

Fine Arts Education and Ethnic Cultural Inheritance in Higher Education: A Four-Stage Conceptual Framework for Guizhou, China

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Abstract: Globalization, modernization, changing lifestyles, and declining participation in traditional practices have increased concern about the continuity of ethnic cultural heritage. This issue is especially important in Guizhou Province, China, where Miao, Dong, Buyi, and other ethnic communities maintain distinctive traditions in silverwork, embroidery, batik, architecture, clothing, crafts, and performance. Although universities increasingly recognize their responsibility for cultural inheritance, ethnic culture is often introduced in fine arts courses through decorative motifs, visual forms, or technical imitation without sufficient attention to historical context, symbolic meaning, identity, community participation, and contemporary relevance. This conceptual paper explains how fine arts education can support cultural inheritance through an integrated four-stage framework: documentation, aesthetic continuation, identity construction, and innovative transformation. The framework draws on art anthropology, social constructivism, and creative pedagogy and links the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of cultural learning. It proposes that students move from acquiring culturally grounded knowledge to developing aesthetic appreciation, cultural confidence, active participation, and responsible innovation. The paper argues that effective inheritance requires coherent curriculum design, student-centred and experiential learning, sustained engagement with practitioners and communities, and opportunities to apply traditional knowledge in contemporary artistic and professional contexts. The framework provides a theoretical guide for curriculum development, programme evaluation, university-community collaboration, and future empirical research in Guizhou higher education..

Keywords: Fine arts education; ethnic culture; national culture; intangible cultural heritage; cultural inheritance; cultural confidence; higher education.

1. Introduction

Globalization and modernization have changed the conditions under which cultural knowledge, artistic practices, and community traditions are transmitted. Wider cultural exchange can increase visibility and stimulate new forms of artistic expression, but it can also weaken the perceived relevance of local traditions among younger generations. In this environment, cultural inheritance cannot be reduced to preserving historical objects. It is an intergenerational process through which communities maintain, communicate, practise, and adapt knowledge, skills, values, symbols, and meanings. Research cited in the thesis shows that younger and highly educated populations may become more receptive to dominant cultural influences and less connected to particular traditional practices, placing continuity under pressure (Aisyah Abu Bakar et al., 2014). This concern

is especially significant in China, where diverse ethnic communities contribute to national cultural richness. Guizhou Province provides a particularly relevant context because its Miao, Dong, Buyi, and other communities have sustained artistic traditions including Miao silverwork and embroidery, Dong architecture and drum towers, Buyi batik, traditional clothing, crafts, and performing arts. These forms are not merely decorative products. They embody accumulated knowledge, historical memory, cultural identity, values, techniques, and relationships between communities and their environments (Wu, 2024; Zhang, 2023). Intangible cultural heritage is central to this discussion. It includes practices, expressions, knowledge, skills, objects, instruments, and cultural spaces recognized by communities as part of their heritage (UNESCO, 2003). Its continuity depends on practitioners and social participation. An object can be stored in a museum, but the knowledge needed to produce, interpret, and use it may disappear if cultural practice is interrupted. Effective inheritance must therefore preserve not only visible forms but also the skills, meanings, narratives, and relationships through which those forms remain alive. Higher education institutions occupy an important position within this cultural ecosystem. Universities produce knowledge, prepare future professionals, and influence how young people understand identity and social responsibility. Fine arts education is particularly relevant because it combines visual analysis, technical skill, material experience, aesthetic judgment, reflection, and creative production. It can support documentation of cultural forms (Shi, 2019), continuation of aesthetic values (Wang, 2019), development of cultural confidence, and contemporary application through art, design, digital media, and creative industries (Dreesmann et al., 2014; Yavuz, 2013). However, the inclusion of ethnic elements in university courses does not automatically constitute cultural inheritance. In Guizhou higher education, curriculum design may be incomplete, cultural content may lack depth, and institutional objectives may not clearly connect art education with cultural continuity or professional preparation (Zhang, 2023). Traditional culture is sometimes represented through patterns, colours, and stylistic characteristics without adequate attention to historical origins, symbolic meaning, community function, and cultural ownership. Such treatment can reduce living traditions to static decorative elements (Zhou & Li, 2024). Pedagogy presents a related problem. Teacher-centred instruction based on lecture, demonstration, imitation, and rote reproduction may develop technical accuracy but does not necessarily cultivate interpretation, identity, or creativity. Student-centred approaches involving studio exploration, reflective discussion, community projects, and creative problem-solving are more consistent with the goal of developing active cultural participants (Swanzy-Impraim et al., 2022; Yavuz, 2013). Visual-perception methods can also move learners from passive viewing to analytical engagement with artistic structure and meaning (Arslangazi, 2012). A further concern is the distance between university teaching and community practice. Cultural inheritance occurs primarily through families, artisans, community associations, rituals, and everyday participation. Universities are therefore only one part of the transmission system. When practitioners are excluded, courses may offer incomplete or decontextualized accounts of traditional art. Collaboration with cultural bearers can connect academic learning with embodied knowledge and living practice (Aisyah Abu

Bakar et al., 2014). The literature reviewed in the thesis identifies cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of cultural inheritance. The cognitive dimension concerns knowledge of history, symbols, materials, techniques, and cultural narratives. The affective dimension concerns appreciation, pride, identity, belonging, and cultural confidence. The behavioural dimension concerns participation, artistic production, skills application, community engagement, and innovation. Existing studies often address these outcomes separately. Heritage research may emphasize documentation and preservation, while art-education research may focus on pedagogy, creativity, or employability. A coherent framework is therefore needed to explain how educational processes connect knowledge, appreciation, identity, and practice. The research gap is consequently both conceptual and educational. There is insufficient integration between the cultural meanings to be transmitted, the teaching processes through which students engage with them, and the outcomes expected from that engagement. There is also limited clarification of how student-centred methods, visual perception, community participation, professional preparation, and digital integration can be organized within one developmental model for Guizhou universities. Without such integration, cultural content may be present in courses while the transition from knowledge to confidence and from confidence to practice remains unexplained. This paper responds by proposing a four-stage conceptual framework consisting of documentation, aesthetic continuation, identity construction, and innovative transformation. It asks how fine arts education can support ethnic cultural inheritance, how cognitive, affective, and behavioural processes are connected, and what pedagogical, community, and institutional conditions influence implementation. Its contribution is a theoretically integrated model that positions students not only as recipients of tradition but also as informed and responsible participants in cultural continuity and renewal.

2. Ethnic Cultural Inheritance and Intangible Cultural Heritage

2.1 Ethnic Culture, National Culture, and Cultural Inheritance

Ethnic culture refers to the historically developed system of meanings, practices, beliefs, customs, symbols, artistic forms, and practical knowledge associated with a particular community. It is expressed through language, rituals, architecture, clothing, crafts, visual arts, performance, and patterns of social life. National culture is broader: in a multi-ethnic society, it is enriched by the diversity of the traditions that contribute to collective identity. Protecting distinct ethnic traditions therefore supports both community continuity and the wider cultural inheritance of the nation. In Guizhou, Miao silverwork and embroidery, Dong architecture, Buyi batik, traditional clothing, decorative symbols, and performance preserve more than aesthetic forms. They retain knowledge of materials, production methods, environment, social relationships, memory, and identity (Wu, 2024; Zhang, 2023). Their educational value depends on presenting these relationships, not only their visual appearance. Cultural inheritance is not the mechanical transfer of fixed forms. Traditions survive because communities repeatedly interpret and practise them while responding to new social conditions. Inheritance includes the transmission of knowledge, skills, values, practices, and meanings across generations and their continued

development (Aisyah Abu Bakar et al., 2014). Artistic traditions make this process visible and experiential. A piece of Miao silverwork, a Buyi batik design, or a Dong architectural form may simultaneously embody material knowledge, technical skill, memory, symbolic meaning, social identity, and collective values. Cultural inheritance is also linked to identity. Individuals develop belonging through engagement with stories, symbols, artistic practices, and values regarded as meaningful by communities. Cultural confidence involves pride, value identification, and connection with heritage. In higher education, confidence requires more than awareness: students must understand the significance of cultural forms, appreciate their value, and recognize their relevance to contemporary life. Cultural confidence should therefore be grounded in knowledge and participation rather than in symbolic celebration alone.

2.2 Intangible Cultural Heritage as Living Practice

The concept of intangible cultural heritage emphasizes that cultural continuity depends on living practice. Traditional crafts, performing arts, customs, rituals, knowledge, and skills are sustained through practitioners and community recognition (UNESCO, 2003). In Guizhou, embroidery, silverwork, batik, architecture, and related traditions depend on knowledge transmitted through demonstration, observation, oral explanation, and repeated practice. This living character also creates vulnerability. Physical objects may survive while the knowledge needed to make or interpret them disappears. A preserved embroidered garment does not itself retain knowledge about material selection, production sequence, symbolism, or social use. Documentation can record images, techniques, oral histories, and production stages, but records alone cannot reproduce the full social context of a tradition. Higher education can contribute by organizing knowledge, developing teaching resources, supporting documentation, and providing opportunities for practice. Yet universities cannot replace families, communities, and cultural bearers. Effective engagement must involve practitioners and recognize their authority in interpreting heritage. This distinction is essential: education should support living transmission rather than transferring ownership of cultural knowledge from communities to institutions.

2.3 Cognitive, Affective, and Behavioural Dimensions

Cultural inheritance through fine arts education can be understood through three interconnected dimensions. The cognitive dimension includes historical, symbolic, material, and technical knowledge. The affective dimension includes appreciation, emotional attachment, belonging, identity, and confidence. The behavioural dimension includes practice, participation, creation, collaboration, and innovation (Aisyah Abu Bakar et al., 2014). These dimensions depend on one another. Knowledge without emotional engagement may remain detached; appreciation without contextual knowledge may become romanticized; and creative activity without understanding may lead to inappropriate or decontextualized use. Effective inheritance requires students to understand cultural traditions, value them meaningfully, and participate responsibly in their continuation. The three dimensions also provide possible criteria for evaluating art programmes: what students know, how they relate to what they know, and what they are

able and willing to do with that knowledge. This relationship provides the educational logic for the four-stage framework.

3. Contemporary Challenges to Cultural Inheritance

3.1 Globalization and Changing Cultural Preferences

Global circulation of images, technologies, lifestyles, and artistic styles creates opportunities for cultural exchange and broader visibility. At the same time, dominant cultural products may reduce the social prominence of local traditions. Younger people may regard traditional practices as less relevant to modern education, employment, or daily life. Evidence cited in the thesis suggests that younger, highly educated, and higher-income groups can display weaker recognition of particular heritage practices and greater receptivity to mainstream cultural influences (Aisyah Abu Bakar et al., 2014). The result may be reduced knowledge, weaker emotional attachment, and declining participation. Globalization is not exclusively destructive. It can support digital presentation, contemporary design, and wider communication. The challenge is to develop sufficient cultural knowledge and confidence so that adaptation does not erase the meanings that distinguish a tradition.

3.2 Economic Pressures on Traditional Crafts

Traditional crafts depend on specialized skill, long production periods, and practitioner livelihoods. Industrial products are often cheaper and more easily distributed, while consumer preferences continue to change. Contracting markets may make traditional practice economically insecure and discourage younger people from becoming apprentices (Zhou & Li, 2024). When practitioners leave without successors, knowledge of materials, tools, production sequences, quality standards, and cultural use may be lost. Creative industries can provide new opportunities by connecting heritage with design, museums, tourism, digital media, and entrepreneurship (Dreesmann et al., 2014). Yet commercialization may also simplify traditions into marketable decoration. Sustainable application must therefore balance economic viability, cultural integrity, practitioner participation, and community benefit.

3.3 Superficial Representation in Education

A central educational problem is the use of ethnic culture as a collection of colours, motifs, and techniques. Students may reproduce a traditional pattern without understanding its origin, symbolism, social function, or relationship to community identity. This approach removes artistic appearance from the cultural system that produced it and turns living practice into a static visual resource (Zhou & Li, 2024). Formal analysis remains important, but it must be connected with contextual interpretation. Active visual-perception methods can help students examine relationships among form, material, technique, symbolism, and cultural context rather than receive images passively (Arslangazi, 2012). Nevertheless, not all meanings can be discovered visually. Practitioner explanations, historical accounts, and community narratives remain necessary.

3.4 Pedagogical and Institutional Limitations

Cultural inheritance is weakened when universities lack clear objectives, coherent curricula, trained teachers, community partnerships, or adequate resources. Ethnic content may appear only in isolated lessons or exhibitions rather than being connected across art history, studio practice, design, digital media, and professional development. Teacher-centred methods may produce technical replication without interpretation or creativity (Swanzy-Impraim et al., 2022). Student-centred inquiry, studio exploration, reflection, and community projects offer a stronger basis for cultural learning (Yavuz, 2013). Their implementation, however, requires time, faculty capability, and institutional support. Digital integration presents an additional challenge: teachers' technological competence shapes how effectively digital tools are used, while the connection between digital media and cultural content remains underdeveloped (Shiri & Baigutov, 2024; Uzunboyly & Islek, 2014). These challenges demonstrate the need for an integrated educational mechanism rather than isolated cultural content. The challenges are mutually reinforcing. Superficial curricula can weaken students' understanding, teacher-centred methods can reduce participation, and limited professional opportunities can discourage long-term practice. Conversely, economic and technological opportunities may not support cultural continuity when learners lack contextual knowledge. An effective intervention must therefore address cultural content, pedagogy, community connection, and application together.

4. Fine Arts Education as a Cultural-Inheritance Mechanism

Fine arts education can connect cultural knowledge, aesthetic experience, practical production, identity, and innovation. Its contribution depends on systematic integration rather than the addition of occasional traditional motifs to existing courses. The distinctive value of art education lies in its ability to combine interpretation with embodied and material learning. First, art education can support documentation. Students can record patterns, objects, materials, tools, production processes, symbols, architectural forms, oral histories, and practitioner explanations through drawing, photography, video, written description, and digital archives. Documentation becomes an educational activity when learners investigate how cultural forms are produced, what they mean, and how they function within communities (Shi, 2019). Recording visible appearance alone is insufficient; context, narratives, and practitioner perspectives are necessary to preserve cultural meaning. Documentation also allows students to compare regional variations and recognize that ethnic traditions are internally diverse rather than uniform. Second, art education can continue aesthetic values. Traditional arts embody distinctive relationships among form, colour, rhythm, material, texture, symbolism, and craftsmanship. Visual analysis, studio practice, material exploration, and contextual interpretation help students understand these relationships. Aesthetic continuation moves beyond copying by linking artistic form with community meaning. It contributes to the affective dimension of inheritance by developing appreciation and emotional engagement. Direct work with materials may reveal the skill, patience, and judgment involved in a practice more effectively than written description alone. Third, art education can support identity and cultural confidence. Artistic practice enables learners to encounter heritage visually, materially, and emotionally. Through reflection and interaction, cultural knowledge may

become connected with family memory, regional identity, or wider national culture. Students will not all construct the same identity, but they can develop informed respect, belonging, and responsibility. Participatory learning and dialogue are important because identity is shaped socially rather than produced through factual instruction alone. Fourth, student-centred and experiential pedagogy can transform learners from passive recipients into active interpreters. Studio exploration, visual analysis, collaborative production, field visits, practitioner demonstrations, community projects, and creative problem-solving connect knowledge with experience and action. Creative pedagogy emphasizes learner agency and the development of new relationships between traditional knowledge and contemporary life (Yavuz, 2013). This approach contrasts with rigid replication, which may restrict creativity and reduce learning to technical reproduction (Swanzy-Impraim et al., 2022). Reflection is especially important because it requires students to explain the cultural sources, meanings, and decisions behind their work. Fifth, community participation connects university learning with living practice. Practitioners possess embodied knowledge of materials, tools, sequence, standards, symbolism, and appropriate cultural use. Workshops, collaborative documentation, field activities, exhibitions, and community projects can improve the depth and authenticity of teaching. Cultural bearers should be recognized as knowledge holders and educational partners, not merely as subjects from whom information is extracted (Aisyah Abu Bakar et al., 2014). Sustained relationships are more valuable than occasional demonstrations because they allow shared planning, feedback, and continuity. Finally, fine arts education can link heritage with professional and creative application. Contemporary art, design, museums, tourism, digital media, cultural products, and social enterprise may provide opportunities for students and practitioners. Art universities may therefore integrate artistic education with entrepreneurial capability (Dreesmann et al., 2014). Digital technologies can also support documentation, virtual presentation, and new forms of expression, although their use depends on teachers' competence and meaningful integration with cultural content (Shiri & Baigutov, 2024; Uzunboyly & Islek, 2014). Innovation should not simply modernize appearance or improve marketability. It should preserve a meaningful relationship with cultural knowledge and community practice. Fine arts education becomes a cultural-inheritance mechanism when documentation, aesthetic experience, identity, community participation, and professional application operate as connected functions rather than separate activities.

5. Theoretical Foundations

The framework integrates art anthropology, social constructivism, and creative pedagogy. Each perspective addresses a different part of the relationship between art education and cultural inheritance, and together they connect cultural content, learning processes, and contemporary practice.

5.1 Art Anthropology

Art anthropology treats artistic production as part of a cultural system. Forms, materials, techniques, themes, and symbols emerge from historical and social environments and may communicate memory, belief, identity, community values, and patterns of social

organization. In Guizhou, Miao silverwork and embroidery, Dong architecture, Buyi batik, clothing, and performance should therefore be examined not only as visually distinctive forms but also as culturally coded practices. This perspective asks students to interpret what an artistic form represents, how it developed, who produces it, how it is used, and why it matters. A motif should be studied in relation to its cultural context; a technique should be understood as knowledge carried by practitioners; and a craft object should be examined through its social use as well as its formal qualities. Art anthropology therefore challenges the treatment of ethnic art as decoration and supports culturally responsible documentation and interpretation. Within the framework, art anthropology primarily supports documentation and aesthetic continuation. It clarifies what knowledge should be preserved and demonstrates that informed appreciation depends on understanding the relationship between form and meaning.

5.2 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism explains knowledge and identity as outcomes of interaction, participation, reflection, and guided experience. Cultural confidence cannot be generated through factual instruction alone. Students construct meaning when they work with artistic materials, discuss interpretations, collaborate with peers, and engage with practitioners and communities. Classroom dialogue, collaborative production, studio practice, and community activities position learners as participants in cultural meaning-making. Interaction with cultural bearers can reveal embodied knowledge, regional variation, and appropriate cultural use that textbooks cannot fully communicate. Reflection enables students to connect these experiences with their own backgrounds and responsibilities. These processes support aesthetic continuation and identity construction by helping cultural knowledge become personally and socially meaningful (Aisyah Abu Bakar et al., 2014). The theory also explains why community participation is not an optional addition: cultural meanings are constructed and negotiated in social relationships.

5.3 Creative Pedagogy

Creative pedagogy emphasizes learner agency, experimentation, critical inquiry, and problem-solving. It opposes instruction based only on memorization and mechanical imitation. Students should investigate traditional meanings, relate inherited knowledge to contemporary conditions, and create new expressions that remain culturally grounded (Yavuz, 2013; Swanzky-Impraim et al., 2022).

Creative transformation does not mean unrestricted alteration. Learners should understand origins, significance, and community associations before adapting cultural elements. They should be able to explain why a form has been changed and how the new work remains connected to its cultural source. Within the framework, creative pedagogy supports innovative transformation and prepares students to become adaptive contributors rather than simple reproducers of fixed forms.

5.4 Theoretical Integration

The three perspectives are complementary, Table 1. Art anthropology explains what should be understood and preserved; social constructivism explains how knowledge,

belonging, and confidence develop; and creative pedagogy explains how inherited knowledge can become contemporary practice. They also align with the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of inheritance. The relationship is not exclusive. Documentation may be participatory, aesthetic experience may deepen knowledge, and creative projects may reshape identity. Their integration establishes the progression from documentation to aesthetic continuation, identity construction, and innovative transformation while recognizing interaction among all stages. This theoretical synthesis enables the framework to connect educational processes with cultural outcomes rather than treating preservation, identity, and creativity as unrelated goals.

Table 1. The three perspectives perform different but interconnected functions.

Theoretical perspective	Central focus	Educational contribution	Main framework connection
Art anthropology	Art as cultural knowledge and meaning	Helps students interpret history, symbolism, materials, practices, and community context	Documentation and aesthetic continuation
Social constructivism	Learning and identity through social interaction	Supports dialogue, participation, reflection, cultural belonging, and confidence	Aesthetic continuation and identity construction
Creative pedagogy	Learning through exploration and innovation	Enables experimentation, adaptation, problem-solving, and contemporary application	Innovative transformation

6. The Four-Stage Conceptual Framework

The central contribution of the paper is a four-stage framework that explains how university fine arts education may connect cultural knowledge with aesthetic engagement, identity, and responsible innovation. The stages are progressive but not rigidly linear. Students may return to earlier stages when new experiences reveal gaps in understanding or require reinterpretation.

6.1 Stage One: Documentation

Documentation establishes the cognitive foundation of cultural inheritance. It involves collecting, recording, organizing, and interpreting traditional knowledge, artistic forms, skills, and practices. In university art education, students may document Miao embroidery and silverwork, Dong architecture, Buyi batik, traditional clothing, and other local forms through drawing, photography, video, written analysis, interviews, and digital archiving. The objective is not only to preserve what cultural forms look like but also to record how they are produced, used, and understood. Documentation should include materials, tools, processes, symbols, oral histories, community narratives, and practitioner interpretations. Students may analyse how form changes across places or practitioners and how cultural meanings are connected to particular uses. The principal outcome is culturally grounded knowledge: students acquire historical, conceptual, and procedural understanding that supports later appreciation and application (Shi, 2019; UNESCO, 2003). Documentation should also be understood as a learning process rather than the creation of a neutral institutional record. Decisions about what to record, how to

classify it, and how to describe its meaning influence representation. The main risk is decontextualization. Institutional archives may omit community voices, regional variation, or restrictions on cultural use. Documentation should therefore be collaborative, with cultural bearers involved in interpretation and decisions about access.

6.2 Stage Two: Aesthetic Continuation

Aesthetic continuation moves learners from factual knowledge toward conscious experience of the values and aesthetic qualities embedded in traditional art. It involves active visual perception, studio practice, material exploration, practitioner demonstration, comparative study, field or museum visits, and reflective discussion. Students should analyse relationships among form, colour, rhythm, texture, material, craftsmanship, symbolism, and context. For example, Buyi batik should be considered through its production process and cultural meaning, while Dong architecture should be studied in relation to community function as well as structural form. Active visual analysis supports the movement from passive reception to interpretation (Arslangazi, 2012). Material and practical experience are equally important. Observing or attempting a traditional process can make visible the skill and judgment involved and can deepen respect for practitioner knowledge. The primary outcome is informed appreciation and emotional engagement. Students begin to value cultural forms through direct visual and material experience. The risk is that aesthetic engagement may remain limited to attractiveness or admiration. It must remain connected to the cultural knowledge established through documentation. Aesthetic continuation is therefore not the romantic celebration of tradition; it is the informed internalization of artistic values and meanings.

6.3 Stage Three: Identity Construction

Identity construction connects knowledge and aesthetic experience with belonging, confidence, and responsibility. Students develop cultural meaning through reflective dialogue, collaborative studio projects, practitioner-led activities, community participation, cultural narratives, artistic expression, and joint exhibitions. This stage reflects the view that identity is socially constructed through participation and interaction. Students may relate to a tradition differently depending on their cultural backgrounds. Members of a community may connect learning with family history or inherited practice, while others may develop informed appreciation and respect. The purpose is not to impose a uniform identity but to cultivate meaningful and ethically appropriate relationships with heritage. The principal outcomes are cultural confidence, belonging, and responsibility. Students recognize that heritage continuity depends on understanding, respectful representation, participation, and transmission. Reflection can help learners examine how their assumptions change and how their artistic decisions represent a community. The main risk is assuming that brief exposure automatically produces identification. Identity requires sustained and socially meaningful engagement. Universities must also avoid claiming that institutional instruction is the sole source of cultural identity, since identity is formed through family, community, and wider social experience.

6.4 Stage Four: Innovative Transformation

Innovative transformation converts cultural understanding and identification into active practice. Learners adapt traditional knowledge to produce new artistic expressions and socially useful applications in contemporary fine arts, design, digital media, cultural products, creative industries, social enterprise, or community projects. Creative pedagogy supports experimentation and critical inquiry while rejecting mechanical imitation (Yavuz, 2013; Swanzy-Impraim et al., 2022). Higher education may also connect cultural learning with entrepreneurial capability and professional development (Dreesmann et al., 2014). Digital technologies can contribute to documentation, multimedia communication, virtual presentation, and new artistic forms, provided they are integrated with cultural meaning (Shiri & Baigutov, 2024; Uzunboylu & Islek, 2014). Innovation should remain grounded in historical knowledge, practitioner perspectives, and community context. Students should acknowledge cultural sources and consider whether particular symbols or practices are appropriate for adaptation. Otherwise, transformation may become decorative borrowing or superficial commercialization. The intended outcome is sustainable behavioural participation: students act as responsible contributors to cultural continuity rather than passive observers. Their work may create new contexts for traditional knowledge while retaining meaningful relationships with the communities from which that knowledge originates. The four stages can also be read as changes in the learner's role. In documentation, the student is primarily a researcher and recorder. In aesthetic continuation, the student becomes an interpreter and practitioner. In identity construction, the learner becomes a reflective participant who relates heritage to personal and social meaning. In innovative transformation, the student becomes a responsible creator. This progression explains why the stages should not be collapsed into a single cultural project: each represents a different educational task and outcome.

Figure 1 presents the original four-stage model developed in the thesis. It positions the framework as a theoretical guide for cultural inheritance and innovation and as a practical tool for sustainable cultural development.

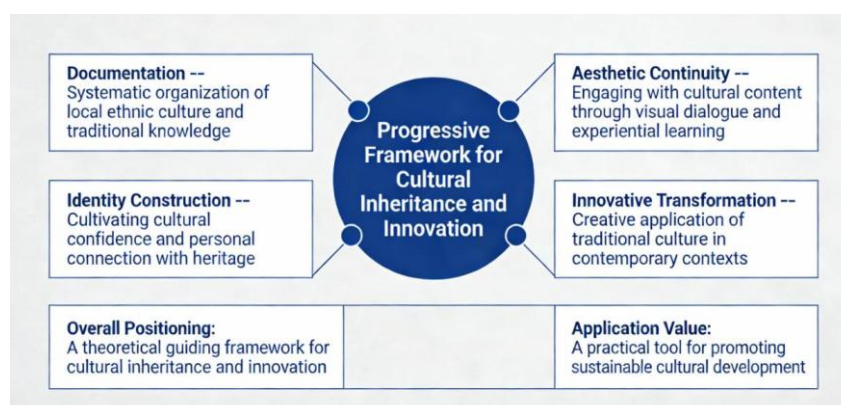


Figure 1. Stage of the Conceptual Framework

6.5 Relationships among the Stages

The framework can be summarized as:

Documentation → Aesthetic Continuation → Identity Construction → Innovative Transformation

Documentation provides the knowledge required for interpretation. Aesthetic continuation develops informed appreciation. Identity construction connects understanding and appreciation with belonging and confidence. Innovative transformation converts these foundations into cultural practice. The model also connects the cognitive, affective, and behavioural domains. Documentation is primarily cognitive; aesthetic continuation and identity construction strengthen affective learning; and innovative transformation emphasizes behavioural participation. Nevertheless, the stages overlap. Community engagement may deepen knowledge, creative production may reveal a need for further documentation, and identity may develop through practice. The framework is cumulative in the sense that later stages require grounding in earlier ones, but it is also cyclical because innovation can generate new questions and documentation. This flexibility prevents the model from becoming a rigid teaching sequence. The transition from identity construction to innovative transformation is especially critical. Students may value cultural heritage without possessing the resources or opportunities to apply it. Weak curriculum design, limited faculty capability, insufficient community participation, inadequate digital resources, and poor professional preparation may interrupt progression. Conversely, innovation attempted without adequate documentation or identity-related engagement may produce decontextualized designs. The framework therefore functions both as an explanation of cultural learning and as an analytical tool. It can be used to examine whether programmes provide coherent knowledge, meaningful aesthetic experience, opportunities for identity formation, and supported pathways to practice. It can also identify the stage at which teaching or institutional conditions create a bottleneck.

7. Conceptual Propositions

The framework supports five propositions. They are theoretical expectations derived from the thesis literature rather than confirmed empirical findings. Their purpose is to translate the four stages into relationships that can guide later curriculum evaluation and empirical research.

Proposition 1: Systematic integration and documentation of local ethnic cultural knowledge in university fine arts education are expected to strengthen students' understanding of cultural heritage. Organized study of history, symbols, materials, techniques, production processes, and community narratives provides a stronger foundation than occasional use of traditional motifs (Shi, 2019; Zhou & Li, 2024). The proposition assumes that curriculum content is contextualized and that documentation includes practitioner perspectives rather than only institutional classification.

Proposition 2: Student-centred and experiential teaching is expected to strengthen aesthetic engagement, cultural identification, and cultural confidence. Studio practice, visual analysis, reflection, collaborative creation, and community activities connect factual knowledge with emotional and social experience (Yavuz, 2013). The proposition does not

imply that all students develop the same identity; rather, participatory learning is expected to support meaningful and informed relationships with heritage.

Proposition 3: The contribution of fine arts education to cultural practice is expected to be stronger when curricula are connected with local communities and intangible-cultural-heritage practitioners. Their embodied knowledge can improve authenticity, clarify appropriate cultural use, and move students from observation toward participation (Aisyah Abu Bakar et al., 2014). Sustained collaboration is expected to have greater educational value than isolated demonstrations because it allows dialogue, feedback, and shared interpretation.

Proposition 4: Students guided through all four stages are expected to apply traditional knowledge more responsibly in contemporary contexts. Innovation grounded in documentation, aesthetic understanding, and identity is less likely to become superficial borrowing. Applications may include fine arts, design, digital media, creative industries, social enterprise, or community projects, provided they retain meaningful relationships with cultural sources (Dreesmann et al., 2014; Swanzy-Impraim et al., 2022).

Proposition 5: Weaknesses in curriculum design, faculty capability, community integration, and resource allocation may interrupt progression, especially between identity construction and innovative transformation. Cultural confidence alone does not guarantee sustained practice; students require technical, professional, institutional, and community support. The proposition identifies this transition as a likely bottleneck because universities may cultivate appreciation without creating adequate opportunities for application.

Together, the propositions connect educational inputs with expected cultural outcomes: systematic content supports knowledge, experiential pedagogy supports appreciation and confidence, community integration supports participation, progression supports responsible innovation, and institutional conditions influence whether this progression is sustained. Future studies may examine these relationships through curriculum analysis, student and practitioner perspectives, project outcomes, and longitudinal evidence.

8. Discussion

The four-stage framework reframes cultural inheritance as an educational process rather than the simple inclusion of ethnic content. Its value lies in explaining several necessary transitions. First, education must move from cultural appearance to cultural meaning. Motifs, colours, materials, and techniques become educationally significant when students understand their historical origins, symbolic associations, production processes, and community functions. Documentation and art-anthropological interpretation challenge the reduction of Miao embroidery, Buyi batik, Dong architecture, or silverwork to decorative resources (Zhou & Li, 2024). Visual analysis remains important, but it should lead to questions about meaning, use, and cultural authority. Second, learning must move from knowledge to cultural confidence. Factual understanding is necessary but does not automatically create belonging or responsibility. Aesthetic experience, studio practice, reflection, and practitioner engagement allow knowledge to become personally

meaningful. Social participation is therefore central to identity construction (Aisyah Abu Bakar et al., 2014). Cultural confidence should not mean compulsory or uncritical pride; it should involve informed appreciation, respect, and the ability to understand heritage within contemporary life. Third, preservation must lead to living cultural development. Archives can protect information but cannot sustain a tradition if practitioners disappear or younger generations do not participate. Innovative transformation responds by connecting heritage with contemporary art, design, digital media, creative industries, and social enterprise. Yet adaptation must preserve cultural grounding. Increased visibility is not sufficient if cultural meaning, practitioner authority, or community benefit is weakened. Fourth, institutional teaching must become community partnership. Universities possess studios, archives, technologies, and teaching structures, but living knowledge remains rooted in communities. Practitioners should participate as educators, interpreters, and collaborators. Workshops, field learning, joint documentation, exhibitions, and community projects can connect academic knowledge with practice and reduce misrepresentation. Partnership should be sustained rather than limited to ceremonial visits, because trust and shared interpretation develop over time. Fifth, imitation must develop into responsible innovation. Mechanical reproduction can preserve appearance while limiting understanding and creativity. Creative pedagogy encourages students to interpret, question, experiment, and establish relationships between tradition and contemporary life (Yavuz, 2013; Swanzy-Impraim et al., 2022). Digital media expand possibilities but also make decontextualized copying easier, reinforcing the need for both technological and cultural competence (Shiri & Baigutov, 2024). For Guizhou universities, the framework coordinates several roles: documentation centre, site of aesthetic and artistic learning, partner of local communities, environment for identity formation, and platform for creative application. Its implementation requires more than institutional recognition. Coherent curricula, capable teachers, community relationships, resources, and professional opportunities are necessary if students are to move from cultural knowledge to active contribution. The framework also clarifies that no single intervention is sufficient. An archive without experiential teaching may not produce appreciation; creative teaching without cultural depth may produce innovation without integrity; and community engagement without curriculum integration may remain peripheral. Likewise, cultural confidence without opportunities for practice may remain symbolic, while professional application without community connection may become commercial extraction. Sustainable inheritance therefore depends on the relationship among all stages and on institutional conditions that support progression. The framework does not claim that education controls cultural continuity, but it identifies how universities can contribute: by helping students acquire reliable knowledge, experience cultural values, develop meaningful responsibility, and create informed contemporary applications.

9. Practical Implications

The framework can guide curriculum design, teaching, community collaboration, faculty development, and institutional planning. Curricula should integrate ethnic culture systematically rather than through isolated examples. Learning may be sequenced from

cultural research and documentation to studio and visual engagement, reflective and community-based identity work, and contemporary creative application. Outcomes and assessment should address cultural knowledge, aesthetic engagement, contextual accuracy, reflection, responsible practice, and the relationship between tradition and innovation. Assessment may combine research portfolios, studio work, reflective writing, project presentations, and practitioner or community feedback. Teaching should combine demonstrations with inquiry, discussion, experimentation, and reflection. Visual analysis can help students interpret relationships among form, material, technique, symbolism, and context (Arslangazi, 2012). Studio work, field visits, collaborative production, and community projects can connect cognitive, affective, and behavioural learning. Students should be asked to explain the cultural sources and meanings informing their artistic decisions and to identify how community engagement changed their interpretations. Universities should establish sustained relationships with practitioners rather than rely on occasional cultural events. Cultural bearers may contribute through workshops, demonstrations, collaborative documentation, field learning, joint projects, and exhibitions. Their participation should be recognized as an educational contribution, and the resulting materials should remain connected to community perspectives. Clear arrangements are also needed concerning attribution, access, and the use of documented knowledge. Faculty development should address ethnic cultural history, intangible heritage, student-centred pedagogy, community collaboration, visual interpretation, creative teaching, and digital competence. Institutional support is also required through funding, documentation resources, studios, digital facilities, practitioner involvement, interdisciplinary collaboration, and opportunities for student innovation. Programme evaluation can use the four stages to identify whether learning is concentrated at the documentation level or progresses toward identity and application.

Professional development should connect cultural knowledge with contemporary art, design, digital media, museums, tourism, creative industries, and social enterprise. Entrepreneurial preparation may improve the viability of heritage-related practice (Dreesmann et al., 2014), but economic application should remain grounded in cultural history, community meaning, and practitioner knowledge. The purpose is not only to produce marketable objects but to support living, responsible, and sustainable cultural practice.

10. Limitations and Future Research

The framework is conceptual and has not been empirically validated. The propositions therefore describe expected relationships rather than demonstrated effects. The model also does not establish that every learner progresses through the stages in the same order. Knowledge, appreciation, identity, and innovation may overlap, and students may return to earlier stages as their understanding develops. The framework is grounded in Guizhou and may not transfer directly to other cultural settings. Miao, Dong, Buyi, and other traditions differ in their histories, community structures, artistic forms, and modes of transmission, while variation also exists within each community. Application must therefore be context-sensitive rather than treating an ethnic group as culturally uniform.

A further limitation is the absence of direct practitioner and community testimony in this conceptual paper. University-based literature cannot fully represent embodied and informal transmission (Fromm, 2016). Cultural bearers may hold different views regarding documentation, access, innovation, commercialization, digital dissemination, and the appropriate use of cultural symbols. The model should therefore be refined through direct community participation. Cultural confidence and long-term participation are also difficult to assess. Students may express appreciation during a course without sustaining engagement after graduation. Behaviour during a required project may not indicate continuing voluntary participation. Professional outcomes also depend on markets, employment, networks, resources, and tensions between cultural integrity and commercial demand. Longitudinal research is therefore needed (Turker, 2025). Future research should examine the framework in Guizhou universities through case studies of curricula, teaching practices, student projects, and community partnerships. Comparative research could investigate different institutions and traditions. Studies should include students, educators, practitioners, and community representatives; develop indicators for cognitive, affective, and behavioural outcomes; examine digital integration; and follow graduates into creative or community practice. Research may also evaluate individual transitions in the model. For example, it could investigate whether documentation leads to deeper aesthetic interpretation, how community participation affects confidence, and what institutional conditions enable students to move from identity to innovative practice. Such evidence can test, revise, and contextualize the framework without assuming that it operates identically in every programme.

11. Conclusion

This paper conceptualizes fine arts education as a mechanism linking cultural knowledge, aesthetic experience, identity, and creative practice. It responds to the limitations of superficial cultural inclusion by proposing four connected stages: documentation, aesthetic continuation, identity construction, and innovative transformation. Documentation establishes culturally grounded knowledge; aesthetic continuation develops informed appreciation; identity construction connects heritage with confidence and responsibility; and innovative transformation enables contemporary participation. Art anthropology explains cultural meaning, social constructivism explains participation and identity, and creative pedagogy explains responsible adaptation. Together, these perspectives connect the cognitive, affective, and behavioural dimensions of inheritance. The framework also emphasizes that universities cannot replace the communities that sustain living heritage. Effective programmes require coherent curricula, student-centred learning, practitioner participation, institutional resources, and opportunities for culturally grounded innovation. Documentation without experience may remain detached, while innovation without cultural knowledge may become decorative borrowing. The stages must therefore function as a connected educational process. When these conditions are present, students can move beyond passive reception and become informed contributors to the continuity and renewal of ethnic culture in Guizhou. The framework offers a basis for organising teaching, examining programme weaknesses, and

guiding future research, while remaining open to revision through evidence from students, educators, practitioners, and communities.

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