

## Analysing Li Qun and her Miao Batik Paintings from a Research Perspective

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**Abstracts:** Miao batik painting is a force that has risen to prominence in the Chinese painting community in recent decades. It has inherited the culture and art of batik craftsmanship handed down by the Miao for thousands of years as well as the culture and art of the Miao ethnic group, which can be described as "deep background". In recent years Miao batik painting has been supported by the government, colleges and universities, as well as academia, and many artists, art works and art activities have sprung up. What are the unique charms of Miao batik painting? What artistic characteristics does it have? How does it pass down the traditional art of ethnic minorities? This study will attempt to reveal the charm of Miao batik painting through a case study of Ms Li Qun, a Miao batik artist and inheritor of the Miao batik technique, and her artworks.

**Keywords:** Li Qun, Batik Painting, Batik Craftsmanship, Composition, Modelling

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### 1. Introduction

The development of Miao batik painting has a significant meaning in the Chinese art world. "Batik painting" is a new form of painting derived from the in-depth exploration of batik art by contemporary artists and scholars (Guizhou Internet Radio, 2020). Miao batik paintings have arisen since the 1990s (Lian Chengyu, 2023). Its function and expressive power have gone beyond the scope of traditional craft art to become a new form or category of painting (Wu Qinglin, 2017). It can be seen that the emergence of this new art discipline, namely Miao batik painting, in China is not unfounded, but has a certain artistic heritage. Lian Chengyu (2023) points out that Miao batik painting inherits the Miao batik handicraft, an artistic tradition that has been passed down for thousands of years, which is mainly embodied in the following: inheriting the cultural elements of Miao batik handicraft, inheriting the painting form of Miao batik handicraft, and inheriting the decorative meaning of Miao batik handicraft. With the development of China's society, the government and society's support for the Miao batik painting industry is getting stronger and stronger, and the Miao batik was listed as the first batch of national intangible cultural heritage by the State Council of China in 2006 and given special protection and support. The efforts of many Miao batik painting artists have also been practically rewarded in the art market and tourism market, which has led to the development of Miao batik painting.

The subject of this study is Ms Li Qun (Figure 1), a provincial (Guizhou Province) inheritor of Miao batik art. Up to now, Ms Li Qun has had high artistic achievements in the field of Miao batik paintings and handicrafts, attracting a lot of attention in research and news reports. Her batik paintings are also representative.



Figure 1: Ms Li Qun

However, the development of Miao batik painting still has a long way to go. Yuan Di and Wu Bo (2017) suggest that "in China, batik painting still belongs to a form used by a small number of artists to express their art, and it has not yet been developed more". For this reason, Zhu Lei (2019) once said that "modern batik painting should continue and develop the characteristics of the traditional batik craft in order to reflect its unique painting language". Therefore, in order to achieve our research goal of knowing and analysing the representative artists of Miao batik paintings as well as their works and the current status of their artistic inheritance, and to

promote the public's further understanding and appreciation of Miao batik paintings, so as to provide a favourable environment for the artistic inheritance and development of Miao batik paintings, we need to carry out a specific and clear analysis and interpretation of Miao batik paintings, and to explore and study what are the aesthetic characteristics and artistic inheritance characteristics of Miao batik paintings? Thus, the public and artists will be prompted to further understand and appreciate the art of Miao batik painting.

This study will use a qualitative research approach based on a case study, and the chosen research object will be Ms Li Qun, a Miao batik inheritor recognised by the Guizhou Provincial Government, and five representative works of her batik paintings, to carry out an analysis of their artistic and cultural inheritance characteristics, and to attempt to put forward appropriate recommendations for the trials and challenges facing the development of Miao batik paintings on the basis of the results of the case study.

## 2. Methodology

### 2.1 Research methodology

According to the purpose of this study, that is, by recognising and analysing representative artists of Miao batik painting as well as their works and the current status of their artistic inheritance, to promote a greater understanding and appreciation of Miao batik painting by the public, thereby providing a favourable environment for the artistic inheritance and development of Miao batik painting. Therefore, we need to identify the Miao batik painting artists and works in order to be analysed for targeted analysis and research. This study plans to use qualitative research based on case studies to collect reliable data to study and analyse Miao batik artist Ms Li Qun and a total of five of her artworks, analysing their artistic characteristics, cultural inheritance features and aesthetic ideas.

This study plans to conduct a qualitative research approach based on a case study of specified cases of Miao batik paintings. The case study approach involves an in-depth, detailed exploration of a specific example or multiple examples. Therefore, after identifying the object of the study, that is, Ms Li Qun, a Miao batik artist and Miao batik provincial inheritor, and her related batik paintings, we need to carry out long-term and in-depth research, including understanding the artist's artistic biography, reading the recorded documents of previous interviews. At the same time, these analyses were combined with the data to analyse works in terms of style, artistic characteristics, thematic content and artistic heritage.

### 2.2 Data collection methods

Research data for this study will be collected using multiple sources. For biographies and interviews with batik artists, we will look for information on previous interviews or reports. For the artist's artistic claims and demands, we will look for relevant analyses from earlier researchers and, if appropriate, consult directly with the artist herself. The research on the artist's own art will be analysed in all aspects of her biography, her experience as an artist, her awards, and her life background. For the selection of the artist's masterpieces, we will contact the artist directly for recommendation by the artist herself. After determining the object of study, we will analyse the works in terms of style, image form and scenario based on the background of the paintings introduced by the artist herself in an attempt to analyse the beauty of the Miao batik paintings and the artistic inheritance of the art.

Based on communication with Ms Li Qun during the conduct of the research, the five works recommended and provided by the artist herself for use in the research analysis are: "Butterfly Lovers"(Figure 2) and four untitled batik paintings on the theme of the Flower Jumping Festival, which are tentatively named "Flower Jumping Festival 1"(Figure 3), "Flower Jumping Festival 2"(Figure 4), "Flower Jumping Festival 3"(Figure 5) and "Flower Jumping Festival 4"(Figure 6) for the convenience of presenting the results of the study.



Figure 2: Butterfly Lovers



Figure 3: Flower Jumping Festival 1



Figure 4: Flower Jumping Festival 2



Figure 5: Flower Jumping Festival 3



Figure 6: Flower Jumping Festival 4

### 2.3 Effectiveness of Data Collection Methods

Research related to Miao batik painting needs to ensure the accuracy and validity of the data, so that the results of the research can be considered credible. In view of the fact that there are many self-proclaimed Miao batik painters, many of whom are of varying artistic standards, it is important to choose painters with a certain degree of authority and representativeness as the object of data collection. The selection of Ms Li Qun, who has been relatively active in the art world in recent years, among the Miao batik inheritors certified by the national government of China as well as the government of Guizhou Province (where the Miao predominantly reside), will help to ensure that the data collection is authoritative and representative of the target audience. The data for the study of the artist's own art experience and life background comes from Chinese official media reports or academic papers published more than three years ago, in order to filter out data that lacks objectivity or proper research, and to ensure the authority and reliability of the data. The artist's related artworks will be given at the suggestion of Ms Li Qun herself, and the photographs of the artworks are taken by the artist herself, for which we have contacted the author herself. This method of data collection takes into account the fact that the artworks are created by the artist, who herself, as the creator, has a more in-depth knowledge of the artworks, and therefore the works recommended by Ms Li Qun will be more representative.

### 2.4 Data Analysis Methods

Based on the reliable and objective data obtained, we will conduct a thematic analysis, a content analysis, an analysis of the artistic heritage, and an analysis of aesthetic ideas. The above analyses will also take into account the artist's own biography and experience, in order to obtain a more comprehensive analysis of the results. In response to the thematic analysis, this study will analyse what cultural and traditional artistic influences the artist may have been influenced by, based on the artist's artistic experience and biography, in relation to the content of the subject matter that the artwork responds to. Content analysis, however, focuses on the specifics of the artwork's image in terms of style, genre, composition, colour, aesthetic qualities and meaning. The analysis of artistic inheritance means that when analysing the data, it is necessary to take into account the aesthetic characteristics of Miao traditional art and traditional batik handicrafts, to analyse how the selected batik paintings have inherited the traditional art in terms of subject matter, content, artistic style and artistic characteristics, and what characteristics have been inherited, as well as to analyse the impact of this

inheritance on the art of Miao batik paintings. In this way, we are able to have a relatively comprehensive understanding and knowledge of Miao batik painting with Li Qun as the representative case.

### **3. Current Research Status of Miao Batik Painting**

Research on Miao batik paintings has produced some results in the academic community. After screening and summarising the relevant research results of previous scholars, we learnt that the literature involving this study is roughly divided into four categories, which are: Artistic inheritance of Miao batik paintings; artistic characteristics of Miao batik paintings; symbolic meanings of Miao batik paintings and analysis of the art of Miao batik artist Ms Li Qun. We state the above four points in the following order after having collated them.

#### **3.1 Artistic heritage of Miao batik painting**

With regard to the artistic inheritance of Miao batik painting, it is generally agreed in the academic community that its artistic feature is the inheritance of the Miao batik craftsmanship which has a development history of thousands of years. Zhu Lei (2019) says: In order to further inherit and develop the traditional Chinese batik craft, the artist, on the basis of inheriting the traditional craftsmanship of Chinese folk batik (Miao batik), combines it with the concepts of contemporary art, develops and experiments with new materials and mediums in search of new artistic possibilities for batik, expands the boundaries of the artistic language of batik, and makes batik move from folk craftsmanship to modern batik painting, a unique form of contemporary art. Lu Chunying (2023) also mentions that the rise of Miao "batik painting" has enabled traditional Miao batik to break through the old ways of expressing patterns and motifs, which is an innovation to modern art through traditional painting materials, and has become a force of the contemporary painting world. From this we can see that contemporary Miao batik painting is taking over its ethnic folk handicrafts in terms of artistic inheritance. It is a new attempt to innovate the ethnic folk handicrafts.

As for the time of origin of this Miao batik painting, academics generally agree that it had a late start. Yuan Di and Wu Bo (2017) addressed the fact that batik was developed relatively late in our country (China) compared to other countries. When exactly did it arise in the Chinese art world? Lian Chengyu (2023) says that since the 1990s, Miao batik has entered a stage from handicraft technique to batik painting. Meanwhile, he suggests that the landmark event of this transformation is the emergence of a large number of private batik workshops in the Miao region. This shows that Miao batik paintings have not been developed for a long time and are highly associated with the art market. This is different from the traditional Miao batik craft. According to the official definition of the Chinese Intangible Cultural Heritage website, Miao batik handicraft is defined as "an art created for the needs of the producers themselves, and its products are mainly household items ---" This is the essential difference between the successors and the pioneers of the art of Miao batik painting, that is, the difference in the purpose of creation. However, in terms of expression, Miao batik paintings have endeavoured to pass on the artistic characteristics of their predecessors. Discussing the manifestation of this heritage, Lu Chunying (2023) explains that it is mainly reflected in the close proximity to Miao life and the use of classic Miao batik patterns, compositions, and modelling styles. The inheritance of such artistic ideas and characteristics is conducive to the development of Miao batik painting. Modern batik painting should continue and develop the characteristics of the traditional batik craft in order to reflect its unique painting language (Zhu Lei, 2019).

#### **3.2 Artistic Characteristics of Miao Batik Painting**

Miao batik painting in general brings together the artistic wisdom of Miao women artists and creates its unique artistic characteristics. The reason why it is said that it brings together the artistic wisdom of women artists is because most Miao batik painting artists are women. According to official public information, there are a total of three national-level Miao batik inheritors certified by the Chinese government's Ministry of Culture and Tourism, all of whom are women. The provincial-level Miao batik art inheritors certified by the cultural department of the government of Guizhou Province (a province with a high concentration of Miao) are also all women. As Zhu Bingquan (1993) said: Batik painting is created by women, for women, and expresses the world of women's imagery. Why is the group of Miao batik painting artists mainly female? Li Wei (2014) explains the reason for this phenomenon: the history, customs and social structure of ethnic minorities determine that women must master the skill of batik painting and its specific function. It can be seen that this characteristic of the group of female artists of Miao batik paintings is also based on the inheritance of the artistic heritage of traditional Miao batik handicrafts. This will also influence the specific artistic style expressed in Miao batik paintings.

In response to a stylistic overview of Miao batik paintings, Lu Chunying (2023) talks about: It is mainly reflected in the close proximity to Miao life and the use of classic patterns, compositions and modelling styles of Miao batik. At the same time, Lian Chengyu (2023) also discusses that its artistic characteristics are mainly expressed in three aspects, that is, inheriting the cultural elements of Miao batik handicrafts, inheriting the



painting forms of Miao batik handicrafts, and inheriting the decorative meanings of Miao batik handicrafts. However, there is a relative lack of case studies by scholars of specific artworks.

### 3.3 Symbolic meanings of Miao batik paintings

Ms Li Qun once said that the "birds, flowers, fish and insects" on each batik painting "tell" the Miao's mythological stories (Guizhou Provincial Network Radio, 2020). The use of classic patterns of traditional Miao crafts is one of the most important manifestations of contemporary Miao batik painting in terms of artistic heritage (Lu Chunying, 2023). Therefore, it is important to study the symbolic meanings of the totems as well as the symbols in traditional Miao batik and Miao society when studying Miao batik paintings. According to the classification of China Intangible Cultural Heritage Website, Miao batik patterns are mainly divided into "natural patterns" and "geometric patterns". The pattern categories are too rich to mention. So in Geometric Patterns we will introduce Swirls and Bronze drum patterns, and in Natural Patterns we will introduce Butterfly and Maple Leaf patterns.

Three possibilities exist for the meaning of the swirl pattern; one is to commemorate the event of the great migration of the Miao in ancient times, while the swirls are an imitation of the currents of the Yellow River in the Yellow River region, where the Miao ancestors lived; Secondly, it may have originated from Miao rituals, in which bull sacrifices with good-looking swirling horns are the top sacrificial offerings; Thirdly, the "swirl pattern" is an evolution of early bird tribal totems (Yang Shanshan, 2021). The bronze drum pattern is a more famous and widely used ancient pattern, as explained in the book "Qiandongnan Miao and Dong Clothing and Batik Art" published by the Editorial Committee of the Original Ethnic Cultural Characteristics of the Kaili College (2009): "The pattern in the centre of the bronze drum is in fact the sun pattern, which radiates light outside the circle. Sun worship appeared as early as the primitive society, and some ethnic minorities still believe that the sun is the source of all things". It can be seen that the bronze drum pattern belongs to the "sun worship". There are relatively more studies about butterfly patterns, which, according to the records of ancient songs passed down by the Miao, responded to the ancestor worship and reproduction worship of the Miao forefathers (Yu Jiping, Tian Jun, 2011). The pattern of maple leaves, on the other hand, reflects the nature worship of the Miao ancestors (Wang Yaxing, 2021).

It can be seen that the traditional motifs often used in Miao batik paintings contain religious meanings such as worship and sacrifice, which will also have a far-reaching impact on the aesthetics of Miao batik paintings.

## 4. Li Qun's Artistic Biography

Miao batik artist Ms Li Qun is now 57 years old. Based on our research and analysis of Ms Li Qun's artistic life, it is considered that her artistic career is divided into two phases, the first and the second. The first period began during Li Qun's childhood, when at the age of 8 she began to learn traditional Miao arts and crafts, including embroidery and flower picking, from her mother. At the age of 12, she began to learn batik techniques, and in an interview with Guizhou Provincial Network Radio and Television (2020), Li Qun recalled "At that time, I dreamed that when I grew up, I wanted to make the most beautiful clothes." It is evident that the pursuit of batik art had already taken root within her during her childhood. When Li Qun was 17 years old, her batik creations were already superbly skilled and famous, and there was an endless stream of neighbours from the village who came to her house to ask her to make dresses and costumes. After her twenties, Li Qun married an artist, and the two of them shared the same goals and created outstanding works of art, such as the "Bull Drum Totem". Subsequently, the birth of a child and the pressures of life made it impossible for the couple to settle down and concentrate on their creations. While her husband goes to work in a steel factory, Li Qun makes and sells cold rice noodles (Guizhou Network Radio and Television, 2020). This period divides Li Qun's artistic career into two phases. The second part of the story begins when Ms Li Qun's children grow up and become adults, making Li Qun start to look back and consider what she has always dreamed of doing. In 2011, Li Qun's artwork won the award of excellence in the "Two Competitions and One Meeting" of "Colourful Guizhou". In 2014, with the support of the municipal government, Li Qun established "Li Qun Miao Art Workshop in Zhongshan District, Liupanshui City". In 2016, upon the recommendation of the government department, Li Qun and her Miao batik paintings were admitted to the Guizhou Intangible Cultural Heritage Museum. In 2020, Li Qun was recognised by the Department of Culture and Tourism of the Guizhou Provincial Government as one of the fifth batch of representative inheritors of provincial intangible cultural heritage projects. In recent years, her works have also been travelled to Malaysia, Singapore and other countries for display and exchange (Figure 7). This has made her and her works known far and wide.



Figure 7: Ms Li Qun (1st from left) joins the international exchange programme.

By understanding the artist Li Qun's artistic life, we can analyse that the first half of her artistic career and the second half of her artistic career are distinctly different, and at the same time influence each other. The difference is that the first half of the stage is characterised mainly by the artist's individual study and creation as the mainstay of her art life, while the second half of the stage is clearly characterised by the organisation and support of the government or the professional industry. This is a reflection of the increased investment and support by Chinese society in the field of culture and the arts in recent decades. The influence of each other is reflected in the artistic achievements of the artists in the second stage, including international exchanges, professional awards, and so on, which can reflect the academic attainments and professional innovations of the artists to varying degrees, but their artistic inheritance comes from the learning of traditional Miao batik art and handicrafts in the first stage, whereas the inheritance mode of hand-to-hand transmission and artistic traditions in the first stage come from the Miao's thousands of years of cultural inheritance mode. It can be seen that Li Qun's Miao batik painting art has fully absorbed the nutrients of Miao traditional art, and has been able to fully display and continuously progress under the favourable conditions of today's Chinese society, which vigorously supports the development of cultural and artistic industries.

There have been a number of studies and reviews of Ms Li Qun's art, as well as related news reports. The related research mainly reflects on the artist's artistic inheritance, artistic pursuit and some batik painting techniques.

Liu Enqin and Li Xichen (2020) discussed how, as a representative inheritor, Li Qun was able to draw many of the patterns that had been handed down to her by older generations. It can be seen that Ms Li Qun has quite a full understanding and knowledge of Miao traditional art. At the same time, she insists on the traditional way of extracting paint pigments for batik painting. In order to make the batik paintings colourful and diverse, Li Qun goes to the forest every year to look for natural "pigments" from the trees and flowers (Guizhou Network Radio 2020). This way the Miao batik paintings have preserved the nutrients from the traditional art. In addition, Ms Li Qun's dedication to batik painting is also an important reason for her success. "The first thing I think about every morning when I get up and the last thing I hold before I go to bed at night is batik." (Guizhou Network Radio 2020). As for the specific methods of batik painting carried out by Li Qun, Guizhou Daily Newspapers and Periodicals (2022) reported in an interview about Ms Li Qun's painting techniques that one method is to draw colourful patterns on a white cloth first, then seal it 'in wax', and the colourful patterns appear after dipping and dyeing; the other method is to bleach it clean and dry it according to the general method of batik, and then fill the white areas with colours. The first method described by Li Qun is consistent with the traditional batik handcrafting techniques.

In conclusion, we can learn from the analysis that Ms Li Qun, the batik painting artist, has fully understood the aesthetic ideas and specific techniques of traditional folk art. This has had a profound influence on the artistic achievement of her batik paintings.

## 5. Artistic Characteristics of Li Qun Miao Batik Painting

### 5.1 Characteristics of the theme

The subject matter of Miao batik paintings has a certain ethnicity and is characterised by its closeness to Miao life (Lu Chunying, 2023). And festivals are the core content of rural folk culture (Li Yumei, 2022). This feature is therefore evident in the subject matter of Miao batik paintings. According to the artworks recommended by Ms Li Qun as the subject of the study and her own interpretation, the five batik paintings shown above all depict scenes from the traditional Miao festival, the "Flower Jumping Festival". The festival originated from the story of Yang Lu, the leader of the Miao minority, who opened a seven-day flower festival to find his daughter's rescuer and hire him as his son-in-law in the ancient times, and it is also a kind of folklore

activity to wish for good weather, abundant harvests and prosperous livestock. For young Miao boys and girls, this day is a festival of matchmaking, singing and dancing and competing for attention.

In traditional Miao society, the meanings of these festivals include functions such as praying for blessings, matchmaking, and praying for fertility. The China Intangible Cultural Heritage Network under the Ministry of Culture and Tourism of the Government of China (2008) states that "the Miao Flower Jumping Festival is an indispensable part of the life of the Miao people". Thus, in the traditional Miao psyche, these festivals are religious and realistic. On the one hand, religious prayers are performed through this type of festival and on the other hand, matchmaking or display of glamour is performed through this type of festival. This suits the needs of Miao people of different ages as well as backgrounds. The Miao batik paintings are based on this theme, reflecting the closeness of Miao batik paintings to the traditional culture and life of the Miao people, and the inheritance and dissemination of ethnic culture and art. At the same time, artist Ms Li Qun's Miao batik paintings also include themes from other traditional festivals, such as the Lusheng Festival, the Torch Festival, and spring ploughing. In general, the subject matter of Miao batik paintings is characterised by its closeness to Miao life and its embodiment of traditional ethnic culture and art.

## 5.2 Compositional characteristics

The composition of Miao batik paintings has its own unique characteristics. According to the pictures of the artworks provided by the artist Li Qun, we can see that the composition has two distinctive features: firstly, the composition has an overall layout which is mainly "full", and secondly, the composition is characterised by "symmetry". With the so-called "full" composition, we can see that Miao batik paintings are different from other kinds of paintings, such as "combination of real and imaginary" and "gathering and scattering" compositions, but they are full without being boring and many without being scattered. In "Jumping Flower Festival (1)," (Figure 8) for example, there is a small amount of blank space in the lower right and upper left corners, but overall the layout is full and relatively equally sparse and clustered. Another example is in "Jumping Flower Festival (3)," where the work completely supports the canvas and is relatively equally sparse and clustered. The so-called "symmetry" that characterises the design is clearly inherited from the pattern design of Miao batik handicrafts. For example, in the work "Butterfly Lovers" (Figure 9), the picture is symmetrical along a diagonal line from top right to bottom left. In the work "Jumping Flower Festival (1)", the image is symmetrical along the left and right sides of the Lusheng design depicted in the centre. However, works of Miao batik painting are, after all, works of fine art and, unlike craft designs, they are not images of patterns or totems that are repeated.

Therefore, neither a "full" layout nor a "symmetrical" composition is absolute, and the compositional characteristics of a work are not completely divorced from the object depicted. In general, however, the compositional features of Miao batik paintings have become relatively obvious compared to other kinds of art works.

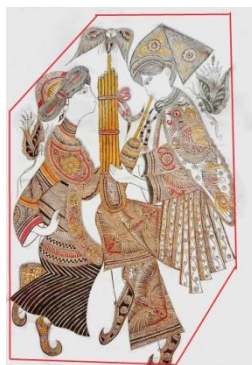


Figure 8: Composition of Jumping Flower Festival (1)



Figure 9: Symmetry of the Butterfly Lovers

### 5.3 Colour characteristics

According to the batik paintings provided by the artist Li Qun, the colours are predominantly warm, and uniformity of colour is a feature of the colours in her Miao batik paintings. Looking at Li Qun's five batik paintings, the colours are mainly yellow, red, warm black and coffee. For example, in the work "Jumping Flower Festival (2)" ( Figure 10), although there are many figures, props and other elements in the picture are different, the artist only uses three colours: red, yellow and warm black. As Miao costumes are more colourful and span a wide range of colours and shades, the selection of colours and the control of tones in Miao batik paintings have obviously been subjectively processed and adjusted by the artist. This is the same as the unity of colour that characterises the traditional batik craft of the Miao. However, the colour characteristics of Li Qun's modern Miao batik paintings are clearly innovative and altered based on traditional batik craftsmanship, which means that they are not simply imitating the cold blue-based colour characteristics of traditional Miao batik craftsmanship, but rather altering it so that the hues are more suitable for the festive themes and warm feelings depicted in the images, while inheriting the aesthetic characteristics of uniformity of colours and coherence of the colours in the images.



Figure 10: Colour Composition of the Flower Jumping Festival (2)

### 5.4 Modelling characteristics

The objects depicted in Miao batik paintings are mainly characterised by their rustic and naive structural modelling, which do not adhere to the Western scientific laws of modelling and express the image through free and open modelling. We can see that in Li Qun's five batik paintings, the faces of the characters are basically round (Figure 11) , the limbs are shaped in a way that does not reflect the skeletal and muscular structures, and the dynamics and proportions of the characters are also given free play without being bound by the objective structural modelling and its laws. The reason for this is that this kind of naive and innocent modelling style is more direct to express the emotion to be conveyed in the painting, and at the same time gives the audience more room for imagination and a lively and free emotional experience. Another reason that may be included is that according to the artistic biographies of most Miao batik artists, including Li Qun, Miao batik painting artists inherited traditional Miao artistic models and ideas, and did not receive the sketching training introduced by the West. As a result, the way it is modelled is quite different from the Western scientific and objective way of modelling. In fact, this characteristic is more suitable for the rural subject matter, pure emotion and direct expression of Miao batik paintings. It makes the content and expression of Miao batik paintings better reflect the consistency.

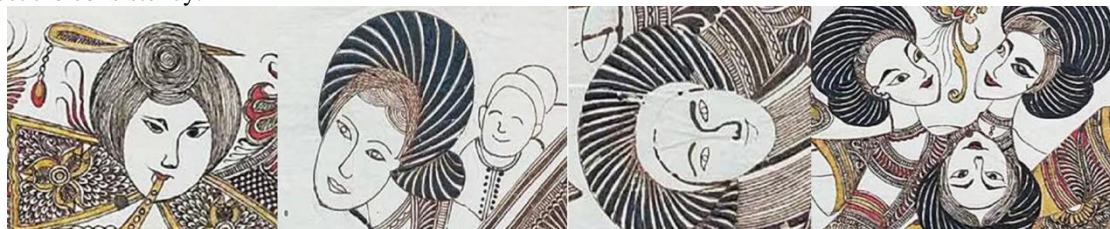


Figure 11: Partial face image

## 6. Cultural Inheritance Characteristics of Li Qun Miao Batik Painting

### 6.1 Cultural transmission of folk beliefs

Ji Zhongyang (2016) writes, "The most prominent aesthetic ideal of folk art is the beauty of life." Miao batik paintings reflect its Miao folk beliefs and pursuit of life everywhere. The characteristics of the subjects mentioned above reflect the depiction of traditional festivals and folk beliefs in Miao batik paintings. Analysing the content of the picture carefully, it is not difficult to find that the artist also expresses this traditional idea based on folk beliefs everywhere in the specific objects depicted in the image.



The image of the lucky-fish-bird(Figure 12) appears in < Jumping Flower Festival 2 > and < Jumping Flower Festival 3 >. In traditional Miao society, the lucky-fish-bird symbolises conjugal love and reproduction. The Miao ancestors believed that the bird symbolised the male and the fish symbolised the female. The fish and bird together symbolise the love of husband and wife, and also symbolise the equality of men and women and the reproduction of offspring. Thus, the depiction of lucky-fish-birds in the artwork has implications of fertility worship. The image of the butterfly(Figure 13) appears in <Flower Jumping Festival 1> <Flower Jumping Festival 2> and<Butterfly Lovers>. In traditional Miao society, the butterfly symbolises the originator of mankind and is the mother of the Miao forefathers. According to Miao mythology, the butterfly gives birth to twelve eggs, which gave birth to the first human beings as well as the ancestors of other living things. Therefore, the depiction of butterflies in the artwork has the meaning of ancestor worship and also symbolises the unending source of human beings. The image of the lusheng(Figure 14) as a musical instrument and ceremonial vessel appears in <Flower Jumping Festival 1><Flower Jumping Festival 3>, and it is an important part of Miao life in traditional Miao society. It often appears in rituals, funerals, festivals, marriage ceremonies and other important ceremonial activities. In Miao traditional beliefs, the lusheng not only plays music, but also has the ability to channel spirits, which means that it achieves communication with ghosts and gods, so the works depicting the lusheng have the meanings of religious ceremonies. In addition, the images that appear more frequently in the above five artworks include flowers, drums with bells, and so on. Flowers symbolise peace and beauty, and some specific flowers also carry the meaning of nature worship, while the drums with bells symbolise the exorcism of evil spirits and the avoidance of plague.



Figure 12: Partial image of a lucky-fish-bird

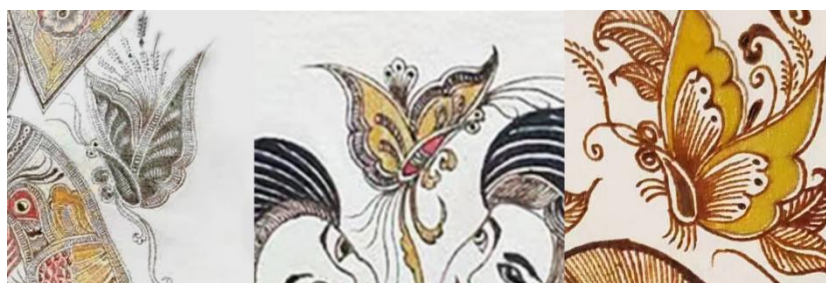


Figure 13: Partial image of a butterfly



Figure 14: Partial image of lusheng

It can be seen that the depiction of Miao batik paintings inherits a large number of symbols and elements of traditional Miao folk beliefs, and at the same time has a more effective as the cultural transmission of folk

beliefs. It embodies Miao batik painting's inheritance of cultural and artistic elements from Miao folk beliefs and its exploration of the pursuit of life.

### 6.2 Transmission of ethnic cultures

In the main part of the picture, the figure part, the artist also carried out relatively detailed depictions, with the figures dressed in ethnic costumes, holding ethnic musical instruments and ceremonial vessels, celebrating ethnic festivals, reflecting the depiction of ethnic traditional culture in batik paintings. There are many branches of the Miao, and the traditional clothing styles of each branch are different but similar, with more significant overall characteristics. The craftsmanship of Miao clothing is a collection of batik craftsmanship, embroidery craftsmanship, picking craftsmanship and other techniques, and the patterns are from the ancient period of the Miao people handed down to the present day, with rich ethnic cultural connotations, which is of great significance in the inheritance of ethnic culture. The artwork depicts items such as ethnic musical instruments, including: lusheng and drums with bells. In traditional Miao society, musical instruments are usually found in important ceremonial activities such as rituals, funerals, festivals, marriage ceremonies, etc., representing traditional folk beliefs, traditional folk music, and traditional lifestyles. The above images are completely depicted in the batik paintings, reflecting the characteristics of Miao batik paintings that have the role of passing down the cultural traditions of the ethnic group.

### 6.3 Transmission of artistic aesthetics

Li Qun's Miao batik paintings reflect a number of aesthetic features of traditional batik handicrafts in their painting techniques. As mentioned above, Miao batik paintings have inherited the artistic features of traditional Miao batik handicrafts in their compositions and colours. At the same time, Miao batik paintings also use lines as the main expression, For example, in the work <Jumping Flower Festival 3>( figure 15), the artist uses dense lines at the pleated skirts or at the hair strands, instead of a whole block of colour. which is similar to the way Miao batik is traditionally drawn in handicrafts. Traditional Miao batik handicrafts use batik knives to draw wax in the line drawing method, so the images presented are line-based, reflecting the fine features of Miao batik handicrafts. Miao batik paintings have inherited this craft technique to a large extent during the creation process, which has confirmed the analyses of many scholars. As we can see from the artwork on display, most of the drawing techniques are line-based. The artistic aesthetics of Miao batik painting, which is mainly based on the characteristics of traditional Miao batik handicraft, reflects the deep artistic heritage and cultural value of Miao batik painting, and reflects the potential and vitality of the development of Miao batik painting.



Figure 15: Jumping Flower Festival 3

The development of Miao batik painting in recent years has attracted continuous attention from the art world, and the artist Ms Li Qun, as a representative artist of Miao batik painting and a provincial inheritor of the technique, has also made outstanding contributions to the development of batik painting in recent years. Based on the above research and analysis of Ms Li Qun's Miao batik paintings, we conclude: Miao batik painting artists in general have a greater heritage of traditional Miao culture and a deeper understanding of Miao culture, including traditional handicrafts and traditional folk art, which can be reflected in and served by Miao batik paintings. This influence is reflected in the batik paintings, making Miao batik paintings highly recognisable in terms of artistic style, including themes, compositions, colours and shapes, all of which have an evident Miao

vernacular and ethnic flavour. At the same time, the themes, contents and artistic styles reflect traditional Miao folk beliefs, traditional Miao culture and traditional artistic aesthetic characteristics. In general, Miao batik paintings can clearly reflect the inheritance and development of Miao traditional culture, traditional art and traditional aesthetic characteristics from the attributes of the artists themselves as well as the characteristics expressed through the artists' works. Coupled with the investment of the government, universities, and society in recent years towards the outstanding culture and arts of ethnic minorities, including Miao batik painting, the opportunities for the development of Miao batik painting are becoming more and more obvious, and some of the temporary challenges can be transformed into opportunities with the continuous support of the art world for Miao batik painting. Overall, Miao batik painting will continue to maintain its characteristics and strengths and move forward with the support of all artists and the fine arts community.

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#### **Declaration:**

1. The copyright of the artworks shown in this study belongs to Ms Li Qun, and readers are not allowed to use the artworks and its pictures without copyright permission.

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