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Our Mission

ChinaVine is a partnership project that includes universities and organizations in the United States and China. ChinaVine's mission is to educate English-speaking/reading children, youth, and adults about China's cultural heritage primarily through an interactive website, chinavine.org. In the development of the website the ChinaVine team seeks new and cooperative ways of producing research as it explores educational processes that utilize new technological advancements.

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- Daily Life
- Celebration (12)
- Community (10)
- Food (8)
- Heritage
- Cultural Heritage (4)
- Philosophy/Religion (5)
- Traditions (10)
- Innovation
- Art Form (15)
- Appreciation (6)
- Content (8)

Tags [View All](#)

- [factory](#) [rural](#) [urban](#)

Art



Introductory text explaining that this page gives an overview of the different art forms highlighted in the site and why they are important.

Architecture



Dance



Fibers



Literature



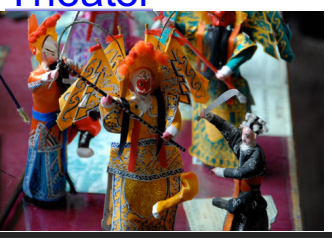
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Theater



Time-Based



Visual Arts



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Art
Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

Tags [View All](#)

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Architecture



This introductory text give an overview of the role of architecture in the Chinese folk art tradition.

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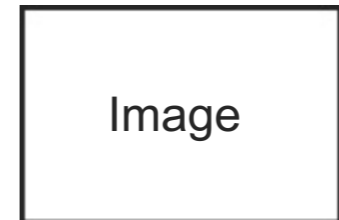
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Art
Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

Tags [View All](#)

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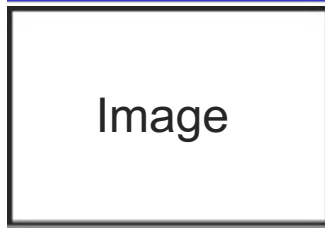
Dance



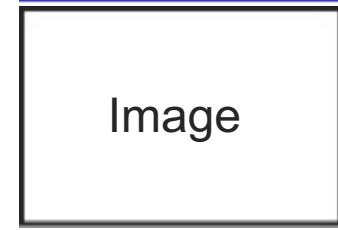
This introductory text give an overview of the role of dance in the Chinese folk art tradition.

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[Miao Performance at Matang](#)



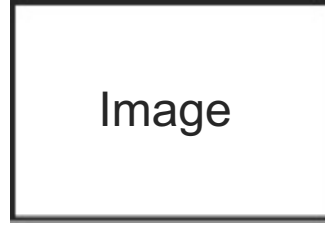
[Miao Performance at Shilong](#)



[Mountain Ramp Festival](#)



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- [Art](#)
- [Fibers \(6\)](#)
- [Multimedia \(4\)](#)
- [Music \(4\)](#)
- [Daily Life](#)
- [Celebration \(12\)](#)
- [Community \(10\)](#)
- [Food \(8\)](#)
- [Heritage](#)
- [Cultural Heritage \(4\)](#)
- [Philosophy/Religion \(5\)](#)
- [Traditions \(10\)](#)
- [Innovation](#)
- [Art Form \(15\)](#)
- [Appreciation \(6\)](#)
- [Content \(8\)](#)

Tags [View All](#)

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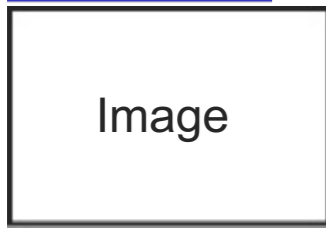
Fibers



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[Cloth Animals](#)



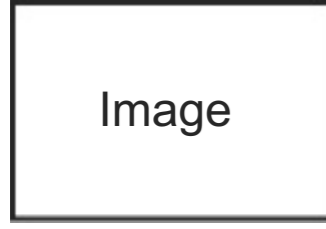
[Insole Embroidery](#)



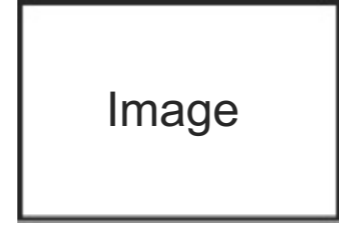
[Needle & Thread Box](#)



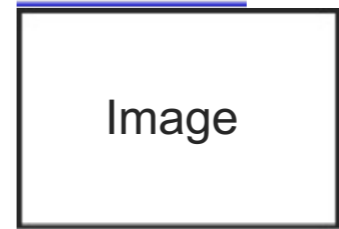
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Most Popular Topics [View All](#)

Art
Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

Tags [View All](#)

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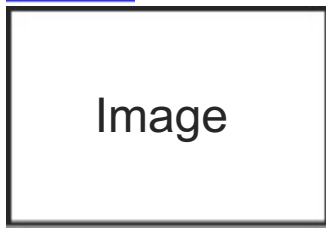
Literature



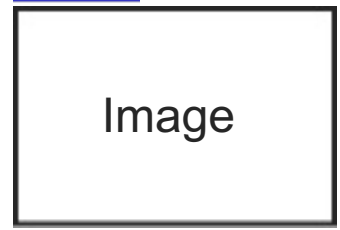
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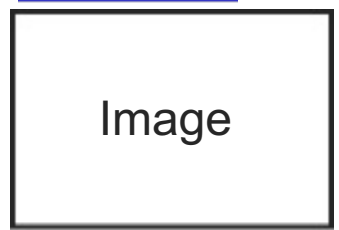
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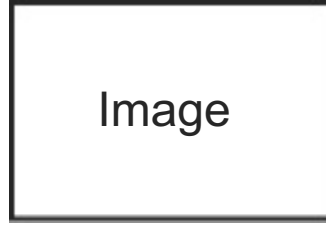
[Fiction](#)



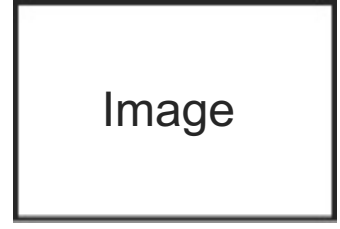
[Non-Fiction](#)



[Oral](#)



[Poetry](#)



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Art
Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

Tags [View All](#)

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[rural](#) [urban](#)

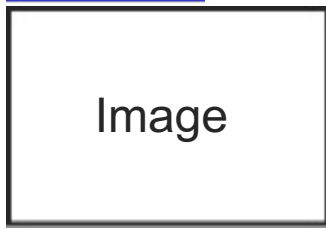
Multimedia



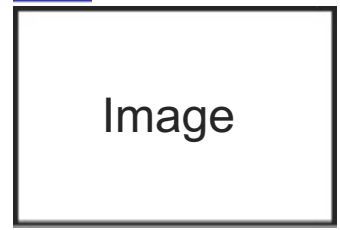
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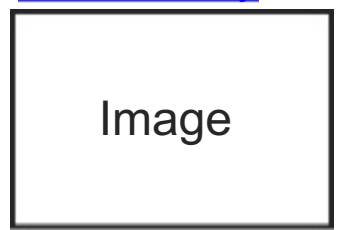
[Interactive](#)



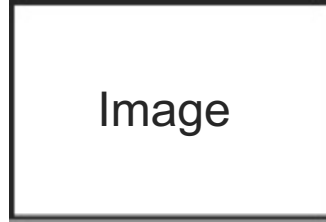
[Live](#)



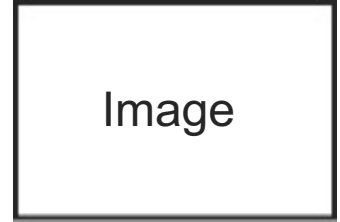
[Multisensory](#)



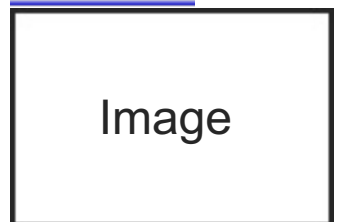
[Networked](#)



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[Transmitted](#)



Most Popular Topics [View All](#)

Art
Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

Tags [View All](#)

[factory](#)
[rural](#) [urban](#)

Music



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[View on Map](#)

[Bristle Dolls](#)



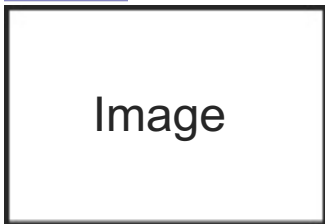
[Coaxian Opera Paper Figures](#)



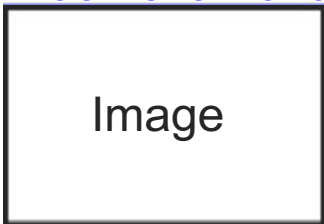
[Peking Opera History](#)



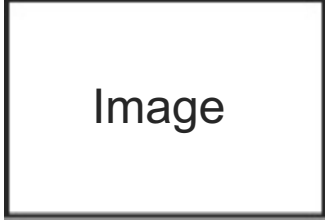
[Masks](#)



[Miao Performance at Matang](#)



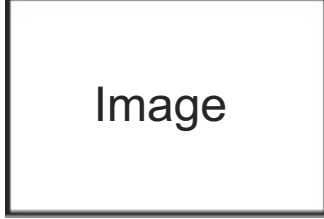
[Miao Performance at Shilong](#)



[Mountain Ramp Festival](#)



[Sister Meal Festival](#)



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- [Art](#)
- [Fibers \(6\)](#)
- [Multimedia \(4\)](#)
- [Music \(4\)](#)
- [Daily Life](#)
- [Celebration \(12\)](#)
- [Community \(10\)](#)
- [Food \(8\)](#)
- [Heritage](#)
- [Cultural Heritage \(4\)](#)
- [Philosophy/Religion \(5\)](#)
- [Traditions \(10\)](#)
- [Innovation](#)
- [Art Form \(15\)](#)
- [Appreciation \(6\)](#)
- [Content \(8\)](#)

Tags [View All](#)

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[rural](#)
[urban](#)

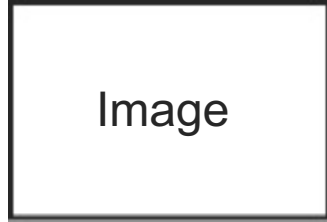
Theater



This introductory text give an overview of the role of theater in the Chinese folkart tradition.

[View on Map](#)

[Bristle Dolls](#)



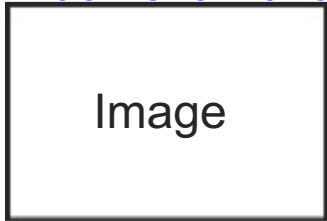
[Coaxian Opera Figures](#)



[Masks](#)



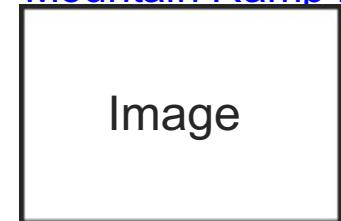
[Miao Performance at Matang](#)



[Miao Performance at Shilong](#)



[Mountain Ramp Festival](#)



[Peking Opera History](#)



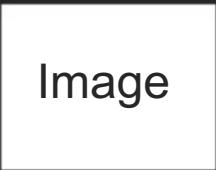
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- [Art](#)
- [Fibers \(6\)](#)
- [Multimedia \(4\)](#)
- [Music \(4\)](#)
- [Daily Life](#)
- [Celebration \(12\)](#)
- [Community \(10\)](#)
- [Food \(8\)](#)
- [Heritage](#)
- [Cultural Heritage \(4\)](#)
- [Philosophy/Religion \(5\)](#)
- [Traditions \(10\)](#)
- [Innovation](#)
- [Art Form \(15\)](#)
- [Appreciation \(6\)](#)
- [Content \(8\)](#)

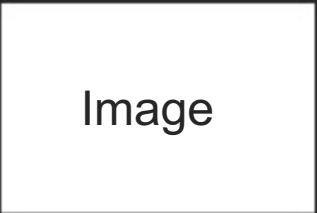
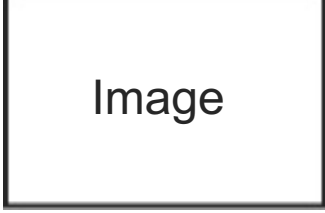
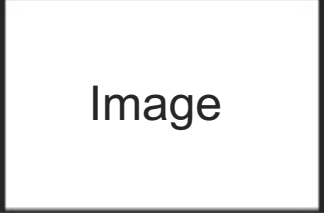
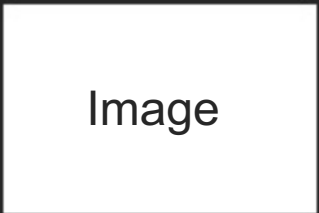
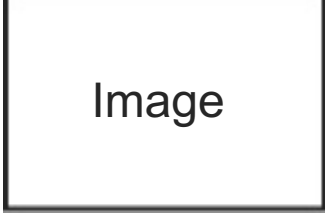
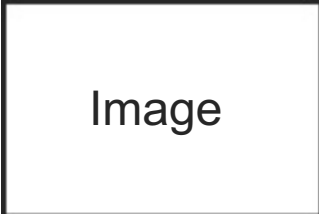
Tags [View All](#)

- [factory](#)
- [rural](#)
- [urban](#)

Visual Arts



This introductory text give an overview of the various types of visual folkarts which are featured in ChinaVine.

[View on Map](#)[Bailin Temple](#)[Bow and Arrow](#)[Bristle Dolls](#)[Coaxian Opera Figures](#)[Crickets](#)[Dough Figures](#)[Dough Flowers](#)[Gourd Engraver](#)[Kitchen Gods](#)

Most Popular Topics [View All](#)

- Art
- Fibers (6)
- Multimedia (4)
- Music (4)
- Daily Life
- Celebration (12)
- Community (10)
- Food (8)
- Heritage
- Cultural Heritage (4)
- Philosophy/Religion (5)
- Traditions (10)
- Innovation
- Art Form (15)
- Appreciation (6)
- Content (8)

Tags [View All](#)

- [factory](#)
- [rural](#)
- [urban](#)

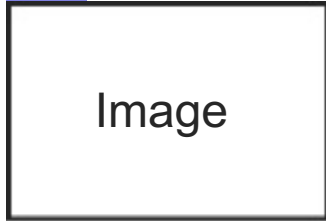
Time-Based



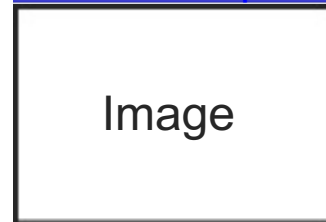
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[View on Map](#)

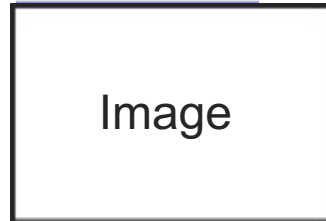
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Art
Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

Tags [View All](#)

[factory](#)
[rural](#) [urban](#)

Masks: Zhao Yong Qi



Amidst the high rises of Beijing are several workshops of Zhao Yong Qi, a skilled Peking Opera mask maker. Zhoa comes from three generations of mask makers and has spent the last twenty years successfully earning his living by documenting opera figures. His tutor, who learned how to make these masks by watching the Peking Opera, gave him additional skills and passion for the craft. He now individually designs all of the mask patterns that are then painted by other artists in his workshops.



When the production of folk art became endangered in rural areas, Zhao left his home and moved to Beijing where he saw potential growth for his craft, as there is more opportunity to market folk arts in big cities. It is here that he continues his work, selling more than 80% of his masks in museums. Zhao is one of many artists who visit local universities and schools to talk about traditional culture in China in hope that young people will continue the practices. He now has ten eager students who help him in his workshops.

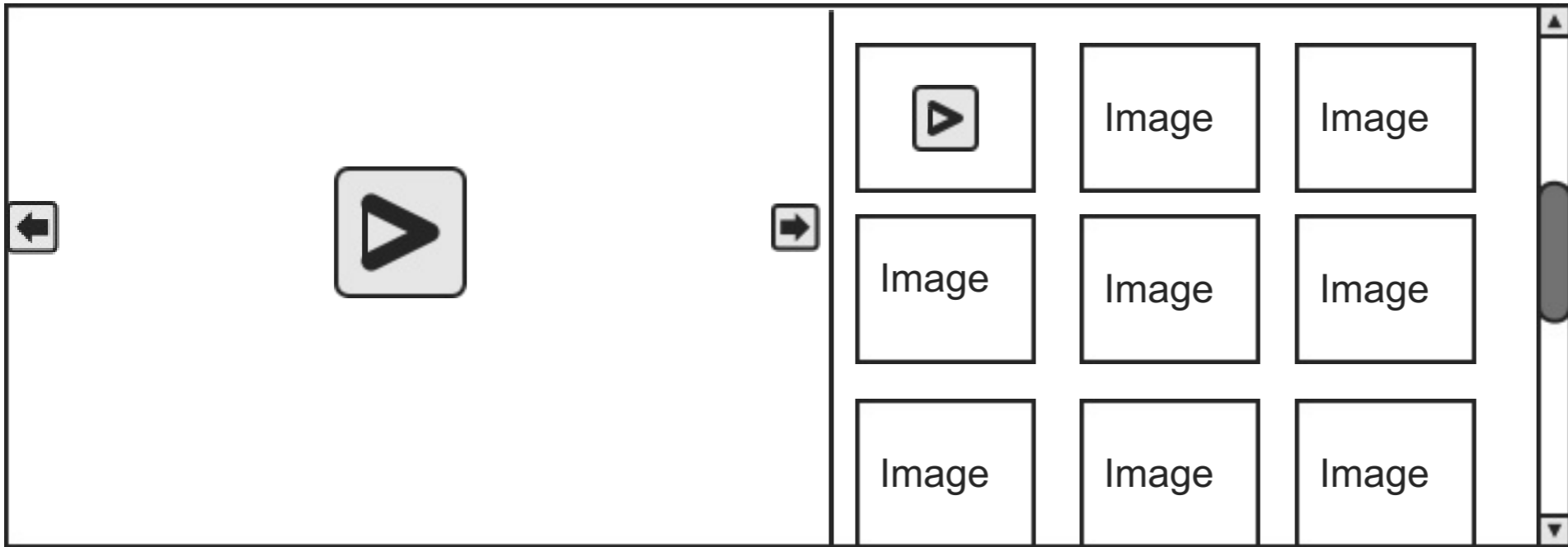
[Workshop](#) [Artist at Work](#) [Artist Gallery](#) [Cultural Heritage](#)

[Author](#)
Topics
[Community](#)
[Work](#)
[Traditions](#)
[Visual Arts](#)

Tags
[Folk Tales](#)
[Toys](#)

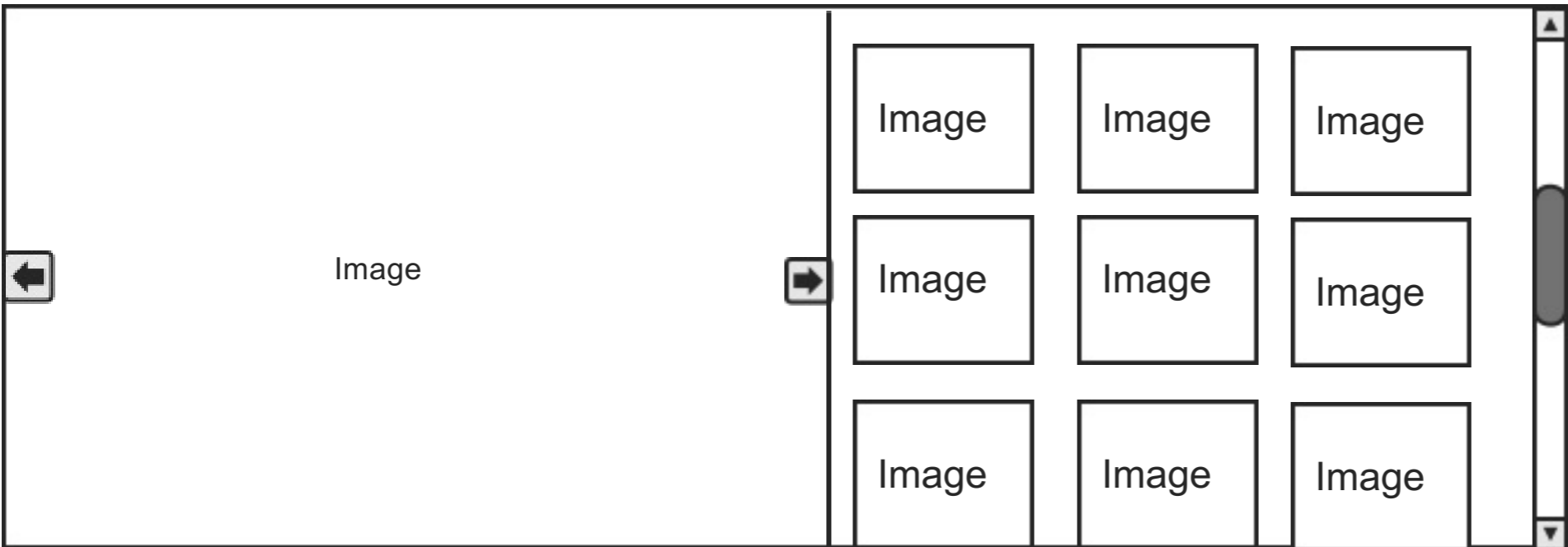
Workshop

Twenty years ago, Zhao Yongqi came to Beijing from Hubei Province and created a mask-making workshop that has since expanded to multiple locations and at least twenty employees. Before he started making masks, Zhao was an accomplished artist. Zhao's teacher was also a well-known artist.

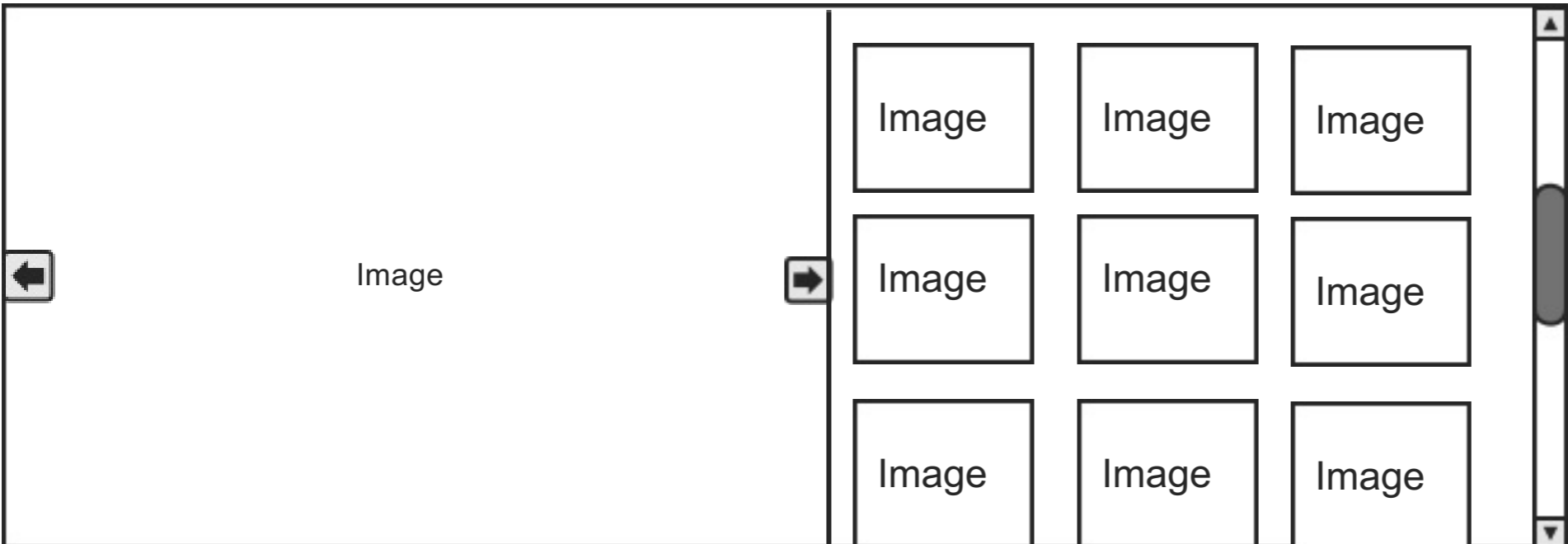


Artist at Work

Although he has students to help him, Zhao designs all parts of his masks himself. The masks are based on different Peking Opera styles. Most of the masks are made out of clay, but the ones that are light enough to wear are made out of papier-mâché. The masks are hand-painted with water-based paint coated with an oil-based substance to make them shine. Some masks are as small as one inch in diameter, but others can be up to five feet



Artist Gallery



Cultural Heritage

Masks are extraordinarily important within traditional Chinese culture. Although there are various types of masks throughout China, one of their most popular uses involves warding off ghosts and spirits and suppressing evil (Xiaoxiang 89). Opera masks mimic the make-up styles worn on the faces of opera performers and the designs and colors are symbolically tied to a character's role in the story. Different colors and brushstrokes indicate different personalities, such as rugged, bad or comical (Xiaoxiang 81-84).

Visual Arts: Dough Figures



The tradition of dough figures stems from the ancient art of making mud dolls and toys. With dough, however, the work can be much more highly detailed. Originally people used the figures as toys but they now have evolved into a world-class art. Check out these dough figure artists

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Art
Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

Tags [View All](#)

[factory](#)
[rural](#)
[urban](#)

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Brief description of artist and their work.

[Zhang Bao Lin](#)



Brief description of artist and their work.

Mountain Ramp Festival

Image

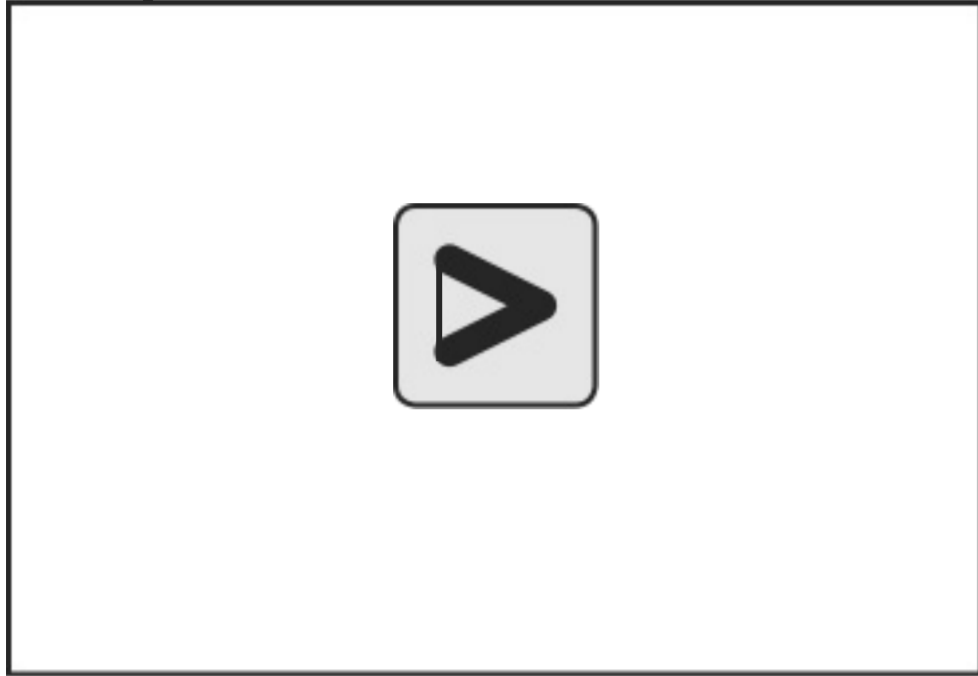
Each year the Mountain Ramp Festival attracts thousands of visitors who range from the Miao people to tourists from China and beyond. The festival itself is steeped in Miao tradition and recreates the journey of the Miao from the eastern coast of China and resettlement in the west hundreds of years earlier.

Clickable mini-map

[History](#)
[Miao Courtship](#)
[Festival Activities](#)
[Attire](#)
[Food](#)

- [Lang Village](#)
- [Folktale Book](#)
- Topics
 - [Theater](#)
 - [Community](#)
 - [Work](#)
 - [Traditions](#)
 - [Visual Arts](#)
- Tags
 - [Folk Tales](#)
 - [Toys](#)
- [Author](#)

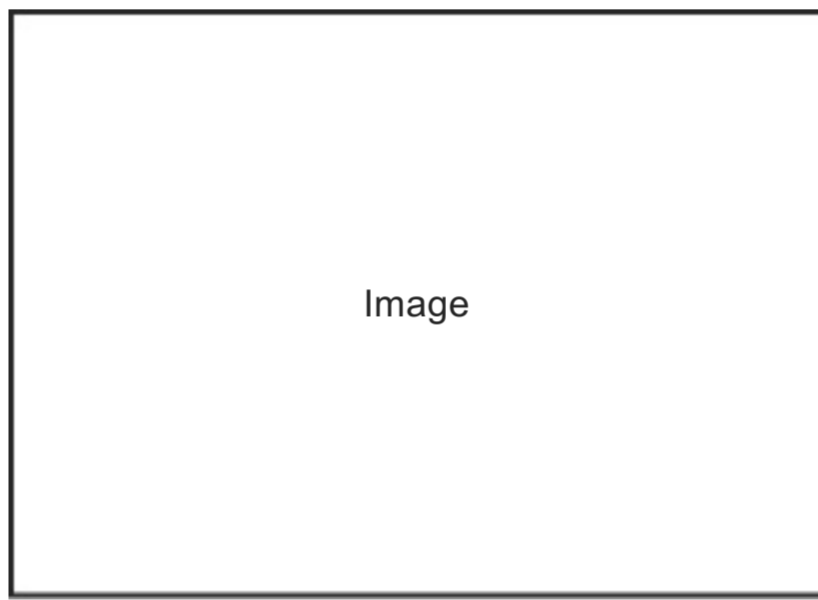
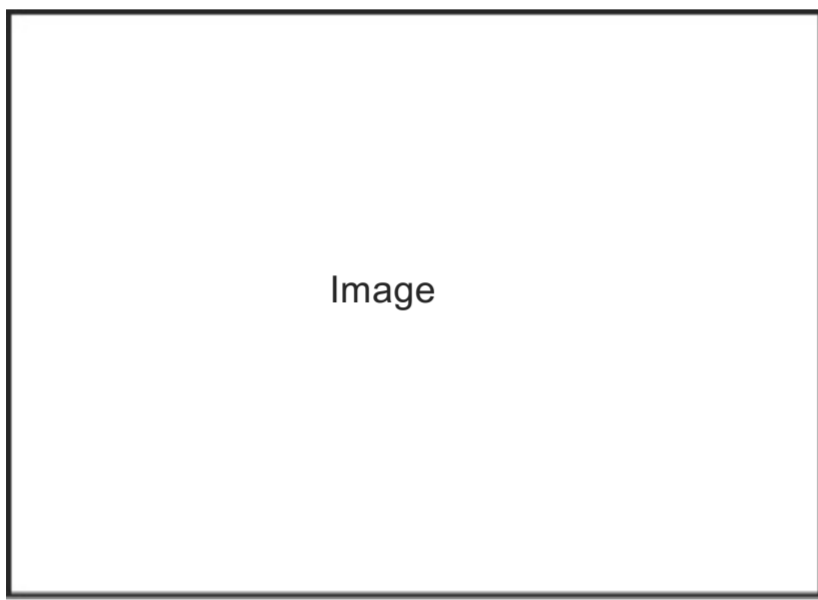
History



Just as the Miao once journeyed in pursuit of their livelihood, visitors from neighboring villages experience the similar trip uphill by foot and by automobile. The festival centers both symbolically and physically around a tree that is selected and ceremonially chopped down by local leaders who then carry it up the mountainside to its place at the center of the festival stage. Trees are revered within Miao culture, and they represent energy and life. Upon the conclusion of the festival the tree is taken to a remote location to ensure that nobody will find it and bring bad luck to the Miao.

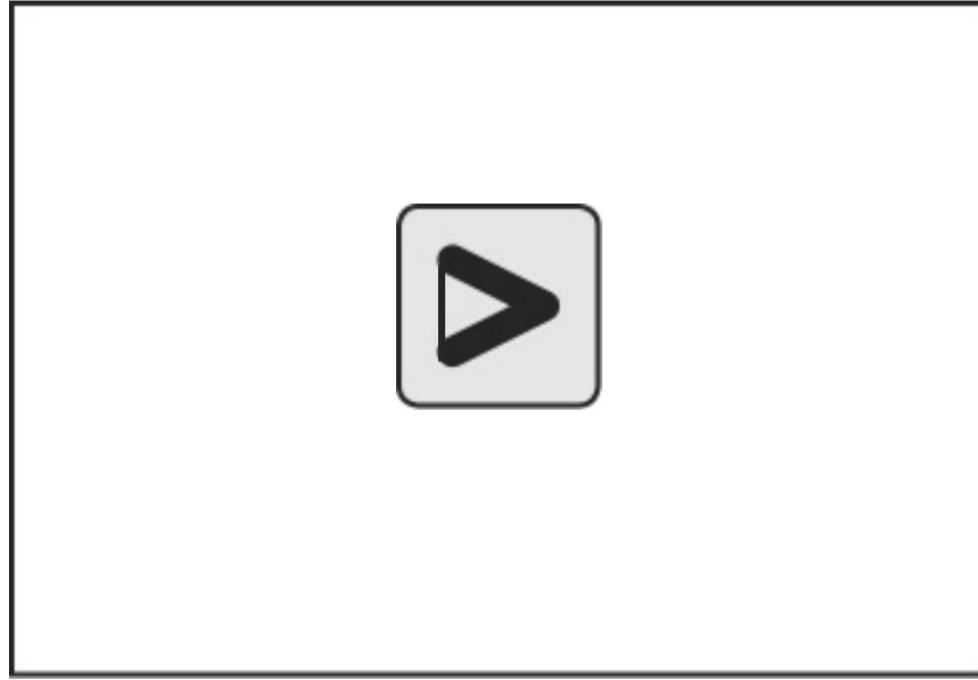
Miao Courtship

The Mountain Ramp Festival serves multiple purposes for the Miao, but the most discussed is its role as a meeting place for young men and women to meet with the hopes of future marriage. In addition to festivals, markets are also a traditional site for men and women to mingle with the hopes of marriage and family.



Upon hearing expressions of interest from young men, Miao women might give them samples of their embroidery, giving the finest pieces to the most attractive suitors. Courtship usually begins when the woman (usually accompanied by a female friend) visits the man's home. If she is interested in marriage the man arranges, through a matchmaker, the delivery of a "sheep fur chicken" to her family's home. In turn, the woman's parents send a chicken to the man's family to express their approval. Miao family systems are usually patrilocal, meaning the woman moves into the man's family's residence upon marriage. Although inheritance generally goes from father to son, clothing and jewelry are passed down through generations of females.

Festival Activities



As men and women assemble onstage to perform song and dance numbers that are influenced by both traditional and popular culture, visitors gather along the mountainside eating grilled pork skewers, pan-fried potatoes, pineapple, and bamboo. Goods such as shoes, handcrafted bamboo pipes, balloons, and hammocks are available for sale. This year's festival featured outdoor photo booths in which one could pose seated on a camel or adorned in traditional Miao costume and receive a printed, laminated photo in just a few minutes.

Attire

Image

Image	Image	Image
Image	Image	Image
Image	Image	Image

Food

Image

Image	Image	Image
Image	Image	Image
Image	Image	Image

Cloth Animals: Liu Qingha



Cloth tiger artist Liu Qingha comes from a family of folk artists. Her father made opera costumes, paintings, and paper cuts, and her mother made tiger hats and shoes. The work of her parents inspires Liu to uphold folk art traditions in the face of modernization. Today Liu makes cloth tigers, pigs, rats and other animals to commemorate years from the Chinese zodiac.

[Workshop](#) [Artist at Work](#) [Gallery](#) [Cultural Heritage](#)



[Lu Liu Village](#)
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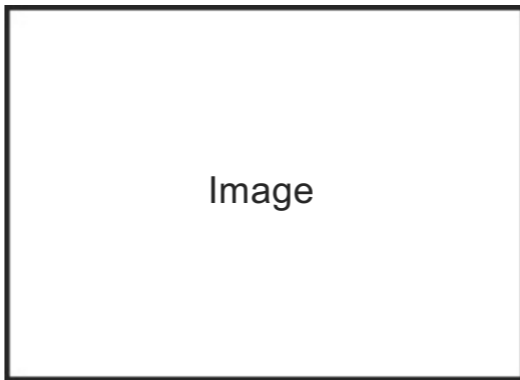
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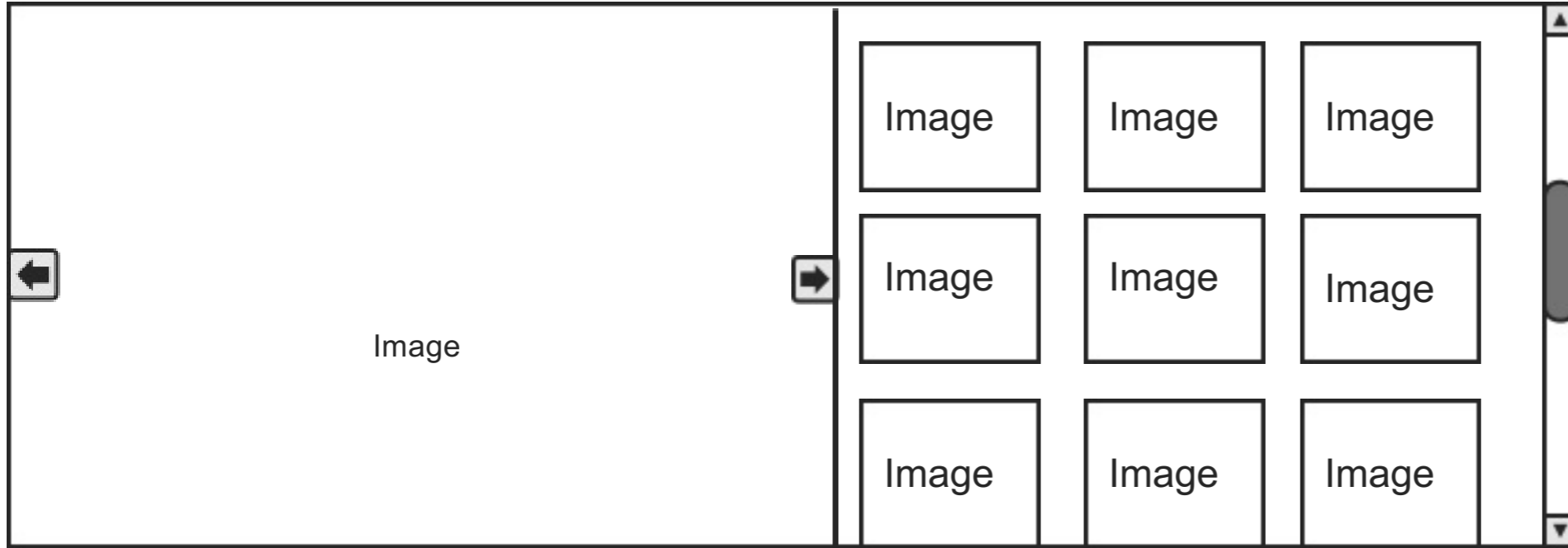
Before making cloth tigers, Liu worked with other folk artists making quilts and weaving cloth. Liu worked alone when she started making cloth tigers, but as her business grew she employed friends and now over one hundred people in her village work for her.

While her business was very difficult to maintain at first, and her first employees were skeptical of its possibility for success, women now come to her frequently and ask for employment because of her good reputation.



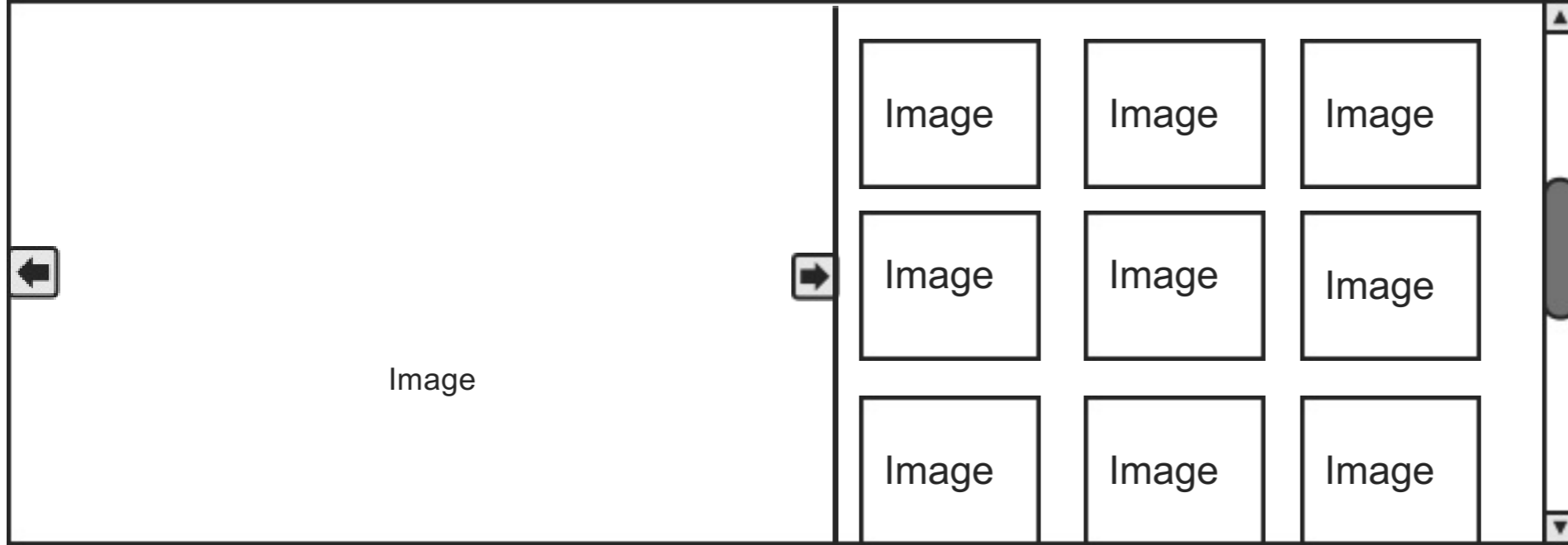
Artist at Work

Although Liu never had a formal art education, she says that innovative designs for toys come to her naturally and easily.



All of Liu's employees collaborate to make each cloth tiger. From separate stations within the same workshop, and from home, parts are individually created and then combined. While one woman uses a funnel to pack sawdust into the cloth body of the tiger at the workshop, other women cut out fabric pieces, glue pieces of cloth onto the tiger's body, and sew the ears together before attaching them to the body. Other women make the bodies and whiskers of the tigers at home. Every day the women produce about sixty to seventy tigers.

Artist Gallery



Cultural Heritage

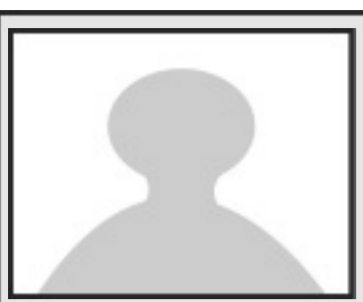
In Chinese culture tigers are symbolic of strength and consequently are a preferred theme for stuffed animals, hats, pillows, and shoes. The Chinese character hu, meaning tiger, is often sewn onto clothing as a play on its homonym, which is the word for wealth. The symbol then becomes symbolic for both strength and wealth (Minick and Ping 20).

To maintain interest in her products, Liu continuously creates new designs for cloth toys. During the Zodiac year of the pig she made cloth pigs, and in 2008 she made cloth rats to honor the year of the rat. Liu has included the Olympic rings on some of the rats as a tie-in with the Beijing Olympics.

Liu says that hard work building her toy business is recognized by the government. Respect, attention, and several awards from the government reward the passion that Liu invests in her work. Despite the potential danger that modernization presents to folk art, Liu is optimistic that folk art will be part of modern life.

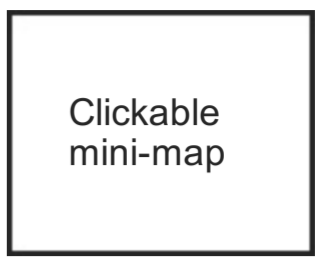


Dough Figures: Laing Xiucai



Liang Xiucai and his wife live a life deeply rooted in their heritage. They are artists who make dough figures, which they sell as toys at the market. Dough figures have a long history in this village but now are only made by these two skilled artists. The delicate and colorful figures they create represent virtues that are significant in Chinese culture and Lang village history. There are over 2,000 different shapes, each with corresponding symbolism and meaning.

- Workshop Artist at Work Process Gallery Dough Figure Gallery Cultural Heritage



Lang Village Folk Tale Book

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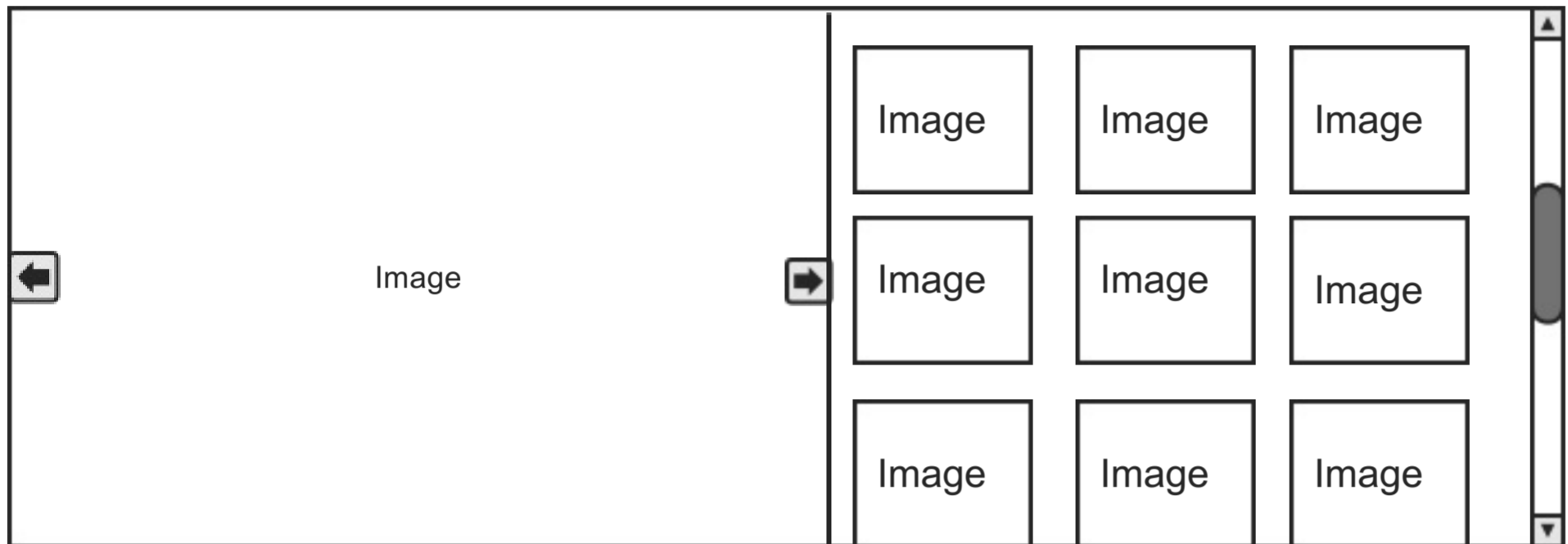
Liang Xiucai and his wife live a life deeply rooted in their heritage. They are artists who make dough figures, which they sell as toys at the market. Dough figures have a long history in this village but now are only made by these two skilled artists. The delicate and colorful figures they create represent virtues that are significant in Chinese culture and Lang village history. There are over 2,000 different shapes, each with corresponding symbolism and meaning. Liang Xiucai learned the craft from his uncle and now teaches it to his wife and children. He says he is not modest about the quality of their craftsmanship because he must sell this work. It is their livelihood.

These resourceful artists work from their home, where they knead, roll, and shape the dough. Each dough figure must undergo an elaborate process featuring several stages of steaming, painting, and drying before a finished piece is ready for sale. While these dough figures were once used to fend off wild wolves, they are now generally sold as toys for children and they are often crafted to represent characters from novels, the opera, and fairy tales. Visit the Artist at Work section to learn more about the process involved in making these dough figures, and learn more about the symbolism and history behind these figures by visiting the Cultural Heritage section.



Artist at Work

Liang Xiucai works in tandem with his wife to make several dough figures at once. They go through an intricate process of steaming and drying the dough before painting it and letting it dry again.



It all begins with a simple dough from wheat flour and water. Though it was not traditionally part of the recipe, Liang Xiucai now adds a small amount of yeast to accelerate the process.

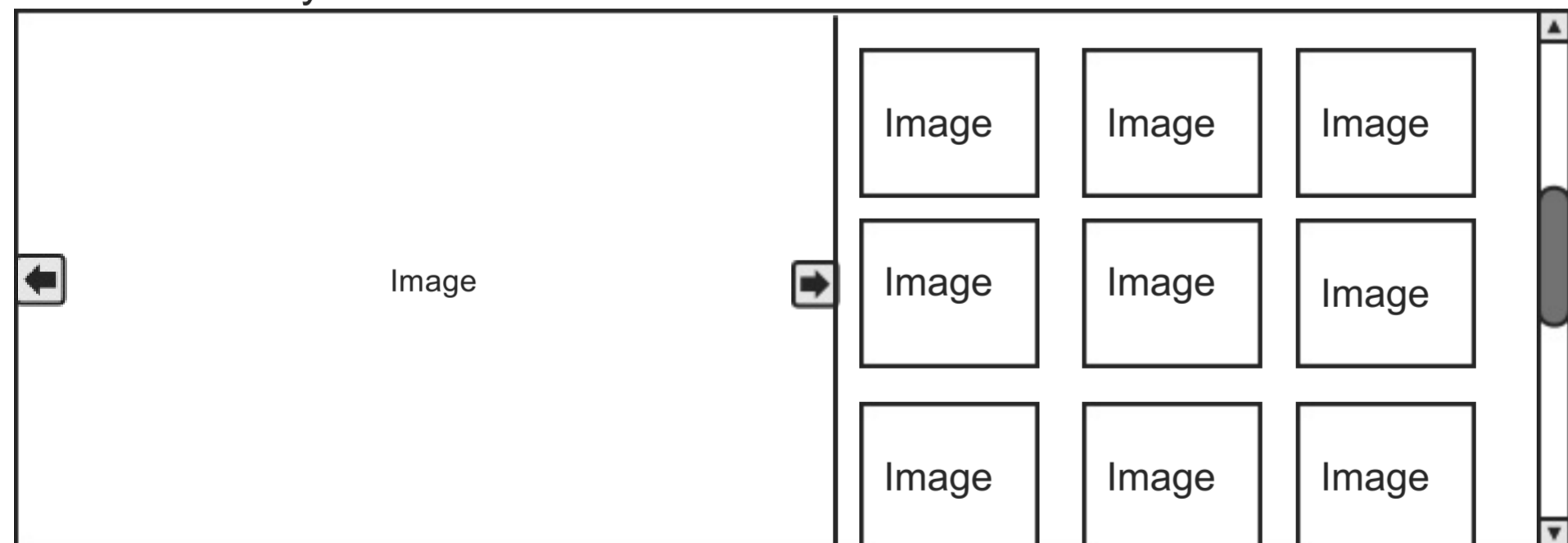
The artists skillfully knead the dough, using the palms of their hands as well as their fingers. This process helps to toughen the gluten so that the dough will hold its shape properly. Often they will use natural food coloring to dye the dough. The bitter tasting paint is non-toxic, in case children place the toys in their mouths.

The artist then rolls the dough and cuts it into intricate shapes to make the figures to be sold at market. Liang Xiucai uses water to attach different parts of the shape together, most often making roosters or tigers. Once they are molded into shape, the pieces are placed on a round woven mat for drying.

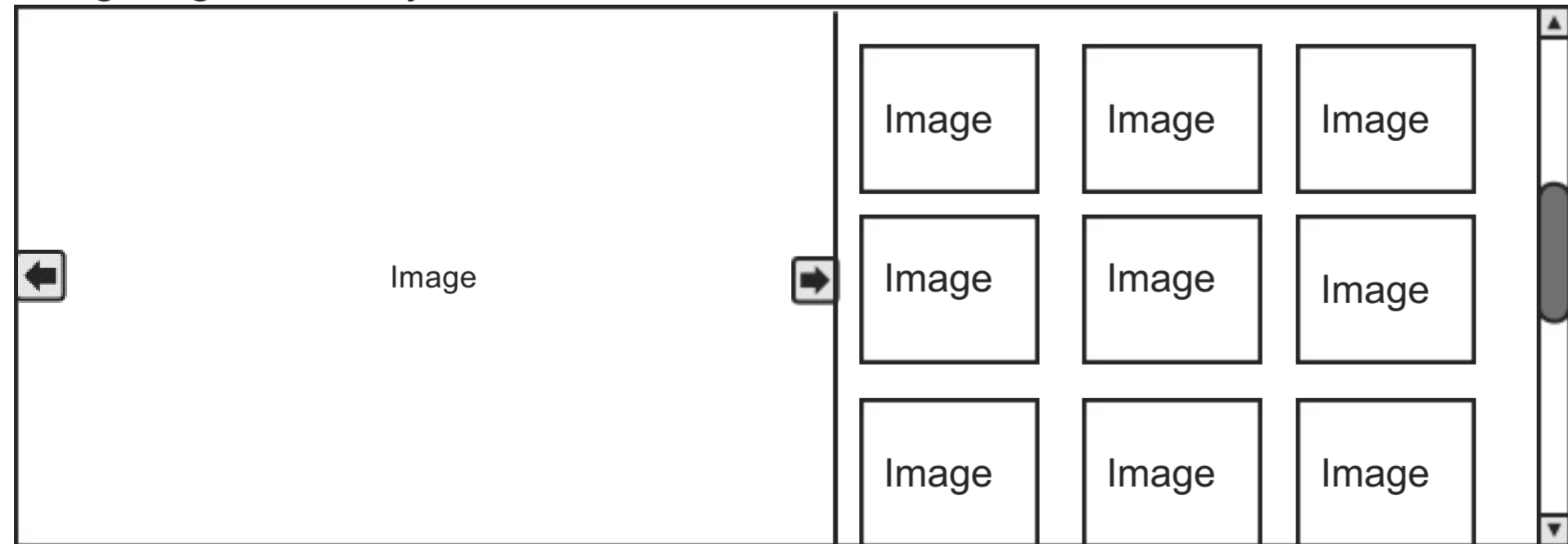
Liang Xiucai's wife covers the tray with a linen cloth, and then takes the tray into the kitchen where the figures will be steamed in a small earthen oven. Using dried leaves from corn stalks to fuel the fire, she stokes the flames in her smoky kitchen for half an hour. The corn stalks, which are readily available throughout the village, are also used to heat the oven for cooking. Because of the yeast, the dough figures will rise from the oven's heat. Once steamed, they are placed in the sun to dry.

After this process has been completed, the figures are painted with a transparent paint mixed with glue made from pigskin mucilage. Using brushes made by a customer in Jinan, Liang Xiucai paints the dough pieces using one color at a time. The colors are added in a specific order. Starting with yellow, he paints each piece and then puts them out to dry. He repeats this process for each color: black, red, green, and then blue. These five colors are the only colors he uses.

Process Gallery

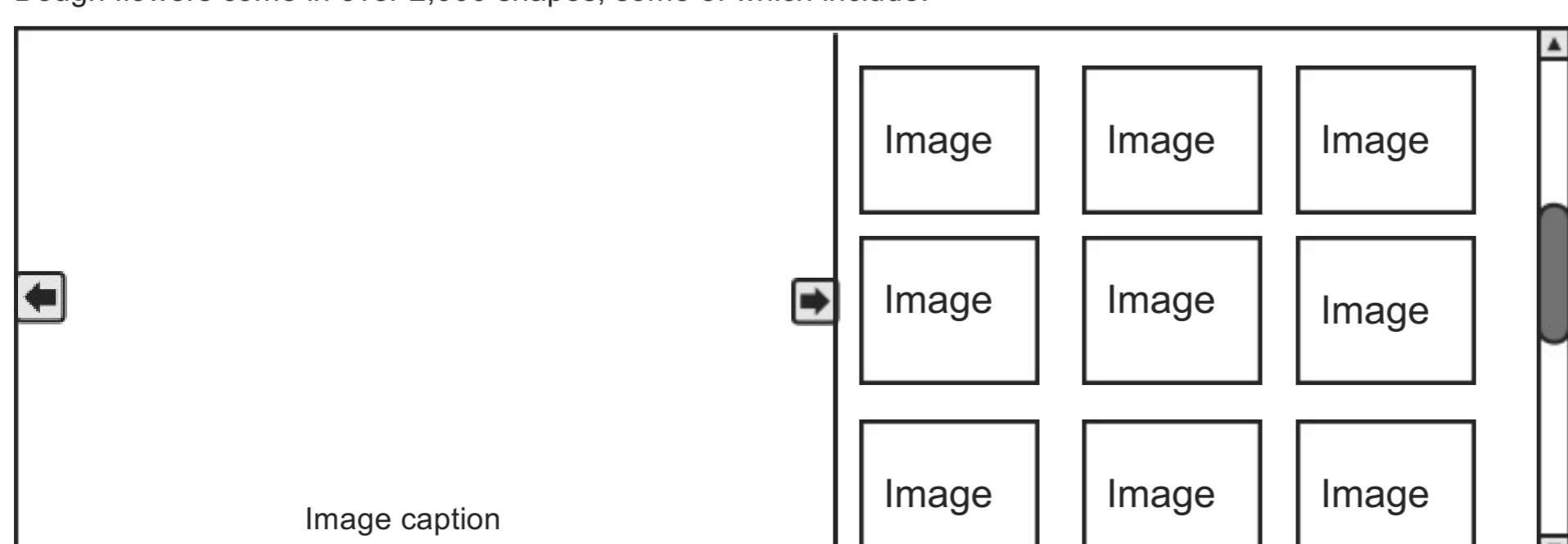


Dough Figure Gallery



Cultural Heritage

Dough flowers come in over 2,000 shapes, some of which include:

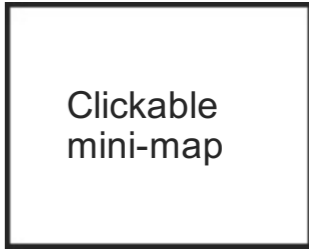


Dough Figures: Zhang Bao Lin



Zhang Bao Lin lives and works in a modern high-rise in central Beijing, but his talent and passion stem from over 2,000 years of tradition and culture. Zhang creates extremely intricate and delicate dough figures from his home and studio in the city. Zhang has been practicing this art form for over forty years, since he was taught this ancient tradition by his teacher and mentor, a close family friend who was a master of the craft.

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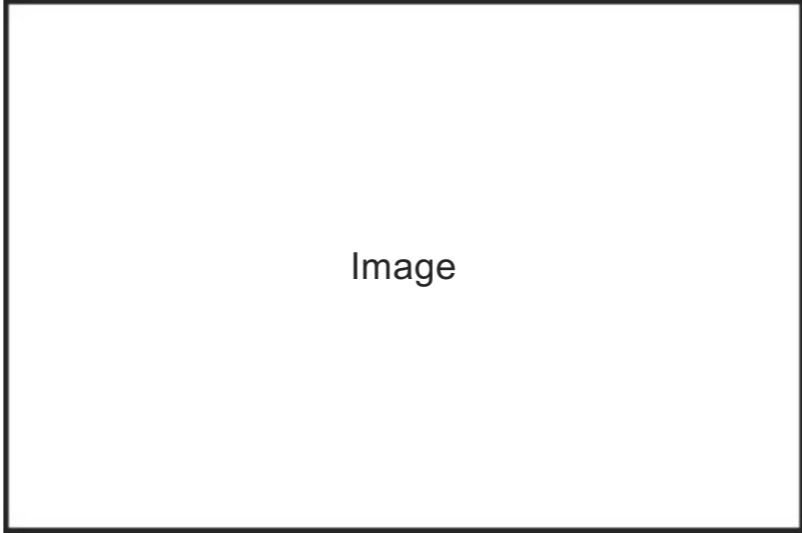
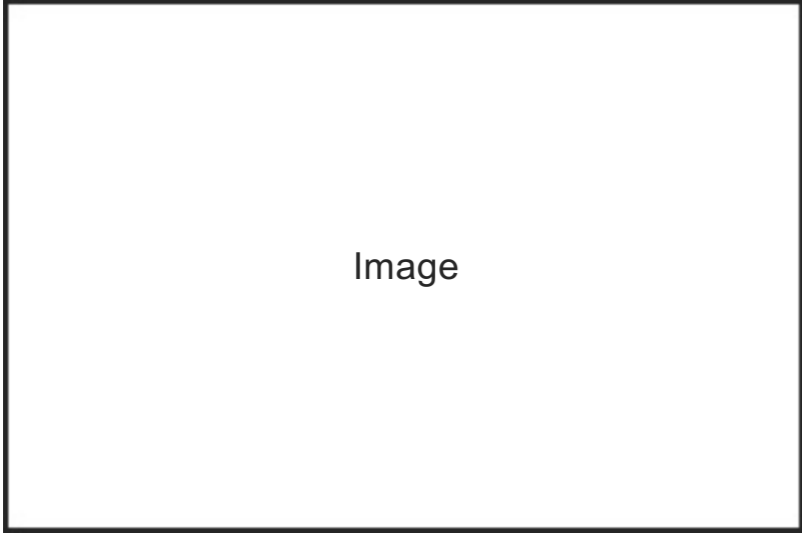


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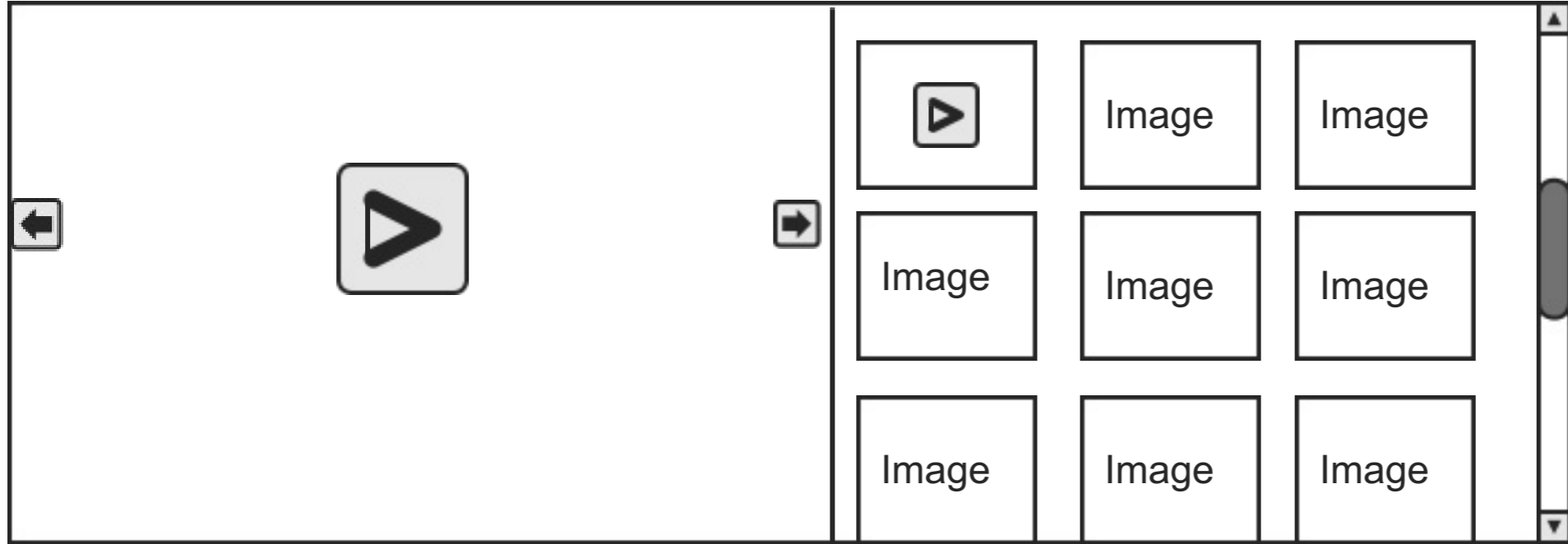
Workshop

This seasoned artist earns his income by depicting historical figures, opera scenes, and everyday people through his dough sculptures. Zhang Bao Lin now has taken on his own student to whom he passes his years of knowledge and experience. Zhang is famous throughout China and has been asked to visit sixteen different countries to showcase his talents.



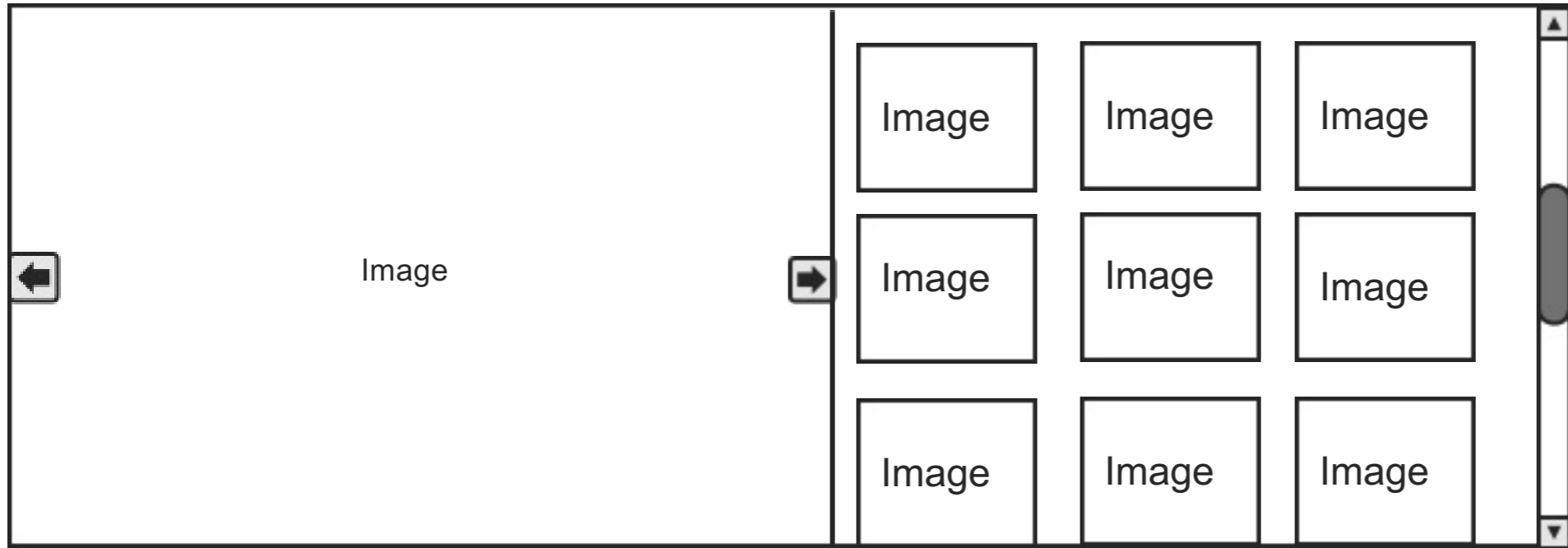
Artist at Work

The artist begins with dough made from rice flour, water, and honey. Many times watercolors are either added to the dough mixture or simply painted on to add color. He starts to form his figures with a limited palette of pre-colored dough (white, beige, bright red, pinkish red, bright green, bright yellow, indigo, and black) from which he is able to make any other color he needs. The tools used to form the figures are made by the artist out of plastic, and he also uses scissors to create certain details of the final product.



Zhang Bao Lin has a deep connection to the figures he creates, and he talks to each one of his pieces to help them stir to life. His spiritual connection with the past is strong and he often communicates with his teachers as he works, remembering the lessons they gave him. He explains that he can make simple figures in about two hours, but it will take him longer if he includes more detail. A complicated figure or scene could take him three days. He often begins his work from previously made parts such as a goddess's head. The dough can be made and saved for years, as long as it is steamed a few days in advance of sculpting. He deftly sculpts arms, legs, clothing, and details to build his pieces as true to life as possible. Once formed, a figure can be dried within ten days.

Artist Gallery



Cultural Heritage

The tradition of dough figures stems from the ancient art of making mud dolls and toys. With dough, however, the work can be much more highly detailed. Originally people used the figures as toys but they now have evolved into a world-class art. Dough figures were commonly used in festivals as a sacrifice to the gods. Afterwards they would be eaten, and this practice is still being followed today in some places. The dough is said to bring good health to all who consume it and bring the spirit to you as you become part of it.

At one point it was thought of as backward to make this kind of work. The theory was that one should not do traditional arts, so many artists stopped. It was seen as superstitious, and so many of these artists went to work in the factories. By the 1980s many of the artists returned to their crafts. Supported by new government policies and foreign interest in folk art, these traditions are returning to prevalence. There is more emphasis in China on the folk arts now so these traditions and deep-rooted parts of culture are taught in schools.

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Artists

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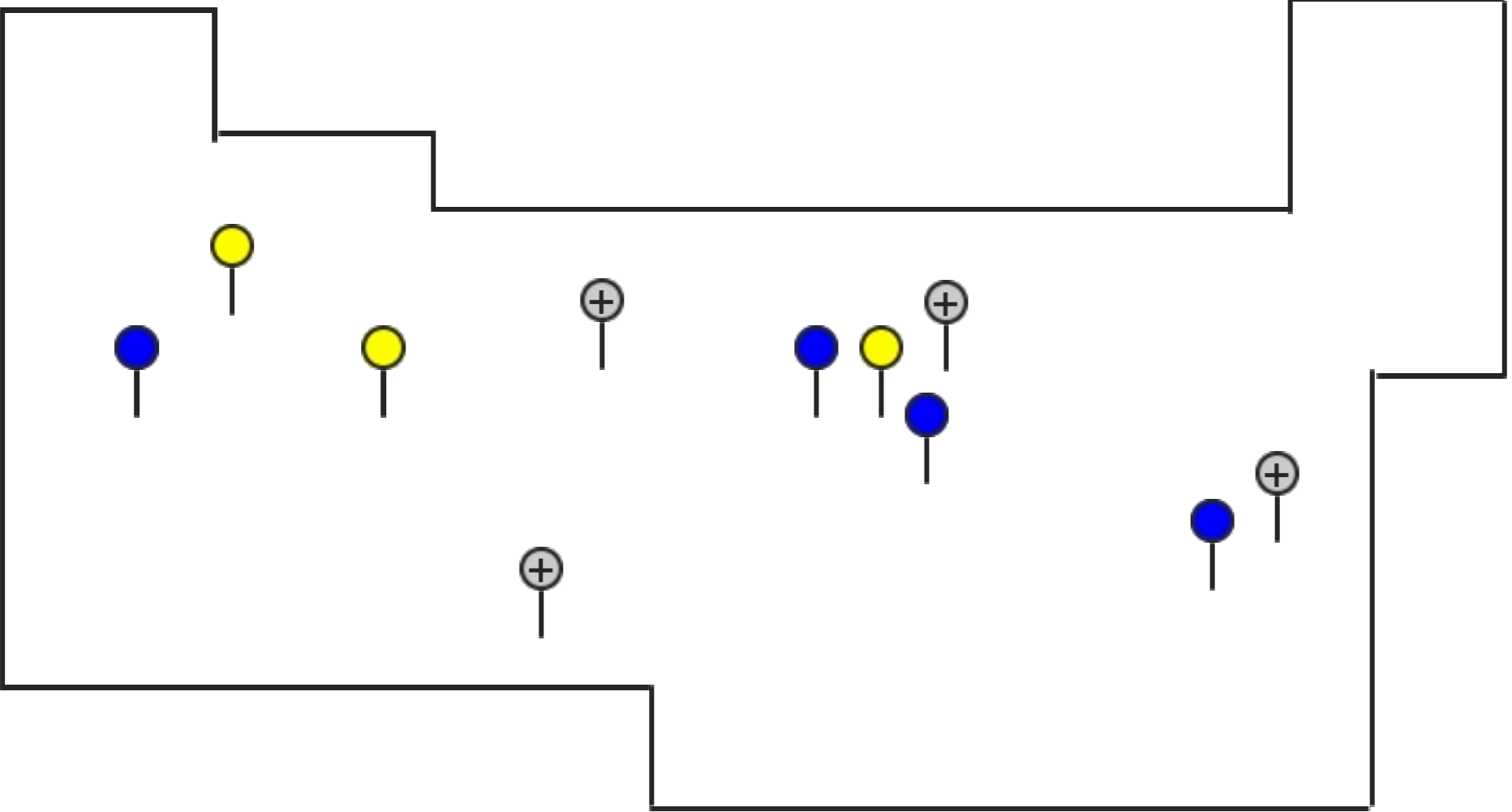
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 - Dance
 - Fibers
 - Literature
 - Multimedia
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Traditions (10)
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Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Appreciation (6)
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Music (4)
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Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Art
Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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[factory](#)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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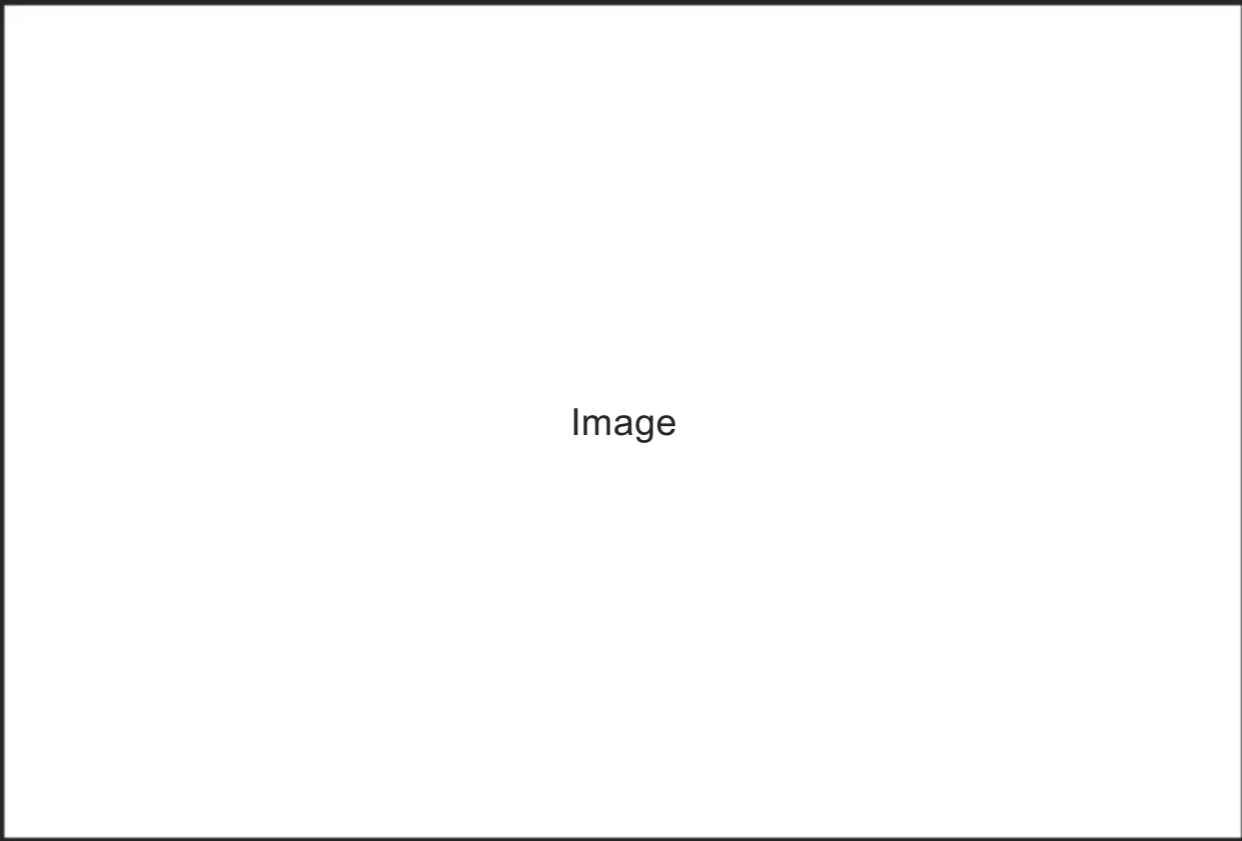
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Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

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Site Map

[Art](#)

- [Architecture](#)
- [Dance](#)
- [Fibers](#)
- [Literature](#)
- [Multimedia](#)
- [Music](#)
- [Theater](#)
- [Time-Based](#)
- [Visual Arts](#)

[Artists](#)

- [Bai Da Cheng](#)
- [Li Yu Cheng](#)
- [Zhang Yi Gui](#)
- [Wang Shu Hua](#)
- [Bai Da Cheng](#)
- [Li Yu Cheng](#)
- [Zhang Yi Gui](#)
- [Wang Shu Hua](#)
- [Bai Da Cheng](#)
- [Li Yu Cheng](#)
- [Zhang Yi Gui](#)
- [Wang Shu Hua](#)

[Topics](#)

- [Appreciation](#)
- [Art Form](#)
- [Celebration](#)
- [Commemoration](#)
- [Community](#)
- [Content](#)
- [Cultural Heritage](#)
- [Education](#)
- [Food](#)
- [Home](#)
- [Learning](#)
- [Material](#)
- [Philosophy/Religion](#)
- [Play](#)
- [Process](#)
- [Traditions](#)
- [Use](#)
- [Values](#)
- [Work](#)

[Place](#)

[Participate](#)

- [Contribute](#)
- [Games & Stories](#)
- [Learning Resources](#)

[About](#)

- [Our Mission](#)
- [In the Press](#)
- [Credits](#)
- [Media](#)
- [Other Partners](#)

Art
Fibers (6)
Multimedia (4)
Music (4)
Architecture (3)
Dance (2)
Theater (2)
Literature (1)
Time-Based (1)
Visual Arts (1)
Daily Life
Celebration (12)
Community (10)
Food (8)
Play (3)
Heritage
Cultural Heritage (4)
Philosophy/Religion (5)
Traditions (10)
Innovation
Art Form (15)
Appreciation (6)
Content (8)

[Buddhism](#)

[Factory](#)

[Fashion](#)

[Festival](#)

[Folktales](#)

[Miao](#)

[Painting](#)

[Rural](#)

[Toys](#)

[Urban](#)

[Weaving](#)