

# A STUDY ON THE FEATURES OF MINORITY-THEMED PAINTINGS IN THE 13<sup>TH</sup> NATIONAL ART EXHIBITION OF CHINA

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## ABSTRACT

This study aims to identify the features of minority-themed paintings in the 13th National Art Exhibition of China. The judging committee selected three award-winning artworks themed on minority subject. These three artworks can show us the features of minority-themed paintings distinctly. So, the researcher set these artworks as the research objective of this study. The research problems of this study are which ethnic groups the artists choose, what expressive strategies they use, and what aesthetic features are presented in these artworks. Based on exploratory research method, the researcher adopted a series of unstructured and semi-structured observation research methods to collect data, allowing the aesthetic features of each work to be revealed. By comparative analysis, the features of minority-themed paintings in this National Art Exhibition were determined. The results of this study found that these artworks exhibit their own features in three aspects: theme, content, meaning; form and structure; artist background. Specifically, the artists prefer to portray the primitive beauty of ethnic minorities, while some artists pay attention to the impact of modernization on ethnic minorities. All the artists use a realistic form to portray ethnic minorities, but they have their own considerations in structure design. The artists all have a background as university teachers, and they have conducted research on the ethnic groups for a relatively long time, which could be the basis of their research. In addition, the artists adopted a cautious attitude about the modern elements in ethnic minorities and used a restrained expressive strategy to design their artwork's structure. This study also found that minority groups that have gradually lost their original characteristics in the process of modernization have not been selected by artists.

**Keywords:** Aesthetic, 13th National Art Exhibition of China, Minority-Themed Paintings, Realistic Form, Primitive Features

## INTRODUCTION



### **The Current Situation of Ethnic Minorities in China**

China, with its vast territory and long history, has nurtured many ethnic minorities. During the pre-modern period of agricultural civilization, they maintained a certain distance from the mainstream civilization and developed their own unique cultures. This culturally heterogeneous heritage, with its high degree of distinctiveness, constitutes a rich source of inspiration for artists and attracts Chinese artists to create paintings depicting ethnic themes. These works showcase to a significant extent the primitive beauty of minority groups. However, in the process of modernization, the original living scenes of ethnic communities are fading, and the ethnic characteristics of ethnic people are gradually collapsing. Some scholars have noticed this phenomenon, such as Hei Wei's statement, "More and more ethnic minority people are moving away from their original ethnic cultural atmosphere (He Wei,2015)."

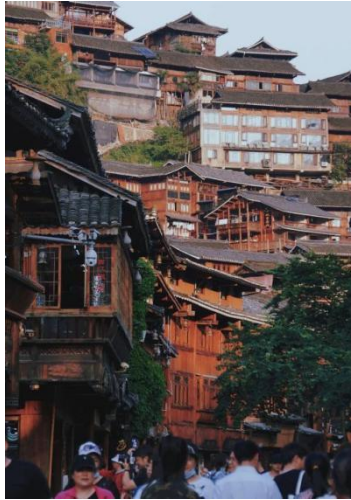
Now days, In the minority regions of China, a transformation led by administrative power is underway, and this transformation is taking the form of urbanization. The government has implemented ethnic regional autonomy, established national management systems and institutions for administration and justice in ethnic regions, and improved infrastructure such as roads and railways to match the new social forms and demands of social productivity. In this social context, market economy factors are consciously or unconsciously penetrating into the development of ethnic economies through administrative means or other ways, and the influence of urbanization and industrialization is also changing the way of life and production in ethnic areas. Almost all minority villages and towns have government office buildings, simple health clinics, or educational facilities for primary schools. According to Lu Chunli's research, these buildings are often modern brick and concrete structures with two or three stories, and the closer they are to towns, the more obvious the use of modern building materials (Lu Chunli,2014). Many minority people have wholeheartedly embraced the experiences of new technologies and lifestyles while actively addressing the potential drawbacks of modernization. Whether it be globalization or diversification, these are not the realms they concern themselves with. As Sun Chenguang said, "Their perspective remains simple yet practical: to make their lives more convenient than before (SunChenguang,2012)." It can be concluded that there is no truly primitive state of minority communities in contemporary China, and modernity is already one of the basic characteristics of minority communities. The ethnic personality and modernization features of minority groups coexist in the phenomenon of minority communities, which is a common situation for minority groups today. Tribes that were originally in a natural gathering state are gradually developing towards urbanization. They are opening up or moving out of their original communities, attempting to accept the transformation of modernization and improve their quality of life. In this situation, many minority communities in remote mountainous areas are in decline, while many others are prospering in new forms of aggregation.

Taking the Maopoying Miao community in Enshi, Hubei Province, visited by the researcher as an example, it can be identified as a Miao community only through the language spoken among residents and the stilts houses they live in, as all members have changed to Han

Chinese attire. Talking with the village secretary Feng Dahua, it was learned that many young people have to seek job opportunities outside the village because of the harsh living conditions. The elderly was left in the community. The Miao elementary school in the village was closed in 2015. And in 2018, the government-established Gele Town Community Poverty Alleviation Relocation Site near the community was completed, and impoverished households had been relocated to the poverty alleviation site, leaving the Miao community on the mountain inevitably in a state of decline. The young members of the Maopoying community will thrive in modern urban life.

	
<p><b>Figure 1:</b> Residents of Maopoying Community (2021) Source: Photo by Li Zhenchao</p>	<p><b>Figure 2:</b> The closed Miao Elementary School (2021) Source: Photo by Li Zhenchao</p>

There are also a few ethnic communities that have become more prosperous due to the development of tourism. Taking the Xijiang Qianhu Miao Village in Guizhou Province as an example, it is the largest Miao village in the world. Studies by some scholars have shown that, “Historically, due to its remote location, it was not incorporated into the centralization process of the Chinese empire until the ‘GaiTuGuiLiu’ policy of the Qing Dynasty (He Jingming, 2010).” Thriving almost in an isolated environment allowed the Qianhu Miao Village to preserve a very complete and unique Miao ethnic culture. With the promotion of the government and scholars, the Qianhu Miao Village has gradually developed a tourism economy model centered on Miao ethnic folk culture. As Xiao Yuanping's research shows us, the residents have been liberated from the lifestyle of the traditional agricultural society and turned to the service industry in the tourism economy (Xiao Yuanping, 2019).



**Figure 3:** the Xijiang Qianhu Miao Village  
Source: Photo by Yao Chuan (2022)

In ethnic communities, the transformation of the residents' spiritual world is a relatively implicit existence, in addition to observable changes in material conditions and lifestyles. As emphasized by Gao Huanjing, the anxiety, pain, calmness, joy, yearning, or reflection that ethnic minority cultures experience during social transformation are not only expressed in images but also exist in reality (Gao Huanjing,2015). It is worth emphasizing repeatedly that the continuous exchange and collision between modern culture and traditional culture of ethnic minorities constitute a description of the current situation of ethnic minorities in terms of material and spiritual changes. A clear understanding of the current situation of ethnic minorities helps to understand the background of contemporary ethnic minority-themed painting creation.

### **Ethnic Minority Themed Painting in China**

Artistic practices were believed to be the utmost capability of human beings. Those people who devoted themselves to artistic practices were called 'artists'. They put effort into letting creativity emerge through the work of art (Mustaqim, Karna. 2018). In China, there has always been a group of artists dedicated to the study of minority ethnic themes in their paintings. Generally, ethnic minority themed painting belongs to the category of paintings with distinct themes. Kang Xiaoyu further described this point, "the people portrayed have prominent features, clearly defined costume style and the environment and geographical locations where they live are also evident (Kang Xiaoyu,1995)." The emergence of self-discipline in art has prompted artists to consciously explore the language of painting, seeking suitable artistic forms and techniques to portray minority ethnic themes. This, in turn, has initiated a subsequent period characterized by a more diverse trend of artistic exploration (Chen Wei,2014). In China, Through the repeated exploration by artists, ethnic minority themed painting has been applied to various forms of painting, including oil painting, traditional Chinese painting, printmaking, watercolor and other art forms. Within these forms, this theme also be practiced in different artistic styles such as realism, abstraction, classical and modern.

Taking China's reform and opening-up as a turning point, before this period, modernization had not significantly impacted the lifestyle of minority ethnic regions, and their original and heterogeneous cultures retained their long-standing appearance. During this period, realism was the main style used in paintings depicting ethnic minority themes. Artists focused on presenting the natural beauty of ethnic minority life. Take Chen Danqing's painting "Shepherd (1980)" as an example. The Tibetan characters in the painting have been expressed simply and honestly. People are situated in their own pasture. we can see the rough skin and traditional Tibetan robes clearly without any traces of modernization. Chen tried to embody pure rural characteristics and relationship between people in this artwork.



**Figure 4:** Shepherd,Oil Painting,ChenDanqing,78.6×52.3cm,1980

Source:<https://www.mei-shu.com/artist/305/artworks-6659.html>

After the period of reform and opening up, Western art had already gone through the peak of modernist exploration and development. A series of modernist and postmodernist art forms became the mainstream of contemporary art at the time. This was a powerful source of theory and practice for the Chinese art world, which was then seeking to reform and break through traditional art, and inevitably had a huge impact on the Chinese art world at the time (Lu Bojia,2015). Scholars who studied the academic trends in the Chinese art world at that time believed that, “Various new genres, new viewpoints, and new visions quickly sprouted and spread in the Chinese painting community (Lu Qingling,2009).” So, artists at that time began a process of localizing Western aesthetics.

As Wang Shuiqing said, due to the influence of modern civilization, the traditional culture of minority ethnic groups is gradually dissipating. Fewer and fewer young people are seen wearing traditional ethnic clothing or adhering to their native customs, presenting a harsh reality (Wang Shuiqing,2017). The change in the situation of ethnic minority groups made some artists aware that artworks that expressed the original beauty of ethnic minorities lacked authenticity and credibility. This academic shift in the mainstream art world and the change in the real situation of ethnic communities prompted some artists to try to expand the expressive content and artistic forms of ethnic minority-themed art. This led to a shift in the narrative core of Chinese ethnic

minority-themed painting from the original narrative to a modern ethnic narrative. This is the background of the current ethnic minority-themed painting.

The purpose of this study is to critically examine the features of minority-themed paintings in the 13th National Art Exhibition of China. The long-term aim is to contribute to the understanding of how such artworks reflect socio-political narratives in contemporary Chinese art. The short-term objective is to analyze the key visual elements, and thematic concerns present in these paintings.

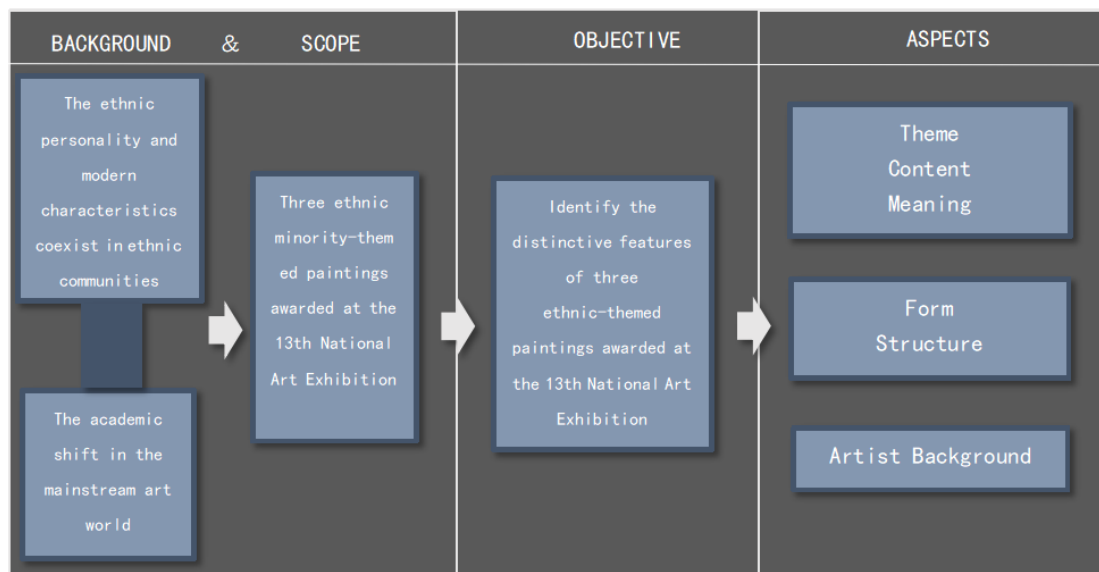
The National Art Exhibition, jointly sponsored by the Ministry of Culture, the Federation of Literature and Art, and the Association of Artists, is the most authoritative and largest top-level exhibition in the Chinese art world. It is also a unique national art evaluation system. There are many ethnic-themed paintings, and some of them have won the highest awards. Furthermore, this art exhibition is considered to be closely related to the shaping of the country's image. In this regard, Liang Bing stated that, the images depicted in ethnic-themed art works also to a large extent reflect the image of the country, showcasing the minority ethnic groups' identification and understanding of the country, while also indirectly portraying the stability within the nation's various ethnicities (Liang Bing,2019). Therefore, the National Art Exhibition is of great importance in studying Chinese ethnic minority-themed paintings. The most recent exhibition, the 13th National Art Exhibition, best represents the current situation of ethnic minority-themed paintings. The "China Art Award" judging committee selected 39 artworks for the award nomination, including three artworks with ethnic minority themes. These artworks provide us with the most representative visual information about ethnic minority-themed paintings. Analyzing the aesthetic forms of these three artworks can help us understand the features of ethnic minority-themed paintings in the National Art Exhibition. Therefore, the researcher selected these three ethnic minority-themed works as the research objective. Below is a list of information about these three artworks.

**Table 1:** List of Minority Themed Painters and the Sources

No.	Name of Artworks	Name of Painters	Source
1	The Gesang Blossoms	Lu Qinglong	<a href="https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%A0%BC%E6%A1%91%E8%8A%B1%E5%BC%80/61704502?fr=ge_ala">https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E6%A0%BC%E6%A1%91%E8%8A%B1%E5%BC%80/61704502?fr=ge_ala</a>
2	Auspicious Motherland	Li Shanyang	<a href="https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%90%89%E7%A5%A5%E7%A5%96%E5%9B%BD/24221773?fr=ge_ala">https://baike.baidu.com/item/%E5%90%89%E7%A5%A5%E7%A5%96%E5%9B%BD/24221773?fr=ge_ala</a>
3	In The Distance	Jie Yuanfang	<a href="http://www.imac.edu.cn/jphc/20230526/21594.shtml">http://www.imac.edu.cn/jphc/20230526/21594.shtml</a>

This study is based on the ethnic minority-themed paintings at the 13th National Art Exhibition in China. The judging criteria for selecting award-winning artworks by the judges have to some extent influenced the final results, and there is a possibility that the awarded artworks may not represent the current state of ethnic minority-themed paintings in its entirety. This largely reflects the mainstream academic community's judgment on ethnic minority-

themed paintings at present. These are the scope and limitations of this study. The following is the background of the research model that has been identified based on the discussion earlier.



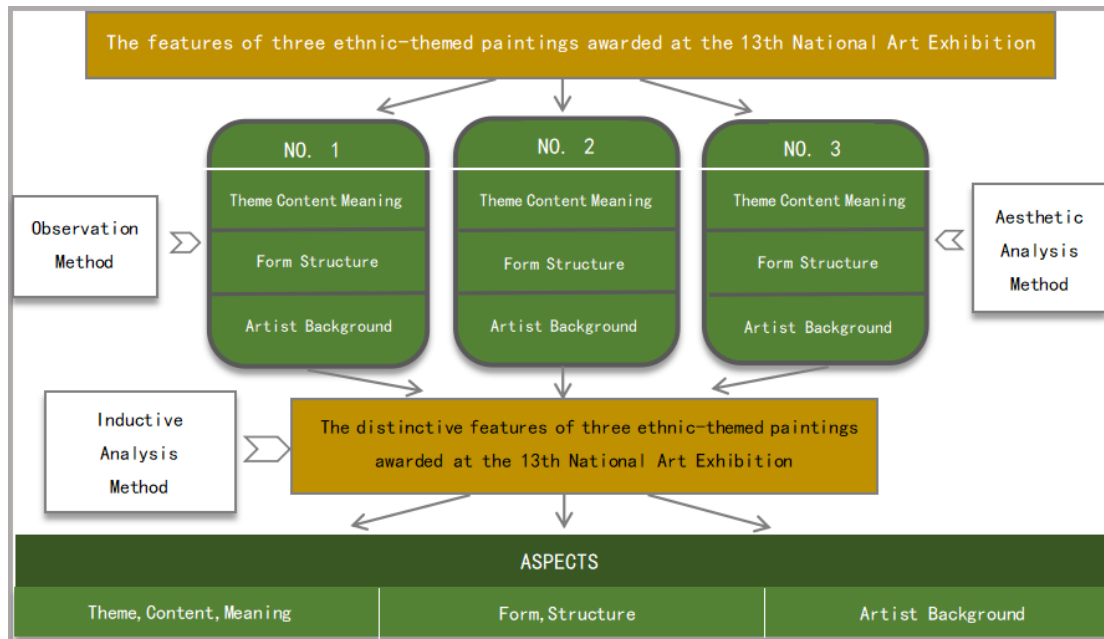
**Figure 5:** Background of the Research Model

## METHODOLOGY

Since the end of the 20th century, qualitative research has witnessed a rapid increase in visual research methods (Leavy P, 2018) (McNiff S, 2018). Visual thinking is the most comprehensive form of cognition. In fact, humans can think more quickly through images or graphical representations. As Omar said, each piece of information in an image can be linked to spatial understanding, allowing concepts to be connected more rapidly as well (Omar, J. 2019). This study adopts the exploratory research method. The purpose of exploratory research is to determine the nature of a problem; it does not produce conclusive proof, but it does help the researcher grasp the nature of the problem (Given, L. 2012). According to Questionpro's research, In exploratory research, the researcher will start with general ideas and use the research to identify issues that will be the focus of further research (Questionpro, 2022). In this study, the researcher employed an exploratory research approach to collect data, which consists of two types: primary research methods and secondary research methods. In the primary research methods, the researcher utilized a range of non-structured and semi-structured observation methods to gain authentic experiences and facts. In the secondary research methods, information was collected through online research, literature-based research, and case studies.



To achieve the research objectives of identifying the aesthetic features of three paintings, the three paintings were studied individually. Based on the aesthetic analysis method (Fenner, D. E. 2003), three analytical aspects were designed: analysis based on themes, content, and meaning; analysis based on form and structure; analysis based on the artist's background. Each artwork's identified aesthetic features will be presented, and then all the distinct features will be summarized using the inductive analysis method (Gibbs, G. R. 2018) to form a description of the features of ethnic-themed paintings in the 13th National Art Exhibition. Below is the research methodology framework that has been built.



## ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

The objective of this study was to identify the features of ethnic minority-themed paintings in the National Art Exhibition. To identify these features, the researcher employed a formal analysis method for artworks, which was divided into three main aspects: theme, main content, meaning; form and structure; artist background. Each of these aspects was arranged based on the works analyzed. Below are the outcomes of the study.



## Artwork 1



**Figure 7:** The Gesang Blossoms.Lu Qinglong.180×200cm,2019  
Source: The 13<sup>th</sup> National Art Exhibition of China

Figure 7 shows an oil painting with a Tibetan theme created by the artist Lu Qinglong. The name of the artwork references the "Gesang Blossoms," which is a symbol of traditional Tibetan culture. Studies have shown that the Gesang blossoms is often used as a synonym for strong Tibetan women (Qin Xinhui,Lin Yan,2016). The Gesang blossoms has a high position in the hearts of Tibetan people, serving as a spiritual existence that symbolizes their pursuit of happiness, auspiciousness, and beautiful emotions. Lu Qinglong employs realistic painting techniques to depict a group of figures dressed in traditional Tibetan clothing. It is easy to discern that the figures in the painting are mother and children. The children are depicted in the foreground, showing an affectionate attitude as they gather around their mother. The mother, in turn, is depicted with a loving and nurturing attitude towards her children. The content depicted in the painting echoes the Tibetan female theme represented in the name of artwork. Lu Qinglong clearly expresses his praise for Tibetan women in this work.

The ethnic clothing worn by these figures indicates that the artist, Lu Qinglong, wanted to emphasize the traditional Tibetan identity and the natural beauty associated with it. In terms of composition, Lu purposely concentrated the many figures together, while leaving out details of the ground and background so as to reinforces the visual effect of the natural beauty of the Tibetans. The main figures in the foreground are hardly shown in full face. Instead, the mothers' gazes are focused on their children, creating a unique atmosphere within the group. While the audience cannot see the mothers' facial expressions, they can sense their affection for their children. Notably, one mother is taking a picture of her child, and a modern item, a smartphone, appears in the painting. Lu Qinglong suggests that modernization has brought changes to the lives of minority ethnic groups.

Lu Qinglong holds a formal position as a professor at the School of Arts at Nanjing University. His paintings primarily depict the daily lives of ordinary individuals, such as migrant workers and ethnic minorities. Through his works, he conveys his humanistic concern

for minority groups. The theme of maternal love expressed in this artwork is a universal human theme that transcends race. As he stated, the crowds waiting for trains on platforms, the flow of pedestrians on the streets, the elderly women basking in the sun, and the laborers standing around smoking are all faithfully reproduced on canvas, making the everyday lives of those around him the source of the artist's expression of humanistic concern (Lu Qinglong,2009).

## Artwork 2



**Figure 8:** Auspicious Motherland.Li Shanyang.240×195cm,2019

Source: The 13<sup>th</sup> National Art Exhibition of China

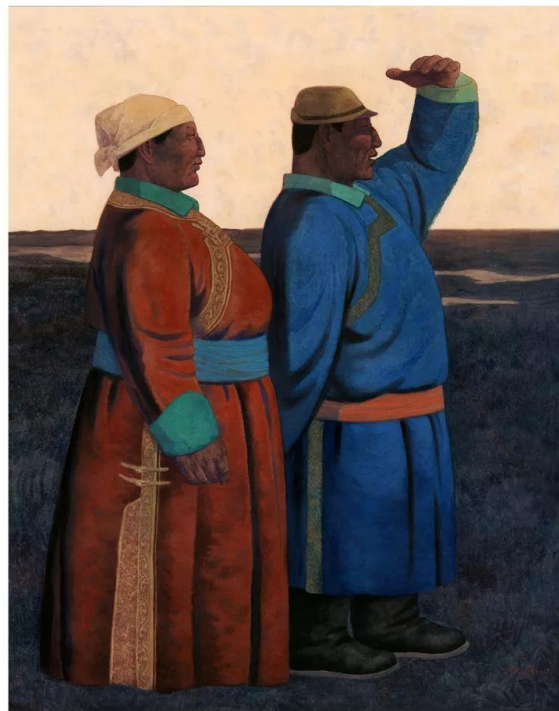
Figure 8 shows an oil painting with a Tibetan theme created by the Li Shanyang. The three women dressed in Tibetan costumes in the painting, along with the title "Auspicious Motherland," suggest that the theme of this work is to express the Tibetan people's support for their country. The three women are the main focus of the painting. The headscarves they wear, the cloth shoes on their feet, and the barley in their hands suggest their identity as Tibetan farmers. The bright sunshine, steep canyons, and towering snow-capped mountains indicate the geographical features of the Qinghai-Tibet Plateau where they live. The winding road on the canyon and the train passing through the clouds imply the achievements of the country's modernization efforts in the Tibetan region. The facial expressions of the characters are satisfied and joyful. The woman in the center holds food in her hands and makes a congratulatory gesture. Based on the above analysis, the work expresses that the government's supportive policies in the Tibetan region have improved the quality of life of the local people. Li Shanyang implies that the Tibetan people are grateful to the government and support its policies, demonstrating their loyalty to the country.

Li Shanyang used realistic techniques to combine different real scenes and arrange them in the same picture, which is clearly a design that serves the purpose of serving others' viewing. Specifically, in terms of composition and structural design, He used a perspective principle and a compressed hierarchical idea. He concentrated the three characters in a rectangular area with

the sky as the background, and used the raised hands of the central character as the center to expand upward successively until it impacted the picture. This design enhances the tension of the painting. He gathered all the light on the characters, making the contrast between light and dark on the characters the strongest in the painting. He also set the audience's viewing angle as upward and the characters in the picture as downward, creating a sense of loftiness and centrality for the characters, implying that minority groups have a high status as citizens of the republic.

Li Shanyang's other formal identity is a professor at Shandong University of Arts. He focuses on the expression of abstract meaning in realistic painting. In his thesis, "Abstract Meaning in Realistic Painting: The Art of Andrew Wyeth and Alex Colville," he studied how Andrew Wyeth and Alex Colville used painting language skills to create abstract meaning in their works. He believes that the most important aspect of this is the use of the principle of organizing similar forms and overlapping techniques (Li Shanyang,2005). This understanding of the structural design behind realism is also evident in Li Shanyang's description of his creation process for the work "Auspicious Motherland."

### Artwork 3



**Figure 9:** In The Distance.Jie Yuanfang.165×132cm,2019  
Source:the 13<sup>th</sup> National Art Exhibition of China

Figure 9 shows a watercolor painting with Mongolian themes created by Jie Yuanfang. The title of the artwork "In The Distance" and the posture of the two figures in the painting jointly imply a theme of looking into the distance. This is a theme with a relatively vague meaning, or it can be said that the artist deliberately concealed the meaning of the work in an inconspicuous manner. Such works often leave a large space for interpretation by the audience. To clarify the

artist's intention, the researcher need to obtain more information from the painting.

The figures in the painting are dressed in traditional Mongolian clothing and have a strong and calm demeanor, standing in different poses. Their eyes are slightly narrowed and focused on something in the distance, while the background depicts the Mongolian grasslands, river, and sky, indicating their indigenous homeland. Jie Yuanfang used dark colors to portray the grasslands and light colors for the sky, creating a clear dividing line that runs through the picture, parallel to the characters' gaze and leading the viewers to imagine the vast space beyond the frame. The horizon line is roughly level with the characters' shoulders, emphasizing the artist's low viewpoint to highlight the main figures. Additionally, Jie Yuanfang only applies clear colors to the characters' clothing, primarily using the primary colors. This color scheme conveys the primitive ethnic atmosphere of the Mongolian people and the simple and honest personalities of the characters. Jie Yuanfang set the representation of individual characteristics and common characteristics in an intermediate zone. She believes that if too much emphasis is placed on individual characteristics, the work will be limited to a specific object, while overemphasizing common characteristics can lead to homogeneity and lose its vitality (Jie Yuanfang,2020). Therefore, she creates her own image of Mongolian characters by retaining only some individual details, such as gender, clothing, and facial features, and exaggerating their shared characteristics. She depicts the characters' physique as robust and strong, using simple lines to accentuate their rough and wild nature. She also exaggerates their facial features, such as smaller eyes, wider cheekbones, and a thicker and shorter neck, completing her expression of the individuality and commonality of the Mongolian characters.

Jie Yuanfang holds another formal position as an associate professor at the School of Fine Arts of Inner Mongolia University of the Arts. Although she is not a Mongolian herself, she lives with Mongolian people and has a deep emotional connection with them. She once stated, "I want to use my paintings to express our feelings towards each other" (Jie Yuanfang,2020). Her profound understanding of the Mongolian people enables her to think about artistic expression from their perspective. Based on the analysis above, the theme of this work is largely inspired by a poetic expression strategy. She visualizes subjective concepts such as love and hope. It can be inferred that the theme of this work is related to the human theme of love, faith, life, and death from the perspective of a minority group.

## **DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

Based on the analysis above, the features of three ethnic-themed paintings identified in the aesthetic analysis method are categorized as follows:

### **Theme, Content, Meaning**

The themes of the three artworks are as follows: Lu Qinglong's "The Gesang Blossoms" focuses on maternal love; Li Shanyang's "Auspicious Motherland" celebrates the national ethnic policies; and Jie Yuanfang's "In The Distance" has a vague poetic theme. There are some similarities in their selection of minority groups to portray. Two of the artworks have Tibetan

themes, and one has a Mongolian theme. The Tibetans and Mongolians both live in remote regions of the northwest and north, and are less affected by modern civilization. For example, many Mongolians still rely on nomadic herding for a living. The three artists have chosen to depict minority groups that still maintain their distinct ethnic features. All three artworks mainly depict people dressed in their ethnic clothing, showcasing their primitive ethnic image. From this perspective, the artists tend to portray the original aesthetic beauty of the ethnic minorities. Additionally, modern objects are presented to varying degrees in "The Gesang Blossoms" and "Auspicious Motherland". This indicates that the artists are aware of the impact of modernization on ethnic minorities, and they largely have a positive attitude towards modernization among minority groups. This is because the modern objects in the artworks appear for the purpose of construction rather than destruction. In terms of the meaning of the artworks, all three express praise for ethnic minorities: Lu Qinglong's "The Gesang Blossoms" uses the representative symbol of the beautiful Gesang blossoms to praise Tibetan women; Li Shanyang's "Auspicious Motherland" praises the Tibetan people's diligence by depicting the special skin color and texture that labor brings to the characters, as well as the grain they hold in their hands; and Jie Yuanfang's "In The Distance" subtly praises the Mongolian people's simple and honest national character.

### **Form, Structure**

The three works are all presented in the form of realism to depict ethnic groups. Realism not only presents the surface reality, but also portrays the profound meaning beyond the surface. Some scholars have expressed similar views. Like Yi Ying said, this dual nature of realism is the criterion for judging realistic art (Yi Ying,2018). To convey the profound meaning, the three artists displayed their individual preferences in composition design. Lu Qinglong's "The Gesang Blossoms" portrays a group of people as the main subject of the painting, with a focus on the dynamics and clothing details of the foreground figures. This design highlights the interaction between the characters in the foreground, presenting the communication between mother and child directly to the audience, making the maternal love in the Tibetan ethnic group palpable. Li Shanyang's "Auspicious Motherland" combines different scenes, arranging them reasonably in a space set by the artist, and incorporates light and shadow designs, further emphasizing the central position of the figures in the painting, creating a monument-like sculptural effect. Jie Yuanfang's "In The Distance" is also a kind of realistic work. She processed the characters and scenes into a flat and geometric form to achieve concise lines and contours, in line with the rough and straightforward personality of the Mongolian ethnic group. She reduced the purity of colors and preferred to use primary colors. Unnecessary details, such as clothing patterns and grassland, are omitted. This makes the painting more concise and the theme she wants to portray more apparent.

### **Artist Backgrounds**

The three artists all share a common identity as a teacher of fine arts in university, which provides them with convenient conditions of time and funding for their research. Their research mainly focuses on the painting representation of ethnic minority themes. Their previous research forms the basis for their studies on the ethnic minority groups. All three artists use realism strategy to depict ethnic minority groups. In addition to portraying the authenticity of

ethnic minority images and their living environment, the artists also try to express their understanding of the ethnic minority groups. Lu Qinglong places one of the universal human themes, motherly love, in the context of Tibetan themes to extend his reflections on human care themes. Li Shanyang juxtaposes modern products and Tibetan characters in his paintings to depict scenes where Tibetan ethnic groups benefit from the modernization process led by the government, which leads to thoughts on the transformation of ethnic minority modernization. Jie Yuanfang is relatively unique among the three artists. She lives and works in the Mongolian region, and her relationship with the ethnic group she selected is the closest among the three artists. As she said, "I am not a Mongolian, but they are my relatives and friends (Jie Yuanfang,2020). " Her close relationship with the Mongolian people creates an emotional connection between her and the Mongolian ethnic group. This enables her to understand the inner world of individual characters and think what they think. The characters she portrays represent a part of her personal emotions.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the research of award-winning artworks on ethnic themes at the 13th National Art Exhibition, the following features were found in three main aspects: theme, content and meaning, form and structure, artist background. Artists tend to portray ethnic features with primitive beauty in ethnic minorities, and some artists pay attention to the impact of modernization on ethnic minorities. Realism is the common form used by artists to depict ethnic minorities, but underneath the surface, they have their own considerations. All artists are college teachers who have conducted relatively long-term research on the ethnic minorities they portray, forming the foundation of their research. Additionally, artists hold a cautious attitude towards modern elements in ethnic minorities and adopt a restrained expression strategy about that. Through this research, no artworks were found expressing ethnic minorities losing their original features in the process of modernization. Like the two ethnic minority communities mentioned in the introduction part, they were not the focus of these artists. Ethnic minorities in different stages of modernization are a common status quo. It can be inferred that ethnic minority-themed paintings have not been fully researched and explored.

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