

# Aesthetic Characteristics Thinking of Minority Folk Art in Guizhou

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**Abstract:** Guizhou, with a cluster of multiple ethnic groups, is located in the southwest of China. In the province, there is up to 49 ethnic minorities whose population occupies around 1/3 of the total. Thanks to this, the multi-ethnic region is endowed with various folk art and culture of distinctive minority styles. This paper briefly discusses the outline of minority folk art in Guizhou, including its development and features, analyzes the aesthetic expression ways and characteristics of the art, and finally, puts forward some further thoughts from fine art, dancing art and batik art. This paper aims to further facilitate the development and innovation of the minority folk art of Guizhou, and add lustre to the progress of our national minority cultures.

**Keywords:** Guizhou; Minorities; Folk Art; Aesthetic Characteristics

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## 1. Introduction

As social economy and people's life keep progressing, people's demands for spiritual enjoyment are greatly increased, and thus inspire more pursuit in art. Our country possesses 56 ethnic minority groups, whose cultures have been treasured as our spiritual and material wealth. As the typical region where minorities are concentrated, Guizhou boasts colorful forms of folk art, including Miao's dances, batik art and embroidery art. Actually, minority folk art of Guizhou can trace back to over 2,000 years ago and even earlier. It embodies cultural characteristics of different peoples nationwide, and full ethnic emotions. Following is the simple analysis of aesthetic characteristics of minority folk art in Guizhou.

## 2. Outline of Minority Folk Art in Guizhou

### 2.1 Development Situation of Minority Folk Art in Guizhou

Nestled in the southwest of China, Guizhou covers 11 minority autonomous counties that are divided geographically, thus, its folk art style is also of unique regional characteristics. Distinctive ethnic cultures of each minority have enriched Guizhou's art resources including those

in spiritual and material level. Moreover, various ethnic groups gathering together have formed the rich folk art forms that act as a model for many schools to learn. Since some minorities in Guizhou haven't got their own written languages, cultures are all passed down orally and translated into the art and culture with unique ethnic characteristics through a long-term historical accumulation.<sup>[1]</sup> This includes the embroidery culture, batik culture and Miao's dance, etc.

### 2.2 Characteristics of Minority Folk Art in Guizhou

Different from the minority cultures in other regions, those in Guizhou's folk art stand in the art form of unique regional and cultural characteristics and stem from mountains and lands. Despite the constant progress of times and transformation of society, folk art in Guizhou still gets inspiration from the land and nature people live on, and the locals' worship for nature is fully presented in the expression ways of various folk arts.<sup>[2]</sup> For example, in manual papermaking technology, leaves of trees are used as raw materials and trimmed by people to make the final pristine and vivid artworks of natural style. Meanwhile, minority folk art in Guizhou is also of traditional artistic style that is different from the modern one.

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### 3. Aesthetic Expression Way of Minority Folk Art in Guizhou

#### 3.1 Brilliant Colors and More Humanity Emotions are Integrated

One prominent characteristic of the minority artworks in Guizhou is that it adopts brilliant colors and bold artistic expressions to bring about the powerful visual impact. In short, it means using no transition colors in the artworks to turn all the colors in sharp contrast. For example, in the design of fine art works, abundant colors are usually used to match each other and chosen as per the painter's feeling for nature in life, to express his/her love and reverence for the nature. Another example is Guizhou's embroidery, which is famous domestically and abroad. In its works, abundant colors are always chosen to draw rich images and render natural tones to artworks.<sup>[3]</sup> All the above art forms manifest the natural and pristine tones of ethnic culture in Guizhou.

#### 3.2 Artworks are Molded with Full Imagination

Minorities in Guizhou boast varied forms of folk art, including the above mentioned batik, embroidery, etc. Although styles of nearly all these artworks derive from nature, they, instead of being fettered by the nature, progress toward a post-modern artistic style that is more bold and ahead of time. Residents in Guizhou have long been living in the rural areas far away from the city, in particular in the Miao-populated area, people have never touched the modern technology and the secular chaos, and maintain the pure heart to keep the original artistic style and use full imagination in artworks creation.<sup>[4]</sup> For example, in Miao's embroidery works there are cows, goats and other animal patterns, and goats are shaped with 4 horns; and cows may grow tiger's tail on body. In a word, these artworks of full imagination are peculiar to minority folk art in Guizhou.

#### 3.3 Possession of the Unique Style of Mountain and Water Culture

As most areas in Guizhou are seated among mountains, the terrain there is rather steep. This, plus the poor transportation, has interrupted Guizhou's economic contact and other activities with the outside world, hence many villages there are poor. Under such living condition, some residents began to study handicrafts, as a way for shaking off poverty, or seeking spiritual comfort. Through a period of precipitation, an atmosphere has been fostered locally for making handicrafts of distinctive ethnic characteristics.

### 4. Aesthetic Characteristics of Minority Folk Art in Guizhou

#### 4.1 Unity of Practicability and Aesthetic Standard

Most minority folk art is inspired from the long-term

living environment and emotional communications. This art represents the comprehension and experience that are born after living in nature and it's hard for urbane people to obtain. So when creators of artworks living in nature are to express the artistic forms, they should integrate the practicability with aesthetics. This unity is just one of the characteristics of minority folk art in Guizhou.<sup>[5]</sup> Since no more stunts are needed in minorities' works, the main consideration is about the practicability of the artworks; at the same time, as these minorities have long been living in nature, their artworks are bound to be of unique aesthetic standard.

#### 4.2 Integration of Materials and Process Technology

Normally, minority folk art in Guizhou is hard for others to duplicate, and even if some forms of folk art can be learned, materials for making them differ greatly. There are many minority nationalities in Guizhou where different minorities obtain raw materials locally and draw on their own living comprehension to create abundant artworks.<sup>[6]</sup> Take batik, the traditional craft in many areas of Guizhou, as an example. People in different ethnic minority areas use beeswax, a unique local material to resist dyeing. This is what other regions can't imitate. Moreover, another visible characteristic for minorities in Guizhou is that, with rudimentary theories, they, however, bear high capability to practice and long-term colorful experience to draw strength constantly from the nature.

#### 4.3 Reflection of Aesthetic Taste

Aesthetic taste can be reflected from composition, modeling and plot design of artworks. Also, the minorities' aesthetic taste is usually embodied through costume design and modeling structure. For example, people often see on TV the costumes worn by Miao people in Guizhou. These costumes of varied and complex forms are matched with silver ornaments that recur frequently from point, line and surface, enabling Miao's costumes to be more brilliant in color, diverse in modeling and gorgeous in appearances. All in all, in expressing aesthetic taste, each minority creates the unfettered artworks that are of traditional ethnic cultural styles through the design of patterns and study of situations.

### 5. Thought Based on the Aesthetic Characteristics of Minority Folk Art in Guizhou

#### 5.1 Thought Based on the Fine Art

Fine art is an artistic form closed to people's life. As modern art paintings are mostly influenced by subjective factors, their colors and tones are always controlled by the creators' arbitrary thoughts. When self-emotions are excessively expressed, the creation will gradually diverge from ideal. This explains why in modern paintings of

certain decorative functions, colors are matched without enough brightness, and artistic conception stands in lack of imagination. But for the paintings created by ethnic minorities who have long been living in nature, the use of colors and matching of tones come mostly from nature. Thus, these creations feature brilliant colors and strong bright-dark contrast. In fact, even the single tone can generate a more powerful contrast effect.

### 5.2 Thought Based on the Dancing Art

Under the unique style of their culture, minorities in Guizhou boast distinctive views on their own dancing expression forms. Among them, Miao's dance is a typical case. As a typical dancing form in Guizhou, Miao's dance stems from sorcery and has long been influenced by sorcery culture. However, as people's lifestyle changes and thinking level improves, Miao's dance focuses more on expressing the unity spirit of Miao people, and reflecting their perseverance and bravery when facing hard life. So, modern Miao's dancing art has incorporated the significant content that manifests humanism.

### 5.3 Thought Based on the Batik Art

As a distinctive artistic form in minority folk art of minorities in Guizhou, batik art has diverse expressive ways. In the course of making batik artworks, natural objects are always portrayed in a way not confined by their original shapes or characteristics. Creators effectively combine their imagination with the actual objects to shape the new "species" of great artistic characteristics. For example, in batik works, designers portray butterfly's body and antenna respectively into fish and then leaf shape. People never view such design as a weird design. Instead, they show great admiration on creator's imagination.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper analyzes the development history and artistic characteristics of minority folk art in Guizhou, gives a simple outline of its aesthetic expressive forms and char-

acteristics and finally, on the basis of its aesthetic features, puts forward several thoughts on fine art, dancing art and batik art. Minority folk art, the heritage from our ancient culture, has gone through historical tests and constant changes. After gradual refinement, it is cultivated into the folk art of unique artistic styles and thus deserves the key protection by contemporary people. We hope that, through development and inheritance, minority folk art of Guizhou can be really integrated into people's heart, and act as an important part of constructing humanistic spirit to promote the progress of the harmonious society.

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