

## Winning Best Costume Oscar 2019 "Black Panther" A model for Reformulating Traditional Costumes into Dramatic Technological Visions

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### Abstract:

As a matter of openness to successful international experiences, and within the framework of exchanging experiences and benefiting from pioneering global experiences through study and analysis, the main objective of the current study comes, which is to analyze the costumes designs of the Oscar-winning film for costumes 2019, "The Black Panther. Where the costumes embodied, including clothes - accessories - jewelry, makeup and hair styling, a future vision of the African artistic heritage, and the study aims, through the inductive approach, to reach the creative modalities by which the fashion designer was able to formulate the heritage characterized by instinct, spontaneity and the raw materials of the natural environment to reformulate it In a future form, thus reviving the heritage with an unprecedented vision. The study is considered a model for employing the inductive approach in the field of costumes and fashion studies, and the applied method was also used, where the researcher conducted self-experiments in designing and supervising undergraduate and graduate students in an attempt to reformulate traditional costumes as it came in the film of the current study.

### Keywords:

Inductive Approach - Oscar Best Costumes - "Black Panther" - Cinematic Costumes - Reviving the artistic heritage- Costumes Modernizing.

### المخلص:

من باب الانفتاح على التجارب العالمية الناجحة، وفي إطار تبادل الخبرات والاستفادة من التجارب العالمية الرائدة من خلال الدراسة والتحليل يأتي الهدف الرئيسي للدراسة الحالية وهو تحليل تصميمات أزياء الفيلم الحاصل على جائزة الأوسكار للملابس مطلع 2019م "النمر الأسود". حيث جسدت الأزياء بما تضمنه من ملابس - مكملات - وحلي وماكياج وتصنيف شعر رؤية مستقبلية للتراث الفني الأفريقي، كما تستهدف الدراسة من خلال المنهج الاستقرائي الوصول الى الكيفيات الابداعية التي أمكن بها لمصمم الأزياء صياغة تراث يتسم بالفطرة والتلقائية وخامات البيئة الطبيعية أن يعيد صياغته في قالب مستقبلي تكنولوجي، وبالتالي احياء التراث برؤية غير مسبوقه. تعد الدراسة نموذجاً لتوظيف المنهج الاستقرائي في مجال دراسات الموضة والأزياء، كما تم استخدام الاسلوب التطبيقي حيث قامت الباحثة بتجارب ذاتية في التصميم والاشراف على طلاب مرحلة البكالوريوس والدراسات العليا في محاولة لإعادة صياغة الأزياء التقليدية كما جاءت بالفيلم موضوع الدراسة الحالية والأزياء الأفريقية التقليدية عامة.

### الكلمات المفتاحية:

المنهج الاستقرائي - أوسكار تصميم الأزياء - فيلم "النمر الأسود" - الأزياء السينمائية - إعادة احياء التراث الفني - تحديث الأزياء.

**Introduction:**

Cultural heritage often recalls artifacts (paintings, drawings, prints, mosaics, sculptures), historical monuments and buildings, as well as archaeological sites. But the concept of cultural heritage is even wider than that, and has gradually grown to include all evidence of human creativity and expression: photographs, documents, books and manuscripts, and instruments, etc.

Moreover, cultural heritage is not only limited to material objects that we can see and touch. It also consists of immaterial elements: traditions, oral history, performing arts, social practices, traditional craftsmanship, representations, rituals, knowledge and skills transmitted from generation to generation within a community.

Cultural Heritage is an expression of the ways of living developed by a community and passed on from generation to generation. Heritage is not only manifested through tangible forms such as artefacts, but also through intangible forms such as traditions. preserving the links between the past and the present and allows the transmission of its different shades and colors to future generations. for heritage to be available to the future generations, it must be managed, for this management to happen, it is assumed that a community has to have some values or significance for the heritage, this values include uprising and moving the heritage from its traditional form to a futuristic one. The case in this study is the futuristic science fiction movie "Black Panther".

The term Afrofuturism was coined in the early 1990s to refer to an analysis of African American sci-fi. But it's since become a method for speculative thought, imagining "what if" scenarios in fiction, music and even architecture that reclaim and reinvigorate depictions of the black experience. By re-examining historical events through an African lens, we can more deeply understand where we are today "Black Panther" gives us a new way to think about a past, present and future rarely seen in mainstream movies.

The "Afro" in the Afrofuturism of "Black Panther," isn't just evident in the predominantly black cast, It's everywhere in the aesthetics, from the vibrant design of the sets and costumes to the fictional rituals of Black Panther's home, Wakanda. Look at the ochre earth that covers the floor of the Wakandan throne room. Or the thatched roofs on the country's gleaming skyscrapers. Or gadgets in the form of traditional necklaces and beads.

The current study focuses on how the Oscar winner costumes designer of "Black Panther" transferred and modernized the costumes from the traditional to the futuristic heritage.

**Study Problems:**

- 1- What are the actual approaches taken by the costume designer for the film (Black Panther) to formulate the African heritage costumes that are characterized by instinct, automaticity and naturality materials into a future vision?
- 2-What are the approaches that can be extrapolating through the experience of designing the costumes of the film (The Black Panther) as a guideline for shaping the heritage with future visions?

**Study Objectives:**

- 1- Costumes analysis for the Oscar-winning Best Costume Design (Black Panther) early 2019.
- 2-Extrapolating creative entries that can move costumes and fashion from heritage to futuristic heritage.

3 -Analyzing creative work indicates its value and brings it closer to understanding, perception and evaluation by specialists.

4 -The study represents a motivation for Arab fashion designers to strive for innovation and aspiration for future visions.

5- Displaying the proposed costumes designs by the researcher and the students in reformulating the African traditional costumes in new vision.

### **Study Significance:**

1 -Drawing the attention of fashion/costumes designers to reformulating traditional fashion/costumes to contemporary and futuristic visions .

2- Enriching the inductive methodology in fashion/costumes design research.

### **Study Methodology:**

Inductive Methodology:

- One of the most important and prominent methods of scientific research and has many applications in human and cultures studies .

- It is a process of ascending inference that elevates the researcher from simple partial cases to general rules.

- Based on scientific observation.

- There is a rareness of use of this methodology in scientific studies related to design and the arts.

- The induction steps are based on observation, hypothesis, and experimentation.

Inductive Methodology in current study: This methodology suits the nature of the current study, as the researcher moves through the analysis of designing the futuristic costumes of (Black Panther) to discover innovative entries of designing futuristic traditional costumes, thus establish a general rule.

### **Study Hypothesis:**

A set of creative approaches can be found for fashion and costumes designers to reformulate traditional costumes with futuristic visions, by extrapolating the actual experience of the costumes for the Oscar-winning Black Panther, Best Costumes Design 2019.

### **Theoretical Framework:**

#### **The story and the concept behind the film:**

The Black Panther from director Ryan Coogler and co-screenwriter Joe Robert Cole, is originally a colorful animated story sequence about the fictional African country of Wakanda, as narrated by a father to his son. Wakanda, the home of T'Challa (played by Chadwick Bosman) as a poor agricultural nation, in keeping with stereotypes that often reduce the continent to one country.

Completely self-sufficient, Wakanda has not been conquered from the outside and is the most technologically advanced country in the world thanks to vibranium. At the same time, Wakanda was lively and rustic, urban and futuristic with flying spacecraft. Populated by a group of tribes with long-standing traditions, Wakanda quickly became a symbol for the higher themes of the film: it is a story of a house, so is the tale of history, and so is the tale of cultural identity even in its fictional context.

The birth of the Black Panther in 1966 (established by Stan Lee and Jack Kirby) preceded the formal formation of the American Black Panther Party, which coincided with an era of independence for many African countries. It is almost impossible to separate Wakanda from its true neighbors, who have been torn apart by colonialism and their natural resources. Clearly, the film's director and screenwriter Kugler and Cole have embraced this policy quite wholeheartedly.

After the sudden death of King T'Chaka. Still mourning his father, T'Challa returns home to his mother Ramonda and his witty, engineer-savant sister Shuri (Letitia Wright), whose innovative weapon and gadget designs protect her brother and her country. With their support, he ascends to the throne as Wakanda's king and warrior-protector Black Panther, and immediately finds himself at the center of an age-old battle between tradition and modernity, and more pressingly, between justice and revenge.

The most spectacular events begin when black market weapons dealer Ulysses Claw (Andy Serkis) crosses his radar, T'Challa enlists the help of ancient flame Nakia (Lupita Nyong'o), Wakandan spy, and Okoye (Danai Gurira), head of Dora Milaje, the elite Royal Guard in Wakanda. Claw escaped with a portion of the vibranium years ago and killed the parents of T'Challa's best friend W'Kabi (Daniel Calluia), but their plans to bring him to justice are frustrated by American black ops soldier Eric Killmonger Stevens (Michael Jordan), who has a secret affair with Wakanda. Eric, as T'halla, lost a beloved father, but unlike T'halla, he grew up poor on the streets of Oakland. A ruthless fighter, Eric sets his sights on the throne, bent on taking revenge on his father and saving, in his mind, oppressed peoples whom the people of Wakanda can easily help but choose to ignore.

As part of the coronation ritual, T'Challa visits his deceased father in the "ancestral plane" and the dead king tells his son, "It is difficult for a good man to be a king." This statement foreshadows the inner character arc of T'Challa. He is noble, generous and tolerant.

### **The Film Staff and cast:**

Produced by Kevin Feige, written by Ryan -Coogler Joe Robert Cole, director of photography Rachel Morrison, edited by Michel P. Shawver Debbie Berman, production designer Hannah Beachler, music Ludwig Goransson, costume designer Ruth E. Carter, visual effect and animation Industrial Light & Magic, Production company Marvel Studios presents.

Chadwick Boseman as prince T'Challa "Black Panther", Lupita Nyong'o as Nakia, Danai Guira as Okoye, Daniel Kaluuya as W'kabi, Letitia Wright as Princess Shuri, Winston Duke as M'Baku, Angela Bassett Ramonda as Queen Mother and others.

### **The Film Costumes:**

Ruth E. Carter's costumes cement the film's Afrofuturist aesthetic with elaborate designs inspired by real-life African tribes such as the Xhosa, Dogon and Suri, among others. "What I did was look at Masaai beadings, Ndebele neck rings, Himba leather work—among other influences—and I infused all of that into the design process," said Carter.

But we didn't want to stop there and make it seem like a documentary. We wanted use those influences in new ways. We wanted to show how Wakandans reconstitute the way the Himba use the leather, we inspired the costumes by African tribes, for example we put it on the Dora Milaje, have the neck rings that the Dora Milaje wear look like jewelry, while still really honoring African history."

This reconstitution is another important theme that guided Carter's work (Wakandans are incredibly skilled at inventively repurposing materials), most notably in the way she included the fictional metal Vibranium in their clothing and jewelry.

"There are these beautiful blankets that the Basotho tribe in South Africa are known for, and that influence is in Black Panther," said Carter. "We actually printed adinkra symbols all over one side of the blankets in silver like it's Vibranium, so we could show that the border tribe use their blankets as their shields. That's one way I tried adapting Vibranium for a modern Wakanda." The result of Carter's extensive research is a bold, Afrofuturistic blend of cutting-edge modernity with explicitly traditional appeals.

And while the people of Wakanda differ in their aesthetics—more traditional villagers along the border have subtle Vibranium styling influences, while those in cosmopolitan cities look like they just stepped off a New York Fashion Week runway—they're clearly connected as one nation thanks to Carter's overarching concept.

Finding ways to display the intermingling of past and present in Wakandan fashion was her favorite design challenge; a lesson about the continuous and evolving nature of black history, all dressed up in colorful fabrics and jewels.

"I think all people enjoy looking at ancient tribal traditions, and people enjoyed craftsmanship long before there was internet and all the gadgetry we have now," said Carter.

"Craftsmanship is so detailed in ancient history, so it's easy to retranslate and reconstitute that into a modern form. It's just like someone today wanting to mix a traditional piece with modern accessories. It enriches the whole idea of the styling and creates this world where we can actually see where style is rooted, feel and touch the origin of species and then understand the modern reuse of those traditional craft pieces and what that means."

Boseman's T'Challa is anything but a stereotype in Black Panther. Following the death of his father and the former king of Wakanda, T'Challa is a rising royal leader trying to conduct his new responsibilities. Carter emphasized the need for him to address his powerful new status through fashion, saying, "Everything had to be elegant and clear. I wanted to keep the body conscious form in his clothing, so he wore a lot of knits so that you could see his shoulders and his arms. Most of his things draped long, and that gave him a royal palace look. But we didn't want him to seem stuffy with robes and capes. I wanted him to be young as he really is."

By focusing on the details of specific fashion items was only part of Carter's job on Black Panther. Her richly diverse styles also had to be distinct to individual characters, a consideration that's complex when it comes to black people on screen.

The misrepresentation of blackness in media is a tale as old as time: Black characters rarely show up at all, and in the rare moments that they do, they're rendered as inauthentic and uninformed caricatures.



**Images 1-2: on the left is the film character and, on the right, the traditional African tribe (Mursi)**

A unique tradition of the Mursi lies in their various rites of passage, such as the famous lip plates they are known for. They are one of the last groups of people in Africa that still wear large wooden discs and pottery in their lower lips.



**Images 3-4: on the left is the film character and, on the right, Black Panther Co-founder Huey P. Newton**

Huey P. Newton, the co-founder of the American Black nationalist group the Black Panther Party. The Black Panther Party for Self Defense was founded in the East Bay. Come discover how a few committed students at Oakland's Merritt College founded an organization that grew into a powerful social movement that came to have profound influences, nationwide. Facing off with the established political authority of the day, the Panthers were early targeted by police and the FBI, and many were jailed. But even during their most turbulent times, Black Panther Party (BPP) leaders were masters of the power of image and publicity in the news-saturated decade of the 1960s.



**Images 5-6: on the left is the film character and, on the right, the traditional African tribe (Zulu)**

Angela Basset as Queen Mother Ramonda makes an entrance with a large disc head dress. In most of her scenes she wears a smaller version of the hat, which Carter borrowed from Zulu culture. The isicolo is a hat worn by married women, and was traditionally shaped from grass fronds, with cotton woven through. Their sizes and colors differ between clans, at times reaching a meter in diameter. For Black Panther, Carter had Ramonda’s dramatic white isicolo 3D-printed.



**Images 7-8-9: on the left is the film character and, on the center/ right, the traditional African tribe (Mursi)**

In one of the early scenes in the film, Michael B. Jordan’s character visits a London museum which he steals a menacing long-horned mask complete with a mane. The masks typically depict aggression with features such as horns and bared teeth. Images (7-9)

Spears were leaf shaped with a long wooden shaft. The weapons consisted of spears and special javelins. Sometimes these were attached to a long string so that, after spearing an enemy, the spear could be pulled back again and used once more. Images (7-8)



**Images 10-11: on the left is the film character and, on the right, the traditional African tribe (Ndebele)**

Unique traditions attributed to the Southern Ndebele include the copper and brass rings (idzila) that married woman wear on their arms, neck and leg to show their love and faithfulness for their husband.



**Images 12-13-14: on the left is the film character and, on the middle- right, the traditional African tribe (Karo)**

Wearing make-up to feel more, it's the same for women of the Karo tribe in Ethiopia. Using white chalk and red ochre, the women create intricate circle, spiral and cross-hatched designs in order to look more beautiful and stand out of the crowd. Tribesmen decorate themselves with white tags to attract women. With the aim of relying on each other. They cover their bodies and faces with white chalk mixed with fat to celebrate important celebrations, or show off during guest visits, or conflict between other clans or purely aesthetic reasons. "





Images 14-15: on the left is the film character and, on the right, the traditional African tribe (Maasai)

The Dora Milaje, with their deep red armor and tall spears look like Maasai warriors, which was the look Carter was going for .The Maasai Shuka is instantly recognizable as the red and blue chequered (sometimes with black, yellow or green, but red is always the base color) shawl draped over the semi-nomadic Maasai. Images (14-15)



Images 16-17: on the left is the film character and, on the right, the traditional African tribe (Hamer)

Young women with neck rings. In Africa, many of the tribal women - like the Ndebele and Hamar - wear metal rings around their necks and arms. These rings as well as other traditional, beaded sometimes adornments and ornaments symbolize the woman's (and her family's) status in society. Images (16-17)



**Images 18: Beads handicrafts on the warrior costume -film character- inspired by (Himba) and (Massai) tribes**

The use of beads in Africa can be traced back at least 12,000 years. The oldest known colored beads have been discovered in the Kalahari Desert, Sudan and Libya. The earliest beads were made of eggshell, clay, twigs, stones, ivory and bone – glass beads were introduced later by traders from Europe, India and the Middle East.

Beads were used in various parts of Africa as adornment or works of art. As adornment they were important in defining and identifying someone's status, as well as what tribe or group they belonged to. The designer employed beads and handiwork in many of the costumes that appeared in the movie in an ingenious manner



**Images 19-20: on the left is the film character and, on the right, the traditional African tribe (Akan)**

Towards the end of the movie, King T'Challa, is seen wearing a Kente scarf, the fabric which has its origins in Akan, in Ghana's Ashanti region, where it was first woven with raffia fibers. Ancient Kente mythology suggests that the idea for weaving Kente was developed based on a spider's web. Even though Kente has become widely worn, it was initially only reserved for royals and for special occasions. Images (19-20)



Images 21-22: on the left is the film character and, on the right, the traditional African tribe (Mursi)

The men are well known for their "otjize" paste, which is made from butterfat and ochre. Due to the scarcity of water, it is used to keep their bodies clean and to protect them from mosquito bites. Unique to the Himba is their traditional usage of jewelry and hairstyles, which is important in their society as a means of showing age and social status. Images (21-22)

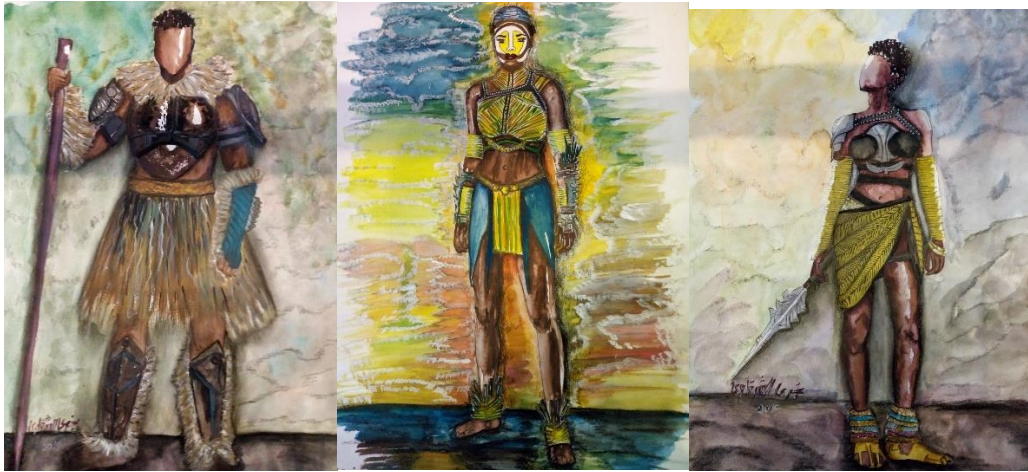
**Practical Framework:**

This section represents two directions, first: Samples of the researcher's students' sketches in the Costumes Design Course Postgraduate PhD students, academic year 2018/2019. And the second part is the researcher's designs and the researcher students to redesign the traditional African costumes in new forms, at Helwan University- College of Home Economics, and the Faculty of Applied Arts at Badr University, for the academic year 2018/2019.

**Section one:** redesigning Black Panther costumes by PhD students with supervision of the researcher, academic year of 2018/ 2019.

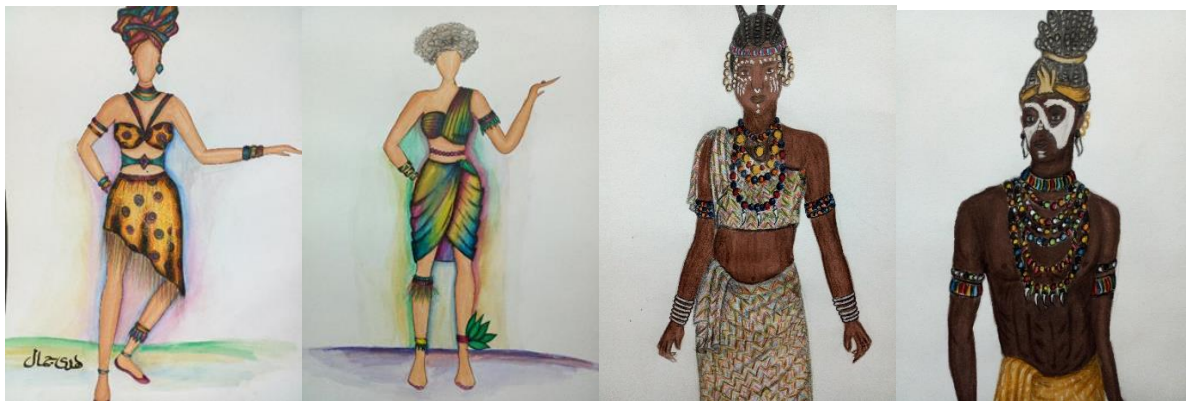


Sketches 1:3: PhD Student's sketches to redesign some characters costumes of Black Panther.

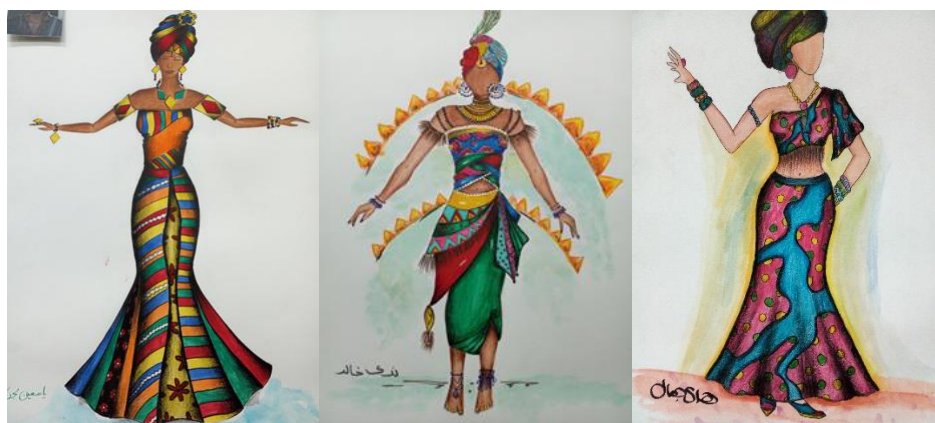


Sketches 4:6: PhD Student's sketches to redesign some characters costumes of Black Panther.

**Section two:** proposing costumes designs inspired by African traditional costumes, designed and implemented by the researcher and the researcher's students within workshop with the researcher supervision in 2018/ 2019.



Sketches 7:10: Undergraduate student sketches to reformulate African tribes' costumes.



Sketches 11:13: Undergraduate student sketches to reformulate African tribes' costumes.



**Design 1:3:** Implemented costumes by undergraduate students, inspired by African tribes traditional costumes. The designs indicate the African costumes beads, natural materials, fringe, accessories and rings.



**Design 4:** researcher implemented design inspired by African tribes' culture, the design indicates to African tribal masks, beads and natural colored feathers.



**Designs 5-6:** researcher implemented designs inspired by African tribes' culture, the design indicates to natural colored feathers, warm fabric colors, fringe and markable decorative stains.

**Acknowledgement:**

The researcher appreciates her students -graduate and undergraduate- efforts and their positive response in designing and implementing the proposed costumes.

**Results:**

The approaches used by the costume designer for the Black Panther film to reformulate the African heritage with a futuristic vision through costumes are as follows:

- Referring to historical and documentary sources to transfer them.
- Mixing realistic heritage with the lines of some contemporary fashion designers who inspired by heritage.
- Referring to some artistic trends and contemporary artworks, both visual arts and expressive arts, and inspiring by them. For example, in the case of the film, the topic of the current research is influenced by the trends of the Afrofuturist and Afropunk.

(Afrofuturism: is a movement that re-envision black people through futuristic means. Despite being coined by Mark Dery in 1993, the term's verbiage has been re-examined by African American scholars over the years. Many forms of art, literature, and music since the early 1900s have been uncovered, existing now as proof of concept to this idea. Afrofuturism stands on its own merit as a modernized successor to the Black Arts Movement). (Afropunk: refers to the participation of African Americans and other black people in punk and alternative subcultures, especially in the United States where this scene had been overwhelmingly white), also there is a festival entitle Afropunk Festival, is an annual arts festival that includes live music, film, fashion, and art produced by black artists.

- The smart and harmonious integration and overlap between the different heritage styles to create a new and innovative style, which is a combination of those styles, in the case of the film the subject of the current study, the merging of the costumes of several African tribes in one innovative design.
- The merging between the artistic heritage and the various concepts related to this heritage and the nationalism that belongs to this heritage, in the case of the Black Panther film - the current study- the African tribal heritage was merged with the Black Panther movement that was launched in the United States of America in 1966 by African Americans as a movement against Racial persecution and colonial persecution.

**Conclusion:**

Through studying and analyzing the costume design of the Black Panther film, it was found that the transition in African costumes from traditional to futuristic tradition was achieved through:

## 1) Ideas:

- Refer to the actual heritage sources.
- Mixing the realistic heritage with contemporary fashion lines inspired by the realistic heritage.
- Inspiration from contemporary artworks influenced by heritage.
- Mixing the different types of heritage into one new and innovative pattern.
- The merging of the actual heritage with contemporary concepts related to this heritage.

2) Materials: The combination of real or closest heritage materials with other materials that give an impression of contemporary and future.

- 3) Techniques: The combination of handcraftsmanship techniques and other contemporary and futuristic technologies such as 3D printing.
- 4) The complete form of the character: Employing all clothing accessories in terms of hairdressing, makeup, jewelry, and separate and connected clothing accessories in affirming the heritage identity with a contemporary vision.
- 5) Elements of innovative costume design: such as the design lines, the colors used, and the silhouettes of the characters' figures, all of these elements are influenced by the actual heritage with an innovative and contemporary formulation influenced by the contemporary and future technological progress.

### Recommendations:

- Training and guiding students in fashion design programs to inspire by heritage and move it from a traditional vision to the future.
- Encouraging public and private state institutions to adopt the creative experiences of designers and preserve the intellectual property of Arab designers.

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