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Article

The Global Turn of Local Heritage: Reconstructing the Value of Folk Art and Its Modern Practice

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Abstract: The global standardization heritage system and the restructuring of capital consumption logic have reconfigured the criteria for evaluating the value of folk art. Local handicrafts have transitioned from mere daily survival tools to cultural symbols circulating globally, thereby giving rise to structural tensions such as the erosion of cultural depth, the loss of voice within local communities, and a polarization of values. This paper draws upon Clifford Geertz's concept of 'local knowledge' and Jinbult's 'Heritage Critique' as the core theoretical tools to trace the four-tiered evolution of folk art values: indigenous knowledge rooted in regional ecology and community rituals; global aesthetic heritage standardized and documented under UNESCO's heritage system; a dual commercialization dilemma divided into high-end luxury products and low-cost imitations; and a dynamic revitalization approach grounded in participatory design that bridges local empathy with contemporary sustainable development. The research demonstrates that current heritage conservation and commercial development often treat folk art as an external aesthetic object, severing the symbiotic relationship between craftsmanship and local life. Only by centering efforts on community co-creation and harnessing the ecological insights and slow-production wisdom embedded in local knowledge can we achieve value reconstruction that balances cultural authenticity with contemporary relevance, thereby addressing cultural fragmentation caused by heritageification and commercialization. This study contributes to the broader discourse on intangible cultural heritage by proposing a community-centered framework that reconciles global heritage standards with localized cultural practices, offering actionable insights for policymakers, practitioners, and scholars engaged in sustainable heritage development.

Keywords: folk art; local knowledge; heritage preservation; cultural commercialization; living inheritance

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1. Introduction

The integration of rural handicrafts into international art museums has triggered a profound transformation in their cultural identity: objects originally embedded in local ritual practices and daily life activities have been repositioned within global frameworks, acquiring new layers of symbolic and institutional value through standardized heritage narratives. However, this process has simultaneously introduced complex developmental challenges—ritual practices are undergoing progressive simplification, intergenerational transmission among younger community members is weakening, and indigenous knowledge systems are experiencing gradual attrition. While the external recognition and market valuation of these artifacts have increased significantly, traditional rural lifestyles and associated social structures are concurrently experiencing decline, forming the central empirical and conceptual foundation for this study. The valuation of folk arts is inherently pluralistic, shaped by diverse stakeholders including local communities, cultural institutions, and commercial actors; each group applies distinct criteria rooted in differing epistemological priorities, resulting in ongoing divergence in how value is articulated and prioritized. Existing scholarship tends to treat intangible cultural heritage preservation and cultural product commercialization as separate domains, rarely bridging

anthropological insights on situated knowledge with critical perspectives on heritage formation. This article therefore advances an integrative approach, drawing upon documented global practices in traditional craft revitalization and aligning them with internationally recognized heritage documentation methodologies. Concerns regarding cross-cultural representation in global creative industries have highlighted the importance of ethical engagement frameworks. Grounded in extensive field data collected through participatory design methods—including co-creation workshops, iterative prototyping, and longitudinal community observation—this study identifies key structural and epistemic barriers to sustainable development [1]. It proposes a dynamic transformation model that shifts emphasis from external evaluation toward empathetic, community-centered collaboration, thereby constructing an analytical framework specifically designed to support the long-term vitality and self-determined evolution of folk art traditions worldwide.

The knowledge embedded in folk crafts is not abstract or transferable in isolation; rather, it is deeply cultivated through sustained interaction with local ecological conditions, seasonal rhythms, communal memory, linguistic patterns, and embodied skill transmission across generations. This knowledge manifests not only in technical proficiency—such as material selection, tool adaptation, and process sequencing—but also in tacit understandings of spatial organization, temporal pacing, symbolic resonance, and relational ethics embedded in making practices. It is transmitted informally through observation, imitation, shared labor, storytelling, and ritualized repetition, forming an inseparable part of everyday social life rather than existing as discrete curricular content [1, 2]. As such, its continuity depends not merely on individual mastery but on the health and coherence of the broader sociocultural ecosystem in which it is practiced.

Interpretive anthropology emphasizes that local cultures function as integrated systems of meaning, shaped by specific geographical settings, ecological relationships, spiritual worldviews, and collective social structures; within this understanding, folk crafts serve as primary carriers of culturally grounded knowledge that cannot be extracted, translated, or standardized without significant loss of contextual significance. Traditional folk art within community-based settings fulfills two foundational roles: first, it provides tangible utility in supporting subsistence, domestic life, and ceremonial functions; second, it actively sustains communal bonds through collaborative production, shared symbolism, and intergenerational dialogue. These dual dimensions—material functionality and social cohesion—constitute the holistic knowledge base that precedes and underpins any formal designation or external reinterpretation within heritage frameworks.

1.1. The Material Production Logic Supported by Regional Ecology

The materials, crafting processes, and formal characteristics of diverse folk arts exhibit profound congruence with regional ecological conditions and local phenological rhythms, thereby constituting a self-sustaining, geographically embedded system of production knowledge [3]. Plant-based dyes employed in traditional textile arts are systematically harvested from native flora—such as indigo, madder, and turmeric—whose seasonal availability dictates dyeing calendars; pottery clay is carefully selected from stratified soil deposits unique to specific river basins or mountain foothills, with mineral composition directly influencing firing behavior and surface texture; wooden tools are carved from locally abundant timber species whose grain density, moisture resistance, and workability determine functional suitability. This holistic production framework operates without reliance on industrially standardized inputs, instead depending on empirically refined, place-specific technical know-how transmitted across generations through immersive apprenticeship, observational learning, and embodied practice. Such knowledge systems reflect a relational ecological epistemology—one that perceives human craft not as domination over nature but as participatory adaptation within it. Consequently, aesthetic qualities emerge organically from functional requirements and material constraints, rather than being imposed as autonomous artistic criteria. The primary purpose remains deeply utilitarian: fulfilling essential dimensions of

daily life—including clothing, food preparation, shelter construction, and transport—and thus functioning as an integral, non-separable component of community-level subsistence resilience and cultural continuity.

1.2. Ethnic Identity Symbols Embodied in Folk Rituals

Folk art functions far beyond its utilitarian or decorative roles, operating as a deeply embedded symbolic system that facilitates communal communication, reinforces collective identity, and sustains ritual practice across generations. Traditional New Year paintings, for instance, are integral components of seasonal ceremonial life—not passive ornaments but active ritual agents employed to invoke auspicious forces, repel malevolent influences, and affirm cosmic harmony during critical calendrical transitions. Similarly, ethnic clothing patterns encode layered sociocultural information: geometric motifs may denote specific clan affiliations, color combinations signal marital status or life-stage transitions, and textile techniques reflect inherited knowledge systems tied to local ecology and kinship structures [4, 5]. Folk wood carvings and embroidered motifs further articulate cosmological worldviews, embedding narratives of ancestral origin, mythic heroes, and agrarian cycles into tangible, tactile forms. This symbolic repertoire is internally coherent and context-dependent; its meanings emerge only through sustained participation in shared ritual practice and intergenerational transmission. Outsiders often perceive these artifacts solely through aesthetic or formal criteria, overlooking the intricate web of social relations, moral frameworks, and spiritual commitments they instantiate—highlighting the profound contextual specificity inherent in such traditional knowledge systems.

1.3. A Dynamic Cultural Practice of Self-Directed Character Development

Folk art, when situated within its original social and cultural milieu, resists rigid codification or standardization; rather, it manifests as a fluid, adaptive practice continually reshaped by shifting communal values, functional requirements, and evolving aesthetic sensibilities. This organic development occurs without reliance on formal institutional frameworks or centralized authority—there are no officially sanctioned master practitioners or hierarchical gatekeepers of knowledge. Transmission occurs horizontally and intergenerationally across the entire community: elders share experiential wisdom, women contribute distinctive stylistic innovations rooted in domestic and ritual contexts, and youth reinterpret motifs through contemporary media and materials, ensuring continuity without stagnation. Techniques remain collectively accessible, with no proprietary claims or exclusionary apprenticeship systems. Crucially, at this foundational level, folk art is not conceptualized as intangible cultural heritage requiring safeguarding; it is embedded seamlessly in quotidian routines—woven into festivals, labor practices, rites of passage, and domestic decoration—its vitality sustained not by policy interventions but by ongoing relevance to lived experience and communal identity formation.

2. The Dual Value Transformation Shaped by the Heritage System

Heritage is not a pre-existing, self-evident category rooted in objective materiality, but rather an actively constructed social and institutional phenomenon. This process—often termed heritageization—involves deliberate curatorial interventions, formal nomination procedures, and standardized evaluative frameworks administered by museums, national cultural agencies, and transnational bodies [4, 6]. Within this system, indigenous folk art undergoes a profound dual transformation: its original functional, ritual, or utilitarian dimensions are systematically detached, thereby demystifying its embeddedness in lived community practice; concurrently, it is repositioned as possessing universal aesthetic, historical, or symbolic significance accessible to broader audiences. Moreover, dynamic, evolving, and context-sensitive folk traditions are rendered into stabilized, codified, and museum-ready forms—effectively converting living cultural expressions into discrete, bounded, and archivable specimens. The international intangible cultural heritage listing mechanism exemplifies this globalized preservation

paradigm, standardizing criteria for recognition while influencing national policy priorities, funding allocations, and public perceptions of cultural value across diverse sociocultural settings.

2.1. The Entrenched Forms of Practice under Unified Standardization and Regulation

To align with internationally recognized heritage evaluation frameworks, local authorities responsible for identifying and documenting folk arts often select a narrow set of forms, stylistic patterns, and production techniques from richly varied and dynamically evolving local traditions, designating them as official reference models. This process inherently prioritizes certain expressions while overlooking or omitting numerous other locally significant variants that do not conform to externally defined benchmarks. As a result, living, adaptive craft practices—characterized by regional specificity, intergenerational innovation, and contextual responsiveness—are distilled into singular, static exemplars. Such standardization substitutes community-rooted aesthetic values and functional diversity with externally imposed uniformity, effectively enacting a form of cultural curation rather than organic preservation [5]. Comparable mechanisms operate within various national intangible cultural heritage recognition systems and international nomination procedures, where procedural consistency and comparability across contexts take precedence over localized complexity and continuity. This approach risks reinforcing institutional homogenization at the expense of grassroots pluralism and adaptive resilience in traditional knowledge transmission.

2.2. The Erosion of Meaning Resulting from the Separation of Native Living Scenarios

The process of heritageization frequently entails the systematic extraction of folk art from its original, embedded position within the rhythms and structures of community life. This displacement involves the deliberate removal of functional, practical, and socially embedded dimensions—such as agricultural labor, lifecycle ceremonies including weddings and funerals, seasonal festivals, and ancestral or communal sacrificial rituals—leaving behind only stylized technical execution and formal aesthetic qualities. Consequently, objects that once served as everyday garments, ritual paraphernalia, or utilitarian implements in farming or domestic contexts are reconfigured exclusively as static visual artifacts, displayed under controlled museum conditions without contextual explanation or interactive engagement. As a result, foundational components of local epistemology—including knowledge systems rooted in ecological observation and adaptation, intergenerational transmission through participatory rites, and collective identity formation anchored in shared practice—are flattened into superficial decorative motifs. This reduction not only obscures the dynamic relationship between form and function but also disrupts the holistic cultural logic that historically sustained meaning-making across generations [7, 8]. Ultimately, folk art undergoes a profound ontological shift: it ceases to operate as an active, embodied medium of social cohesion and practical wisdom, becoming instead a decontextualized, inert specimen whose significance is mediated solely through institutional framing and curatorial interpretation.

2.3. Universal Cultural Symbols for Establishing a Global Aesthetic Framework

While distilling their local practical essence, heritage institutions draw upon the broadly recognized value of folk art as part of humanity's shared intangible cultural legacy, aligning with internationally endorsed principles for safeguarding living traditions. This approach supports the construction of an aesthetic narrative designed to resonate across diverse geographical, linguistic, and civilizational contexts. Within this framework, visual motifs and symbolic forms are intentionally emphasized for their cross-cultural legibility, facilitating their integration into global art museums, international exhibition programs, and structured intercultural dialogue initiatives. Although such institutional engagement often enhances visibility and strengthens eligibility for public funding and policy-level recognition, it may simultaneously weaken endogenous transmission pathways [9]. When traditional crafts become increasingly dependent on external curatorial frameworks rather than remaining embedded in everyday social

practices, community-based continuity is compromised. Over time, this dynamic can shift the status of such practices from living traditions to objects requiring sustained institutional stewardship. A consequential tension thus emerges: heightened formal recognition and resource allocation do not necessarily reinforce organic transmission; instead, they may inadvertently narrow the conditions under which authentic intergenerational learning and adaptive innovation naturally occur.

3. The Multiple Practical Contradictions Arising from Market Transformation Processes

Following heritage-based revitalization efforts and integration into international market frameworks, traditional folk arts have increasingly followed two distinct commercial trajectories—on one hand, mass commodification through tourism and digital platforms; on the other, elite aesthetic repositioning within global art markets. Both pathways tend to prioritize market viability over continuity of local knowledge systems, often resulting in simplification or decontextualization of artistic practices. As community-rooted expressions historically transmitted through oral tradition, apprenticeship, and shared ritual, these art forms inherently operate outside the individualized rights framework embedded in prevailing legal instruments governing creative works. This structural misalignment has prompted sustained scholarly and policy-level discussion concerning equitable cultural exchange, benefit-sharing mechanisms, and safeguarding intangible heritage. Such considerations represent a key dimension in understanding how value is reconfigured during contemporary cultural-economic transitions.

3.1. The Dual Commodityization Path

The first approach entails the strategic repositioning of luxury goods as elite cultural commodities: multinational high-end brands enter collaborative arrangements with regional artisan communities to selectively appropriate traditional motifs, handcrafted techniques, and symbolic vernaculars—often distilling them into limited-edition premium offerings. This process significantly inflates market value through scarcity framing and global prestige marketing, directing these products toward affluent international consumers. Crucially, craftsmanship is instrumentalized solely as a marker of exclusivity and brand differentiation, while the holistic production ecology—including localized material sourcing, intergenerational skill transmission, ritualized making practices, and embedded social meanings—is systematically excluded from commercial narratives. As a result, such commodified artifacts become culturally dislocated: severed from their original functional, ceremonial, or communal contexts, they circulate as aestheticized tokens rather than living cultural expressions, thereby reinforcing socioeconomic barriers that prevent broader public access to heritage-derived value.

The second approach relies on industrial standardization and economies of scale: folk visual motifs are digitized, simplified, and adapted for automated manufacturing across textile, homeware, and accessory sectors, enabling widespread distribution at accessible price points. While this expands visibility and lowers entry thresholds for consumers, it inevitably sacrifices tactile authenticity, material specificity, and the nuanced variations arising from human-centered making processes—such as tool wear, seasonal material shifts, or improvisational adaptations honed over decades. The resulting outputs retain only flattened graphic elements, divorcing design from its epistemic foundations in local ecological knowledge, spatial memory, kinesthetic learning, and community-based pedagogy [10]. Consequently, mass-produced iterations often converge toward generic, stylistically diluted forms that lack semantic depth and contextual resonance. Despite their divergent market strategies—one emphasizing scarcity and exclusivity, the other prioritizing ubiquity and affordability—both pathways operate under a shared extractive logic: they treat folk aesthetics as decontextualized visual assets, bypassing the integrated systems of knowledge, ethics, and relational practice that constitute intangible cultural heritage.

3.2. Conflict between Collective Cultural Creation and Modern Property Rights Rules

Traditional folk art emerges from sustained, intergenerational participation within communities, embodying shared aesthetic values, symbolic meanings, and technical knowledge transmitted orally and through practice rather than attributable to any single originator. This mode of cultural continuity reflects deeply rooted communal stewardship, where custodianship is exercised collectively over time and space. In contrast, contemporary frameworks for rights attribution—such as those governing trademarks, licensing agreements, and related legal instruments—are structured around identifiable legal persons or corporate entities, making them inherently ill-suited to accommodate models grounded in distributed, non-individualized authorship. Instances have occurred where commercial enterprises adopt traditional motifs in branding or product design without establishing formal, equitable partnerships with source communities, leading to asymmetrical benefit-sharing and limited reinvestment in the preservation and transmission of associated craft knowledge. Similar considerations have arisen internationally concerning textile traditions from regions including Latin America and South Asia, prompting several jurisdictions to develop tailored policy instruments aimed at supporting ethical collaboration and fair value distribution. However, harmonized international standards remain under active discussion among cultural heritage institutions and multilateral bodies.

3.3. The Identity Politics Dilemma Behind Cultural Appropriation

When external commercial entities extract folk art symbols for global circulation without the deep participation, informed consent, or equitable benefit-sharing of the originating communities, this practice raises significant concerns regarding cultural integrity and ethical stewardship. The central issue extends beyond superficial borrowing of decorative motifs; it centers on structural imbalances in agency, representation, and economic return. Entities possessing capital, marketing infrastructure, and design expertise often capture disproportionate commercial value, while the communities whose lived traditions, generational knowledge, and aesthetic systems give rise to these symbols receive minimal recognition, no formal rights over derivative uses, and limited access to resulting revenue streams. In certain so-called collaborative initiatives, artisans are engaged only perfunctorily—through brief site visits or token consultations—without sustained involvement in conceptual development, co-design, or decision-making processes. Consequently, such engagements remain fundamentally extractive rather than reciprocal, failing to foster authentic intercultural dialogue or mutual respect. Furthermore, digital platforms—including live streaming services and short-form video applications—amplify these challenges by enabling rapid, unregulated dissemination of folk decorative patterns, often divorced from their original context, meaning, and custodianship. This accelerates the detachment of cultural expressions from their source communities, undermining collective rights to safeguard, interpret, and sustain intangible heritage in accordance with local values and customary practices.

4. An Equal Coexistence Pathway for the Reconstruction of Living Heritage Transmission

Contemporary heritage conservation and commercial development practices frequently position folk art as a static object of external observation, aesthetic consumption, and instrumental appropriation. In such frameworks, decision-making authority and creative agency predominantly reside with external institutions, professional designers, and corporate branding entities, while local artisans are often relegated to the role of technical service providers rather than knowledge holders or co-authors of cultural meaning. This asymmetry undermines the integrity of living heritage transmission and limits its adaptive potential in rapidly evolving social contexts. A more sustainable and ethically grounded approach centers on participatory design methodologies that prioritize equitable collaboration, mutual learning, and shared authorship. By institutionalizing co-creation platforms where community members and

external practitioners engage through reciprocal dialogue and empathetic exchange, local epistemologies can be revitalized as dynamic, context-sensitive resources. Such models enable folk art to transcend its status as a curated aesthetic artifact and instead function as an active repository of localized wisdom—capable of informing contemporary challenges related to sustainability, community resilience, intergenerational continuity, and culturally grounded innovation. This paradigm shift fosters long-term stewardship rooted in respect, reciprocity, and collective responsibility.

4.1. Collaborative Design Replaces the Use of Simple Patterns

Participatory design represents a paradigm shift from superficial aesthetic borrowing to deep, reciprocal knowledge exchange; it necessitates sustained, immersive engagement between designers, brand stakeholders, and the custodians of intangible cultural heritage—particularly artisans whose expertise is embedded in generations of embodied practice. Rather than treating traditional craftsmanship as a static repository of decorative motifs for surface-level application, this approach prioritizes longitudinal cohabitation and collaborative inquiry within craft communities. Designers immerse themselves in local lifeworlds—not only observing but actively participating in seasonal material harvesting, ritual preparations, intergenerational skill transmission, and vernacular problem-solving frameworks [11]. This enables rigorous analysis of foundational systems: closed-loop dyeing ecologies utilizing region-specific botanicals and mordants, structural intelligence encoded in loom configurations and warp-weighted tension logic, and ergonomic wisdom embedded in tool morphology and spatial organization of workshop practices. Such systemic understanding allows for principled translation—rather than stylistic imitation—into contemporary domains including adaptive architectural cladding systems that respond to microclimatic conditions, modular domestic objects informed by ancestral storage logics, and circular textile systems integrating hand-loomed structural integrity with biodegradable fiber innovation.

Across China, numerous higher education institutions have institutionalized such collaboration through formal partnerships with provincial and county-level craft associations, resulting in the establishment of long-term practice bases in regions renowned for embroidery, porcelain, bamboo weaving, lacquerware, and other heritage crafts. Within these sites, cohorts of graduate and undergraduate design students reside for extended periods—often six months or more—engaging in iterative prototyping alongside master artisans and community elders [12]. Decision-making authority is deliberately distributed: artisans jointly determine chromatic palettes grounded in local pigment chemistry and symbolic resonance, co-shape product typologies through participatory workshops, and co-author narratives around functional adaptation and cultural continuity. Each final product bears traceable provenance labeling—including artisan names, village origins, and technique descriptors—enhancing transparency and cultural attribution. Furthermore, transparent revenue-sharing mechanisms ensure that a fixed, pre-agreed percentage of sales proceeds flows directly to the originating cooperative or individual practitioners, thereby reinforcing economic sustainability and affirming the intrinsic value of living heritage as active, evolving knowledge systems rather than museum artifacts.

4.2. Returning to Community Daily Life: Reconstructing and Preserving Living Cultural Heritage

The core objective of living transformation is to reintegrate folk art into contemporary daily life, moving beyond static exhibition contexts toward functional, meaningful engagement. This entails two complementary strategies: first, adapting traditional techniques through thoughtful simplification—retaining foundational craftsmanship principles while aligning with modern ergonomic, aesthetic, and practical requirements—to produce everyday household items, wearable accessories, and lightweight cultural products that resonate with current consumption patterns and spatial constraints. Second, it involves cultivating digitally mediated, community-centered knowledge ecosystems wherein local artisans serve as primary content creators, curators, and educators; such

platforms enable authentic, iterative transmission of skills, stories, and contextual knowledge without reliance on externally driven interpretive frameworks. Crucially, a distinction must be drawn between digital revitalization and digital fossilization: static archival practices—such as isolated pattern scans or linear video recordings of production steps—yield inert digital specimens, whereas dynamic, community-operated online spaces featuring regular updates, peer feedback, multigenerational participation, and localized language use actively sustain cultural continuity and adaptive evolution.

4.3. Local Traditional Wisdom Responds to Modern Development Needs

Local knowledge systems embody time-tested responses to contemporary societal challenges, offering integrative frameworks that address ecological integrity, socioeconomic equity, and cultural continuity. Traditional plant-based dyeing practices, for instance, eliminate reliance on synthetic chemical inputs, thereby reducing aquatic toxicity and soil degradation while supporting biodiversity conservation in cultivation zones. Their labor-intensive, small-scale production processes foster mindful engagement with materials and time—values increasingly recognized in global discourse on well-being and post-growth economics. Furthermore, the embedded logic of reusing, repairing, and repurposing locally sourced artifacts reflects a systemic understanding of material cycles, directly informing circular economy models advocated in sustainable development policy [6]. This value redefinition moves decisively beyond aesthetic appreciation alone; it foregrounds epistemic principles rooted in ecological reciprocity, intergenerational stewardship, and collective resource governance. Such principles provide critical counterpoints to patterns of overconsumption, environmental externalization, and social fragmentation intensified by industrial standardization and market-driven homogenization. Consequently, folk art transitions from static representations of regional identity into dynamic repositories of adaptive knowledge—capable of contributing substantively to global sustainability agendas, climate resilience planning, and inclusive innovation ecosystems, thus transcending limitations imposed by heritage commodification and institutionalized cultural categorization.

5. Conclusion

The transformation of folk art—from locally embedded daily necessities rooted in communal practice to globally recognized cultural heritage—reflects a complex, multi-layered process of value redefinition. This evolution involves dynamic interactions among community members, international heritage institutions, and market-driven actors. Each phase introduces distinct structural shifts: the grounding of folk art in lived community life sustains its functional, symbolic, and pedagogical roles; institutional recognition often relocates it into curated, decontextualized frameworks where aesthetic form is prioritized over social function; and commercial engagement frequently simplifies its visual and narrative dimensions into reproducible motifs for branding, tourism, or digital consumption. Collectively, these transitions risk diminishing the relational, intergenerational, and ecological knowledge systems that constitute the foundational integrity of folk art—knowledge that is inseparable from place-specific labor practices, seasonal rhythms, oral transmission, and collective memory.

Critical perspectives on heritage governance and theories of situated knowledge jointly illuminate the central challenges inherent in this trajectory. Historically, both formal heritage frameworks and creative industry initiatives have operated from an external vantage point—positioning communities primarily as sources of raw cultural material rather than as authoritative agents in defining meaning, setting priorities, or determining outcomes. In heritage nomination processes, museum exhibitions, educational programming, and collaborative design projects, decision-making authority and equitable benefit-sharing mechanisms—including intellectual property rights, revenue streams, and curatorial control—have remained structurally underdeveloped. As a result, disparities in cultural representation persist, leading to uneven power dynamics, misrepresentation, and the gradual dilution of contextual authenticity and semantic depth.

A community-led, participatory co-creation model offers a robust alternative framework for dynamic, ethically grounded transformation. This approach replaces extractive observation with reciprocal engagement, substitutes superficial stylistic borrowing with sustained collaboration in material innovation and skill transmission, and bridges localized ecological wisdom with pressing global concerns such as climate resilience, intercultural dialogue, and inclusive urban development. Crucially, it supports the reintegration of folk art into evolving community lifeworlds—not as static relics, but as living, adaptive practices capable of addressing contemporary needs. In an era marked by intensified transnational mobility, digital mediation, and rapid socio-ecological change, revitalizing folk art entails neither nostalgic restoration nor uncritical modernization. Rather, it demands a renewed commitment to epistemic justice—ensuring that local knowledge systems retain agency, continuity, and relevance within shifting global contexts.

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