

# Analysis of She Ethnic-themed Paintings from the Perspective of Ecological Aesthetics

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**Abstract:** *In the context of natural and cultural ecology, She ethnic culture, with its unique ecological concepts and aesthetic ideals, provides a rich source of inspiration for contemporary painting. Artists skillfully merge She ethnic culture with natural ecology through their distinctive perspectives and exquisite techniques, creating artworks that are both rich in ethnic characteristics and abundant in ecological beauty. These works not only showcase the artists' profound artistic achievements and ecological aesthetic wisdom but also enrich the treasury of minority-themed paintings in China.*

**Keywords:** *She ethnic group; Eco-Aesthetics; Contemporary art; Painting works*

## 1. Introduction

In the history of Chinese painting, paintings depicting minority ethnic groups occupy an important position. Ethnic minorities groups have always attracted the attention of artists with their unique physical features and wonderful ethnic culture. And their unique ethnic styles and painting language have provided artists with a broader space for creations.

In the 1940s, artistic creations themed around ethnic minorities primarily focused on showcasing ethnic customs. A significant number of artists sought creative inspiration by traveling to various regions in order to explore the ethnic traditions and folk customs of minority groups. Notable works such as Dong Xiwen's work of "Arriving in Tibet in Spring" and Ye Qianyu's work of "Miao Girl" significantly enriched the development of ethnic minority-themed art during this period. Nevertheless, as Chinese society underwent profound transformations in the late 1970s and early 1980s, artists' creative paradigms also were evolved. Influenced by 'Scar Art,' they shifted their focus towards depicting everyday living conditions, engaging in societal realities directly, thus unveiling a more authentic portrayal of society. This transformation has also affected the artistic creations of minority themes, with artists beginning to reflect on the overly decorative approaches of the past and gradually returning to nature and authenticity. During this period, Chen Danqing's "Tibet Series" elevated ethnic painting to new heights, as his works of Tibet no longer showcased the artistic style of Utopian, but instead emphasized directness and documentary realism. His contributions represented an important milestone in the development of Chinese art, not only shaping the new direction of artistic creation but also encouraging greater focus on expressing inner spirit.

After the reform and opening up, art creations with minority themes entered a new stage of development. Artists began to focus more on expressing human nature and ethnic character, exploring diverse themes and employing richer techniques. For instance, Wei Er Shen's painting "Auspicious Mongolia" not only demonstrated his mastery of traditional European oil painting techniques but also reflected his deep concern for and contemplation of this changing nation.

In response to escalating global ecological crises and deteriorating human living environments in the 21st century, there had been a widespread emergence of an ecological movement. Concurrently, within Chinese contemporary art circles, there was evidence of a shift towards embracing ecological transformation<sup>[1]</sup>. This era witnessed deep explorations in painting that delved into human-nature relationships alongside societal dynamics—becoming central themes for artists<sup>[2]</sup>. In regions inhabited by ethnic minorities, both the magnificent natural landscapes and the profound ethnic cultural history retain a wealth of original ecological characteristics. Therefore, under the background of natural and cultural ecology, artistic creations centered on the lives of ethnic minorities have attracted the attention of artists, ushering in a golden period of development.

Ecological aesthetics is an aesthetic concept that covers the ecological dimension. In the fine cultural tradition of She people, the lifestyle of harmonious coexistence between She people and nature, the romanticized interpretation of natural mountains and rivers in folk stories, and the concept of ecological protection contained in myths and legends together constitute a solid foundation for the ecological aesthetics of She people. In view of this, this paper first reviewed the academic theoretical research results about the She ethnic group ecological aesthetics in recent years, and then interprets the ecological aesthetic thoughts displayed in the She ethnic group themed paintings in recent years from multiple dimensions such as the She ethnic group natural landscape and lifestyle based on the perspective of ecological aesthetics, so as to deepen the understanding of the She ethnic group ecological aesthetics, and provide a new perspective and thinking for contemporary art creation.

## 2. Research Status of Ecological Aesthetics on She Ethnic Group

She ethnic group is an ancient and simple ethnic minority in China, mainly distributed in the remote mountains in the southeast of China. In the early days, She people lived a slash-and-burn, self-sufficient life, and depended on the nature. Therefore, She people had nature worship, regarded all natural things as gods, and unconsciously took natural things around them as objects of worship. It is precisely under this ecological view of reverence for nature that people's behavior towards the surrounding nature is subject to certain constraints. This restriction objectively reduces the disturbance of human activities to the nature, and finally realizes the protection of the natural ecology, making the She area a natural ecological picture of beautiful mountains, lush forests and bamboo shade. It is precisely the living environment of She people for a long time that has laid the foundation for her aesthetics. For example, She costumes are obtained by She people through farming cotton and ramie, and are made of textile. Most of the patterns and colors on the clothing are mostly the colors of the plants themselves, showing rich and gorgeous colors. The common animal and plant patterns in female clothing, such as fish pattern, bird pattern, peony pattern, chrysanthemum pattern and lotus pattern, all reflect the charming natural style of She ethnic group area. Therefore, She costumes are not only a visual symbol produced by the She people's "re-processing" of the local beautiful natural scene, but also contains the ecological aesthetics of nature and the ecological thought of "harmony between nature and man".

At present, domestic scholars have carried out extensive and in-depth research in the field of She ethnic group ecological aesthetics. For example, Xia Juan and Wang Yang, in the framework of cultural ecosystem under the interaction of multiple factors such as physical geography, social economy, human customs and totem belief, found that the She costumes contain profound ecological aesthetics such as "harmonious coexistence", "symbiosis" and "equality"<sup>[3]</sup>. From the perspective of ecological aesthetics, Wu Suping explored the aesthetic implications of She traditional costumes and folk songs, and revealed the ecological aesthetic art and survival mode contained in the She ethnic group culture<sup>[4]</sup>. Nowadays, under the guidance of the concept of sustainable development, some scholars have begun to pay attention to the unity of ethnic group and ecology in the innovative design of minority clothing. Li Ling<sup>[5]</sup> thought that with the continuous enhancement of social ecological consciousness, human beings should not only pay attention to the ecology of production and life, but also pay attention to the ecological construction of culture. In promoting the innovative development of fashion design, it is essential to fully value and integrate ethnic culture, achieving an ecological approach to clothing design. The above research findings not only greatly enrich our understanding of She ethnic culture but also add new vitality to the development of ecological aesthetics, providing unique perspectives and ideas.

## 3. Ecological Aesthetics Reflected in She Ethnic Theme Paintings

In recent years, paintings themed around the She ethnic group have emerged like a breath of fresh air, quietly sweeping through the art world. Their unique charm and profound influence have become increasingly prominent, capturing the attention of numerous artists and audiences<sup>[6]</sup>. The artists not only vividly showcase the rich and colorful ethnic customs of the She people, but also skillfully integrate the wisdom of ecological aesthetics into their works, making each piece seem like a vibrant ecological scroll, flowing with the harmonious beauty of nature and culture. Through delicate brushwork and a unique perspective, they vividly depict the natural landscapes of the She ethnic group's mountains, waters, forests, and fields. Simultaneously, they skillfully incorporate scenes of the She people's labor, daily life, and festivals, making the works rich in liveliness while also embodying profound ecological aesthetic concepts. This ingenious integration not only allows viewers to directly

feel the unique charm of the She ethnic customs, but also guides people to think and understand the ecological wisdom of harmonious coexistence between human and nature.

### ***3.1. Embodiment of the She Ethnic Group's Ecological Aesthetic Wisdom in Folk Paintings***

Folk painting occupies a unique and prominent position in the history of Chinese art. It is not only a sincere expression of original art but also a vivid practice of ecological aesthetics, deeply rooted in the fertile soil of folk culture. "She ethnic group folk painting" is a unique picture scroll filled with the She ethnic group's customs. It takes the elements of She ethnic group's folk patterns, costumes, paper cutting, embroidery, architectural coloring as its cornerstone. Every stroke and stroke is deeply rooted in the soil of She ethnic group and exude unique charm. Although the content is simple and unadorned, it is like a mirror, vividly reflecting the style and soul of She ethnic group. In the "March 3rd" folk painting Art Exhibition of She ethnic group in China in 2021, Zhang Limei's work "The People of She Ethnic Group are Happy" skillfully integrates the natural landscape of She ethnic group with the cultural environment in a full, exaggerated and romantic way, as if bringing the viewer into a festival celebration of She ethnic group full of laughter and joy. Every detail in the picture flows with the rustic natural ecological beauty of the She countryside, captivating the viewer and leaving them enchanted and reluctant to leave. Mei Xiao's "Fun with Melons in She Ethnic Village" is a warm portrayal of life. In the work, the She farming scene of picking and selling watermelons, as well as the family sitting around eating watermelons, is lifelike. The artist The painter intricately depicts elements such as the She ethnic group's attire, headdresses, characters, patterns, and phoenixes, vividly showcasing the happy lives of She farmers. This painting not only reflects the local customs and traditions of the She ethnic group but also conveys the ecological beauty of social harmony among people, making people feel a warm sense of power. Wei Zhaofeng's work of "Splendid Well-off Society" is a masterpiece deeply rooted in the countryside and unique She traditional customs. In the picture, a group of She ethnic women, dressed in traditional attire, gracefully walk along the winding mountain path, carrying baskets laden with local produce. This scene seems to transport the viewer into the simple yet vibrant rural life of the She people. The background of the works is even more unique, which is made of various colorful ribbon patterns on the She ethnic costumes. The dense layers of patterns are like gorgeous tapestry, showing a strong visual impact, as if every line and every color are telling the culture and story of the She ethnic group. This work is not only a beautiful painting but also a hymn that celebrates the richness of a wonderful life. It vividly embodies the friendship and harmony in the work of She women with the names of Lan, Zhong, Pan and Lei. They stand shoulder to shoulder, weaving together the chapters of a happy life. Therefore, this painting is the best interpretation of the harmonious ecological beauty of the She ethnic society, and people can feel sincere emotion in addition to appreciating it. It can be seen that "She folk painting" not only showcase the simple ecological aesthetics of the She homeland but also silently narrate the stories of the She people, conveying the ecological beauty of social harmony. Each artwork serves as a vivid window, allowing viewers to glimpse the rich and diverse cultural connotations and unique charm of the She ethnic group.

### ***3.2. Embodiment of the She Ethnic Group's Ecological Aesthetic Wisdom in Meticulous Paintings***

Meticulous painting pursues "likeness," focuses on "details," emphasizes realism, and strives to express intricate textures and precise forms through meticulous brushwork and richly layered colors, giving the work a characteristic of exquisite delicacy. In the meticulous paintings that depict the She ethnic group's themes, artists often merge modern techniques with traditional elements by utilizing cultural symbols such as totems, clothing, and architecture of the She people, creating works that embody a sense of contemporary relevance and ecological aesthetic wisdom. For example, the meticulous figure paintings by artist Lin Jinchun, such as "*Singing folk songs to each others*"(see Figure 1) and "*Sing a new song walking in the southern field, and the sun shining*" (see Figure 2) focus on the She ethnic group. He delves deeply into and vividly portrays the "natural beauty" of She women<sup>[7]</sup>. In "*Singing folk songs to each others*" , a group of She women gazes into the distance, singing mountain songs. Their eyes and brows are relaxed, and their smiles are radiant, showcasing the harmonious unity of the inherent and external beauty of She ethnic group women, which moves people deeply. In another fascinating work of "*Sing a new song walking in the southern field, and the sun shining*" , A group of She women, carrying woven baskets on their backs, lightly tread along the path to the market, chatting and laughing, and their steps are filled with a relaxed atmosphere. Notably, a woman gently cradles a rooster in her arms; her gaze and posture seem to narrate a beautiful story of equality, intimacy, and harmonious coexistence between humans and animals. This delicate detail undoubtedly adds some vividness and interest to the whole painting. In the two works, Lin Jinchun

adheres to the creative principle of "learning from nature externally, and deriving from the heart internally," taking the unique ecological wisdom of "harmony between nature and man" as the source of inspiration. With a peaceful mindset, he examines nature and skillfully transforms its beauty into an internal artistic expression, thereby showcasing the youthful vitality, sunny disposition, and self-confident beauty of contemporary women. What is even more impressive is that, in terms of color combination, the artist skillfully transforms the beauty of the natural landscape into harmonious and rich colors on the canvas. This ingeniously crafted expressive technique not only greatly enhances the artistic appeal of the artwork but also silently conveys the wisdom of harmonious coexistence between humans and nature within ecological aesthetics. Each stroke and each color seems to narrate a touching story about harmony and symbiosis, allowing viewers, while appreciating the piece, to deeply respect the artist's profound artistic accomplishment and unique creative philosophy.



Figure 1: "Singing folk songs to each others" By Lin Jin chun



Figure 2: "Sing a new song, walking in the southern field in the sun" By Lin Jin chun.

### 3.3. Embodiment of She Ethnic Group's Ecological Aesthetic Wisdom in Oil Paintings

Since the rise of oil painting as an art form, themes related to ethnic minorities have become a focal point for many artists. Artists have recorded the living conditions, inner worlds, and spiritual characteristics of ethnic minorities from different historical periods through delicate brushwork and vivid colors. Take Wu Changyao's oil painting work of "Fruitful" as an example(see Figure 3). The woman from the She ethnic group in the painting is wearing a highly distinctive "Phoenix costume" that is characteristic of the region. One can clearly identify it as belonging to the Fuan-style "Phoenix costume" merely by examining the shape of the headdress and the structural patterns of the attire. In creating this work, the artist skillfully employed minimalist shaping techniques to meticulously extract and highlight the aesthetic elements embedded in the attire of the She ethnic group. This technique not only shows the ecological and rustic beauty unique to the "Phoenix Costume", but also plays a key role in the painting. From the perspective of ecological aesthetics, Wu Changyao has successfully achieved a harmonious and perfect integration and presentation of the traditional culture of the She ethnic group and the concepts of natural aesthetics. The She ethnic woman in the painting, adorned in her "Phoenix Costume" seems to become an extension of nature, collectively forming a vibrant and harmonious ecological tapestry with the mountains, flora, and fruits. This not only serves as a heartfelt tribute to She culture but also represents the brilliant manifestation of the artist's exceptional artistic achievement and profound ecological aesthetic wisdom. Another fascinating work of "Singing folk songs to each others" (see Figure 4), people can deeply feel the artist's exquisite use of unique cultural symbols in the She traditional costumes. These symbols are not only visual decoration, but also vivid carriers of the spiritual and cultural connotations of the She people, as if they are telling a distant story. Every detail of the work reveals the artist's profound ecological aesthetic wisdom, as well as his profound understanding of the harmonious coexistence of nature and humanity. The work not only vividly showed the life scene of the She people singing folk songs leisurely in the original ecological nature, but also vividly portrayed the unique spiritual style and ethnic charm of the characters. This technique of integrating ecological aesthetic idea into artistic creation in the painting undoubtedly demonstrates the artist's outstanding artistic attainments and unique aesthetic perspective. Therefore, the work of "Singing folk songs to each others" is not only a painting, but also a spiritual journey, which leads us into the daily life of the She people, to feel the beauty of their harmonious coexistence with nature, and to experience the simple and sincere ethnic emotion. This work is undoubtedly a deep tribute to the She culture and a brilliant bloom of the artist's artistic talent.



Figure 3: "Fruitful" By WU Chang yao.





Figure 4: "Singing folk songs to each others" By Wu Chang yao.

#### 4. Conclusions

The rich cultural heritage and unique ecological environment of She ethnic group provide endless creative inspiration for painting art. In the above paintings themed on the She ethnic group, people can see the beauty of mountains and rivers, the verdure of trees, the babbling of streams, as well as the scenes of the She ethnic group working hard and celebrating festivals on this land. These pictures are not only a reproduction of the beauty of nature, but also a profound interpretation of the harmonious relationship between human and nature. Through their unique aesthetic perspective, delicate brushstrokes and rich colors, the artists have integrated the ecological wisdom and life philosophy of the She people into their paintings, conveying their deep concern for the ecological environment, so that viewers can feel a strong sense of ecological responsibility and mission while appreciating the beauty.

Through the in-depth analysis of the She-themed paintings, it can be seen that when the painters create the She-themed paintings, they not only pay attention to the expression of the local customs and regional characteristics, but also integrate the concept of ecological aesthetics into them. Through their unique perspective and exquisite skills, they perfectly integrated the She culture with the natural ecology, thus creating a series of artistic works with both ethnic characteristics and ecological beauty. These works not only show the profound artistic attainments and ecological aesthetic wisdom of the painters, but also enrich the treasure-house of paintings about ethnic minorities in China.

In today's international and market-oriented painting environment, Chinese painting is facing unprecedented challenges and opportunities. Therefore, for the creation of the theme of ethnic minorities, artists should enter into the hinterland of ethnic minority areas, experience the geographical environment there, and deeply understand its unique cultural customs. Through in-depth exploration, artists can not only vividly present the original natural environment of ethnic minorities that has not been touched by modern civilization on the canvas, but also depict their rich and colorful traditional culture in the form of painting. Such creative process not only makes the works of ethnic minority subjects full of vitality and unique vitality, but also makes them maintain and highlight the distinct local characteristics in the art wave of globalization.

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