiting to Sheikhpura Fort was like stepping back in time. Its magnificent design and excellent craftsmanship reflect the luxury and royal style of the that time. The fort's design, which includes distinct spaces for staff, troops, and animals, demonstrates how well thought out it was. The emperor riding in on an elephant, the soldiers at the gates, and the bustling activity within the fort all gave a glimpse of the busy life it once had. It made one wonder how the emperor and empress lived and what the apartments looked like in those days. One can clearly see the royal lifestyle and their luxurious way of life from the fort.

Sheikhpura Fort is made more beautiful and charming by the usage of white marble. Visitors may have an excellent perspective of the surroundings from the upper reaches of the fort, demonstrating that it was constructed on high ground for improved defense and visibility. Many historical buildings, monuments, and palaces from Emperor Jahangir's era serve as inspiration for this project. Mughal architecture, including wall murals, miniature artwork, arches, floral designs, and pictures of fruits, birds, and animals, was the main focus of the study. These features were used in fabric painting to create clothing designs based on what Mughal emperors wore, especially during hunting or special events. The main aim was to keep the memory of Mughal paintings alive and help people understand their importance, and not to confuse Mughal art with Sikh styles. Artwork from Sheikhpura Fort, built by Rani Nikayan who inspired by Mughal design had also been included in the project to show the lifestyle, decoration, and architecture of that time.

Figure 8 : The wall paintings feature the Maharani and other royal figures, reflecting the artistic style of that period. The emperor and the queen have set up their court on the rooftop, in the open air. This scene beautifully presented in a surrounding landscape (lush green) setting or beautiful architecture. The royal figures, including the Maharani, Mahraja are portrayed in a style similar to Mughal miniature paintings found in royal palaces.

جلد نمبر 06، شمارہ نمبر 01، جون-2025



Figure a



Figure b

Source 8 (a, b): self by photography.

Figure 9: The arches have floral designs or vines on their borders. Inside the arches, there are depictions of floral patterns, trees, vines, flowers, leaves, and plants. Bombax ceiba trees, also known as Shimul flowers, are painted inside the arches, and above them, beautiful red, orange or green flowers are depicted, which look stunning. The colors used are vibrant and gorgeous. Birds are sitting on the trees and sipping nectar from the flowers. There are three vines on both the right and left sides. A vase is in the middle with flowers inside it, and four birds are sitting next to the vase. The leaves on the vines are painted in green or zinc colors.



Figure a



Figure b



Figure c



Figure d

Source 9 (a, b, c, d): self by photography.

Figure 10: These painting upper side of room door. A painting above the door shows the Emperor and Empress hunting and enjoy nature, accompanied by their protective guards.



Figure a



Figure b

Source 10(a, b): self by photography.

Figure 11: Mughal lighted place for Diya.



جلد نمبر 06، شمارہ نمبر 01، جون-2025

Figure a

Figure b

Source 11 (a, b): self by photography.

Figure 12: Birds Painting with floral design or crockery.



Figure a



Figure b



Figure c



Figure d

Source 12 (a, b, c, d): self by photography.



جلد نمبر 06، شمارہ نمبر 01، جون-2025

Figure 13 (a): arches design on entrance wall or intricate design with paint.



Figure c: Fireplace room

Figure b: entrance door on right side upstairs very talented. They had designed hidden ventilation with small windows on the staircase side, cleverly concealed for airflow.



Figure d: The intricately carved marble wall features 3D lotus flowers, painted with precision. The surrounding fountain, adorned with birds, flowers, and bells, creates a stunning visual spectacle.

Source 13 (a, b, c, d): self by photography.

Fig 14: Second floor of Baradari with beautiful wood pillars intricate design with lotus flower.

compared to modern constructions.



Figure a



Figure b

Source 14 (a, b): self by photography.

Figure 15: Fort rooms balcony inside or outside area, The Emperor and Empress would sit in the balcony and enjoy the view outside. Wall arches were developed in both two-dimensional (2D) and three-dimensional (3D) models.



Source 15 (a, b, c): self by photography.

Hunting attire has been designed drawing inspiration from Shah Jahan's traditional hunting garments, incorporating architectural elements and painting motifs derived from Mughal structures. This approach aims to preserve and celebrate the richness of cultural heritage, ensuring that future generations remain connected to their historical roots. By blending Eastern artistic styles with contemporary fashion trends, the project seeks to encourage a renewed appreciation for traditional clothing. Sheikhpura Fort, as a significant cultural landmark, represents an integral part of Pakistan's historical legacy. Its preservation involves not only physical restoration—repairing damaged sections while retaining architectural integrity—but also creative reinterpretation through art and design. The preservation of art requires careful conservation to protect it from deterioration, and the same principle applies to safeguarding architectural heritage, including its textures and structural details. Fashion, when used as a medium of artistic expression, can contribute meaningfully to this preservation by incorporating architectural motifs into garments. This fusion creates visually compelling pieces that narrate the historical and aesthetic value of heritage structures. Through such interdisciplinary techniques, the fusion of art and fashion serves as an innovative platform to protect and promote cultural heritage.

Silhouettes Sample

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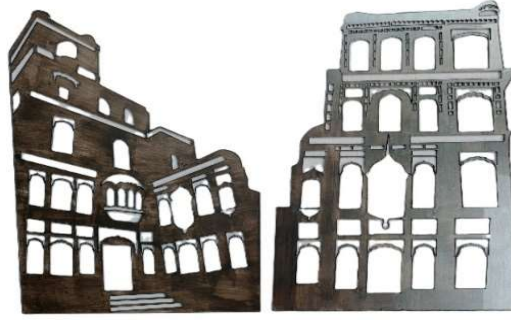


Figure 16: Lacer Acrylic as an accessory used in attire, Sheikhupura Fort design on acrylic sheet.

Source 16: self-photography.



Figure 17: 2D, 3D looks, Painted Pavilion, Embroidery.

Source: self-work.

Result

As a result of this project, clothing that captures the aesthetic and architectural beauty of Sheikhupura Fort was successfully produced. Through fashion design, several methods were employed to bring the fort's history to life.

Techniques:

Several techniques were applied to preserve and showcase the architectural and artistic heritage of Sheikhupura Fort through fashion design:



جلد نمبر 06، شمارہ نمبر 01، جون-2025

- Resin art was used to preserve and accentuate the intricate details of architectural elements from the fort. Resin was also incorporated into fabric development to achieve a stiff, architectural texture. Photographs of the fort were captured, preserved, and encapsulated in resin to protect image resolution and color quality. These resin-embedded visuals were displayed in album frames or as decorative pieces. Additionally, resin was used to craft jewelry and accessories featuring silhouettes inspired by the fort's structure.
- Paint was utilized to preserve representations of Mughal-era lifestyles through artwork on garments. Architectural motifs and wall paintings from the fort were adapted into garments, accessories, and books. These visual records were made durable and long-lasting using varnish. Varnish was applied to restore faded colors and ensure long-term preservation of painted elements, thereby safeguarding cultural heritage (Carrier, 1985).
- Laser-cut acrylic embellishments were employed to create accessories and decorative garment elements inspired by the structural features of Sheikhpura Fort. These designs provided a modern yet culturally rooted expression of heritage, using laser-cut shapes that mirrored architectural details.
- Innovative fabric construction techniques were adopted to replicate the textures and forms of architectural elements. Materials such as white starch and sculpting wire were used to create both two-dimensional and three-dimensional effects in garments. By shaping and manipulating wire structures, detailed architectural forms were represented in wearable designs, breathing new life into historical aesthetics through fashion.

Traditional Mughal outfits, particularly those worn for hunting and ceremonies, served as the model for the clothes. Fabric was printed with designs of flowers, birds, fruits, and arches that were taken from Sikh and Mughal artwork found in the fort or other Jahangir heritage. The finished garments effectively blended contemporary fashion with historical art. The project demonstrated how fashion can be used to preserve and advance culture while also bringing attention to Pakistan's lost legacy.

Figure 18: Self Painted illustrations or Sketches for silhouettes, Display 8th July 2025, in "FITFD Institute of Art and Design".

A long, flowing traditional Chinese dress in blue and green. The bodice features a high collar and is adorned with intricate embroidery, including a large floral motif on the left side and a central panel with a geometric pattern. The sleeves are wide and decorated with a blue and white pattern. The skirt is a deep blue with a subtle pattern and a wide hem. The dress is displayed on a mannequin against a plain white background.



Front Detail

Flap Collar

Front Design 2x Samples

Waist Detail

Waist of Skirt

Puffed Sleeve Detail

Skirt Detail

Coat

Source 18 (a, b, c, d): Self Painted illustrations or Sketches.

Discussion

The study demonstrates how effective fashion can be in preserving cultural heritage. The researcher was able to transform historical elements into wearable designs by examining the Shekhupura Fort's artwork and architecture. In addition to preserving history, this strategy draws in young people who might not otherwise be interested in historic structures or artwork.

The present study focused on preserving and restoring historical architecture that has deteriorated over time and is now in ruins or a dilapidated state. These structures are fragile and require special



care to maintain their historical significance and cultural value. Local communities should be involved in preserving these sites, making them aware of their cultural heritage and encouraging them to protect it. People should be educated about the importance of these historical sites and their cultural heritage, helping them understand their significance. Preserving historical sites will help protect our cultural heritage. Restoring and preserving these sites can boost tourism, benefiting the local economy. These sites can help people learn about their history and culture, increasing their sense of identity and confidence. “There are many organizations that have started establishing libraries in historical architectures. Researchers also believe that we can use a different strategy. Our big historic sites and forts, which are fragile and deteriorated, and often unknown to people, can be maintained, repaired, and restored. This would not only prevent damage to these sites but also provide an opportunity to educate people about our history and archaeological sites. We could convert these sites into universities or organize classes and educational programs at specific times and days. This would allow people to develop an interest in these subjects and learn about the heritage in an engaging way. Even those who may not have shown interest earlier could develop a passion for these subjects. by adopting this approach, we can benefit our archaeological departments, historical subjects, and related fields in the long run. This can also raise awareness among people and provide numerous benefits. By leveraging these heritage sites, we can create a positive impact on future generations for history.

Conclusion

This project demonstrates the significant contribution fashion design can make to the preservation of architectural and cultural heritage. The project made wearable garments by recreating Sheikhpura Fort's architectural designs, wall murals, and small artwork. The amazing beauty of Mughal and Sikh art was brought to life with the aid of techniques like resin art, fabric painting, laser-cut designs, and 3D fabric fabrication. In addition to bringing attention to the value of preserving architectural treasures, the project demonstrated how innovative approaches may foster a sense of cultural identity among individuals, particularly young people. In order for future generations to understand and care about their history, it was also proposed that heritage sites like Sheikhpura Fort could be used for educational purposes, such as community libraries or cultural universities. This project shows how art and fashion may work together to create effective instruments for heritage preservation, education, and storytelling.

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