



**“FRAGMENTED” LANDSCAPE:  
THE CULTURAL IDENTITY OF  
MIAO IN COLLAGE  
MIXED MEDIA ARTWORK**

**Li Zhenchao**

**School of The Arts (SOTA USM)**  
Universiti Sains Malaysia

**Higher Degree by Research Art Exhibition**  
Ninth / Season 2025

**Venue:** Muzium & Galeri Tuanku Fauziah, USM  
**Date :** From 17<sup>th</sup> 2025 Sep. to 24<sup>th</sup> Sep. 2025

**Pameran Seni Ijazah Tinggi melalui Penyelidikan**  
***Higher Degree by Research Art Exhibition***

Pameran Ke Sembilan / Musim 2025  
*Exhibition Ninth / Season 2025*

***"Fragmented" Landscape: the Cultural Identity of Miao in Collage Mixed Media Artworks:  
A Studio Practice / by Li Zhenchao***

Dari 17 September 2025 hingga 24 September 2025  
*From 17th 2025 Sep. to 24th Sep. 2025*

Studio Lukisan, SOTA USM.  
School of The Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia.

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# Profile

**LI ZHENCHAO (b. 1989)**

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Li Zhenchao is a contemporary artist, currently pursuing a PhD degree at the School of Arts, Universiti Sains Malaysia. Trained in watercolor painting, he now extends his practice into collage and mixed media to explore the visual reconstruction of Miao cultural identity. His works reinterpret traditional symbols within the context of globalization, examining how identity is continuously reshaped through cultural encounters and media representation. By combining fragmented imagery, layered materials, and reflective surfaces, his practice emphasizes the fluidity and instability of identity, offering a critical perspective on the dialogue between tradition and modernity.

## **Education**

2011 Graduated from Hubei Institute of Fine Arts with a Bachelor degree in Watercolor Painting

2015 Graduated from Hubei Institute of Fine Arts with a Master degree in Watercolor Painting



# Introduction

In the context of rapid modernization and globalization, the cultural landscape of the Miao community is undergoing profound transformation. Traditional ways of life and visual symbols are gradually fading, while new cultural encounters and hybrid identities are emerging. These shifts give rise to a fragmented yet dynamic image of Miao identity in the contemporary era.

This exhibition presents a body of collage mixed-media works that explore the fluidity, instability, and reconstruction of cultural identity. Through strategies such as silhouettes, fragmented imagery, reflective materials, and obscured faces, the works deliberately blur the boundaries between the individual and the collective, between tradition and modernity, between visibility and erasure.

By reinterpreting traditional customs and engaging with contemporary media forms, the exhibition reveals the tensions between cultural preservation and transformation, marginalization and reinvention. Ultimately, the works invite audiences not only to witness but also to participate in the ongoing negotiation of Miao identity within a globalized cultural landscape.

# Part 1

## Part 1 Difference and Sameness

This stage centers on the theme of Difference and Sameness, exploring how cultural identity is shaped through both distinction and shared elements. Based on visual research in Miao communities, I developed the use of the silhouette as a primary form. To convey the uncertainty and interconnectedness between the multiple spaces cut by the silhouette, I introduced uncertain, connective lines and directional yellow arrows.

At first, the silhouette was paired with specific scenes to reflect the interplay between the individual and other cultural contexts. Later, these scenes evolved into abstract cultural spaces filled with fragmented images, lines, and symbols, intensifying the sense of complexity and exchange. Finally, by merging the silhouette with these abstract spaces, the artworks achieved greater formal fluidity and conceptual openness, allowing multiple interpretations while emphasizing the central theme of identity in tension between difference and sameness.



ARTWORK 1 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.10,  
56×40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022



ARTWORK 2 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.11,  
56x40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022



ARTWORK 3 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.12,  
56x40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022



ARTWORK 4 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.13,  
56x40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022



ARTWORK 5 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.14,  
56x40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022



ARTWORK 6 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.15,  
56×40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022



ARTWORK 7 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.16,  
56x40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022



ARTWORK 8 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.17,  
56×40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022



ARTWORK 9 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.18,  
56x40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022



ARTWORK 10 Ethnicity & Modernity NO.19,  
56x40cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2022

# Part 2

## Part 2 Symbols and Representations

In this stage, the focus shifts to Symbols and Representations, exploring how Miao identity is constructed and communicated through contemporary media. While continuing to use collage and mixed media, I reconfigured familiar elements—silhouettes, lines, and symbols—into compositions that mimic the forms of books, phone screens, and other media platforms.

This design choice reflects the layered ways in which Miao culture is mediated today: through text, imagery, and digital interfaces that both reveal and reshape identity. The silhouettes, often shown in multiple overlapping instances, highlight the instability of representation and the coexistence of different perspectives across time and space.

By embedding fragmented images and symbolic forms within media-inspired layouts, the works suggest that identity is never fixed, but rather continually negotiated within the systems of representation that define contemporary life.



ARTWORK 11  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.01,  
48x76cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 12  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.02,  
48x76cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 13  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.03,  
40×56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 14  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System NO.04,  
40×56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 15  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.05,  
40x56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 16  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.06,  
40x56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



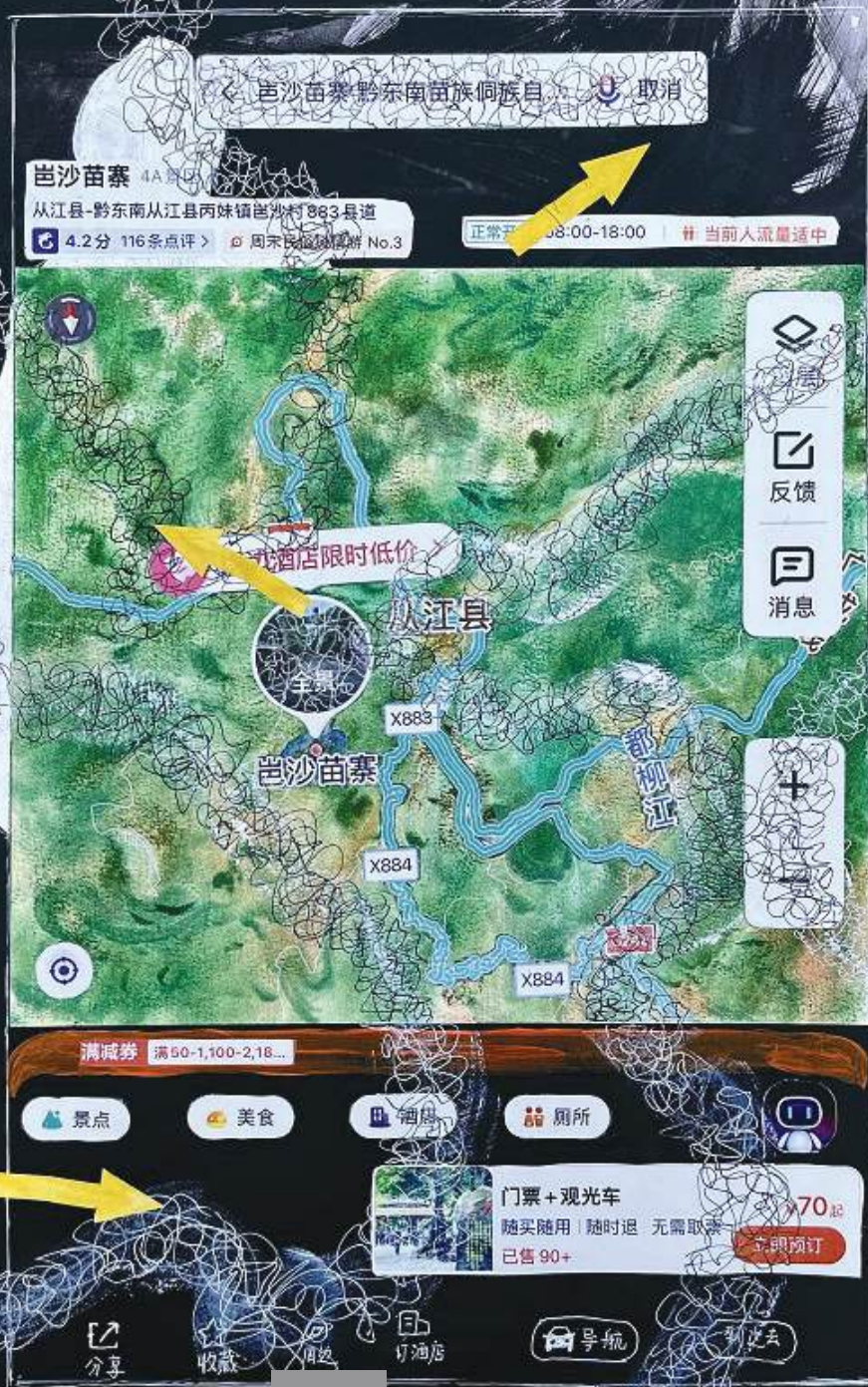
ARTWORK 17  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.07,  
40x56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 18  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.08,  
40x56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 19  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.09,  
40×56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 20  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.10,  
40x56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 21  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.11,  
40x56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 22  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.12,  
40x56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 23  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.13,  
40x56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 24  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.14,  
40x56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023



ARTWORK 25  
Miao Symbols and  
Media System  
NO.15,  
40×56cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2023

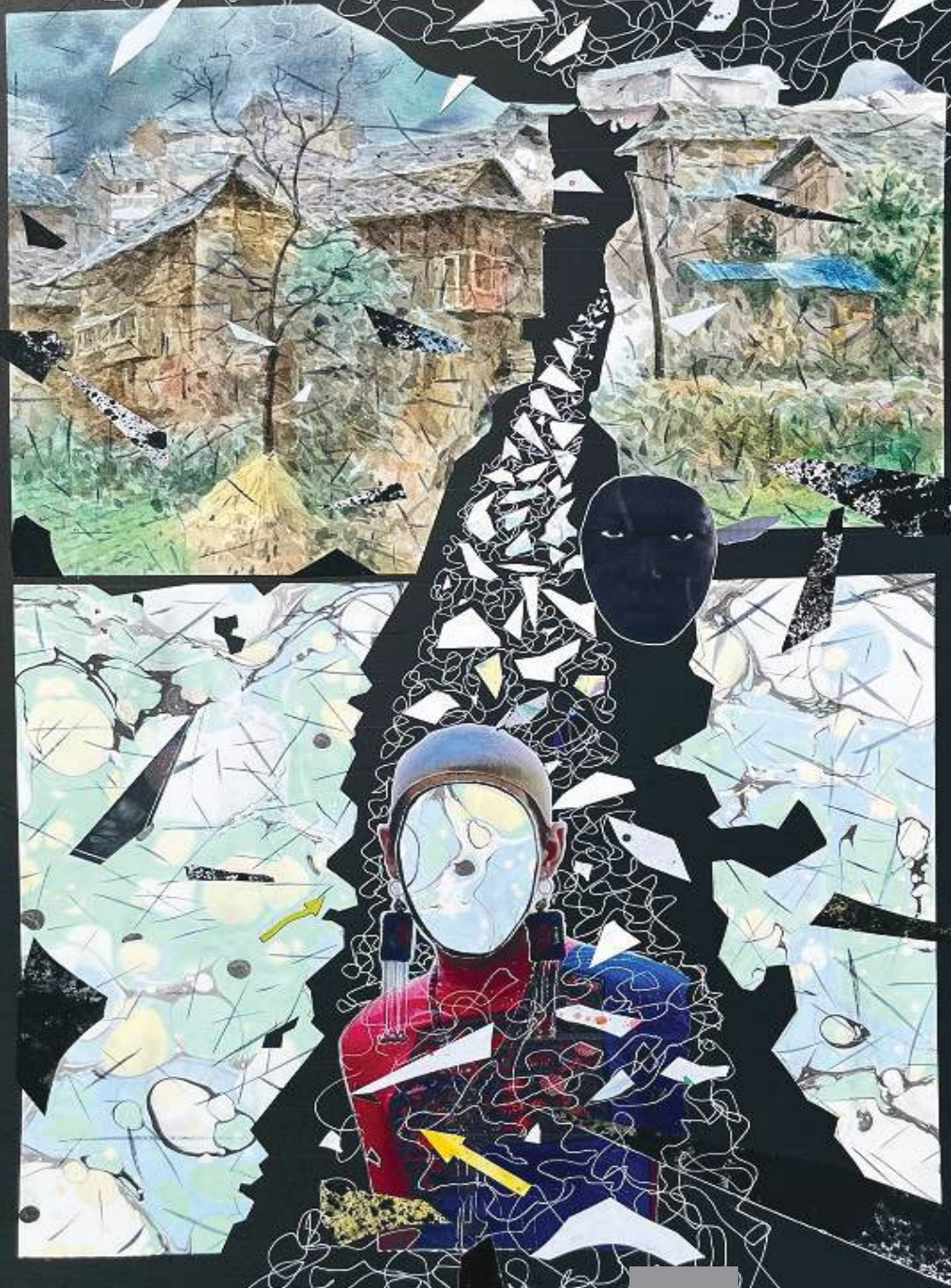
# Part 3

## **Part 3 Globalization and Fluidity**

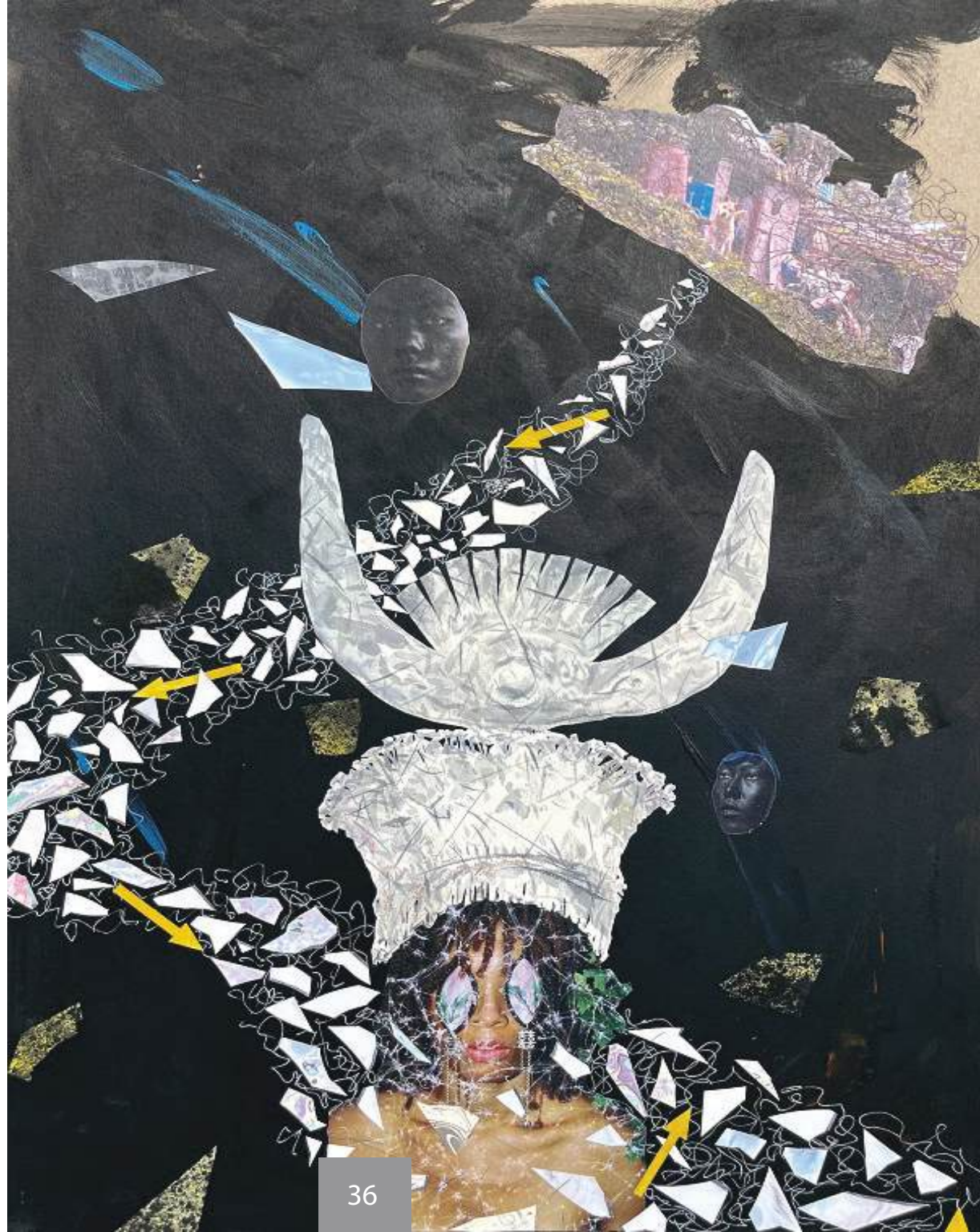
This stage explores how Miao cultural symbols move, transform, and gain new meanings across cultural boundaries. By depicting non-Miao figures—such as singers, models, or individuals from diverse groups—wearing Miao-inspired attire, the works highlight identity's fluidity in a global context, where cultural markers are constantly reinterpreted.

Obscured faces, reflective surfaces, and layered materials underscore the instability of identity and the blurred line between representation and participation. Semi-transparent paper, mirror fragments, and shifting spatial designs evoke circulation and exchange, mirroring the flow of information and culture in today's interconnected world.

Through these strategies, the works suggest that Miao culture, while rooted in tradition, is continually reshaped through encounters with global media and audiences. Identity emerges not as fixed, but as an evolving construct—formed through reflection, collision, and adaptation within globalization's currents.



ARTWORK 26  
Population Mobility  
and Cultural  
Integration NO.01,  
52x78cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2024



ARTWORK 27  
Population Mobility  
and Cultural  
Integration NO.02,  
52x78cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2024



ARTWORK 28  
Population Mobility  
and Cultural  
Integration NO.03,  
52x78cm, Collage  
mixed media, Li  
Zhenchao, 2024



ARTWORK 29 Population Mobility and Cultural Integration  
NO.04, 52×78cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2024



ARTWORK 30 Population Mobility and Cultural Integration  
NO.05, 52x78cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2024



ARTWORK 31  
Population Mobility  
and Cultural  
Integration  
NO.06, 52×78cm,  
Collage mixed media,  
Li Zhenchao, 2024



ARTWORK 32  
Population Mobility  
and Cultural  
Integration  
NO.07, 52×78cm,  
Collage mixed media,  
Li Zhenchao, 2024



ARTWORK 33 Population Mobility and Cultural Integration  
NO.08, 52x78cm, Collage mixed media, Li Zhenchao, 2024



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