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Film and television creation under the new quality productivity-----The innovative logic and path of Chinese animated films

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Abstract

As one of the popular research phenomena in the context of the Internet, domestic animated films, without inheriting the traditional culture and values of the Chinese nation, combined with modern cultural values, captured the hearts of a large number of audiences with three-dimensional characterization, shocking image wonders and ingenuity. In recent years, the strong rise ushered in a huge market expansion. Chinese animation is an important component of world animation, and its unique artistic language, expressive techniques, and aesthetic characteristics with strong ethnic customs have added a significant touch to the world animation art. Based on the above realistic background, this article attempts to take Chinese animated films in the new era as the research object, in order to glimpse the innovative logic and strategies of film and television creation under the new quality productivity, and on this basis, look forward to and think about new optimization paths.

Keywords

New quality productivity; The Chinese school of thought; nationality; Series IP

Introduction

In the history of the development of Chinese animation films, classics such as "Ne Zha Nao Hai", "Da Nao Tian Gong", and "Tian Shu Qi Tan" have built a brilliant era and formed a unique Chinese school. However, due to various reasons, it has experienced nearly 20 years of relative stagnation until the emergence of "Da Sheng Hui", which demonstrates a high level of art and technology and has been widely recognized by Chinese audiences of almost all ages. Subsequently, high-quality and popular films such as "Big Fish and Begonia," "Ne Zha: The Birth of the Demon Child," "White Snake: Origin," and "Jiang Ziya" emerged like mushrooms after rain, achieving double success in box office and reputation. A series of films with distinct ethnic Chinese imprints have entered cinemas, building a "domestic animation universe".

1.Rooted in traditional culture and reborn

In the context of mixed genres and cultural openness and integration, new Chinese animated films consciously consider the mass market while meeting mainstream cultural values. Incorporating commercial elements into the textual writing, narrative style, and other aspects of the film, and opening up its own typological construction path from the perspective of creative characteristics. Whether it's the previous films "White Snake Origins" and "Ne Zha: The Birth of the Demon Child", or the recent "New God List" and "Lion Boy" series, these films are high-quality works that combine genre creation with mainstream values.

The application of elements from the "Chinese School" in the 20th century has a high degree of national artistic consciousness and is a condensed and condensed spirit of traditional Chinese culture and art. The "Chinese School" in the new era continues this creative advantage by incorporating symbols with distinct national characteristics, highlighting the endless cultural heritage, while also creating a new Chinese aesthetic experience that uses the heart to convey meaning and the surface to convey meaning .

1.1. The Artistic Conception Construction of Oriental Freehand brushwork Aesthetics

The aesthetic proposition of "the realm generates the image outside" proposed by the Tang Dynasty poet Liu Yuxi profoundly reveals the dual structure of the Chinese artistic conception of "the image outside the image" - it contains both concrete and perceptible artistic images (reality), and points to an aesthetic space that transcends concreteness (virtuality) . As the core category of traditional Chinese aesthetics, the dialectical concept of "virtual and real" is manifested in painting art as a visual philosophy of implicit coexistence, mutual benefit of concealment and dew, appropriate balance of intensity and lightness, and black and white reflection. It not only reflects the yin and yang nature of all things in nature, but also carries the unique life experience of artists, ultimately constructing an aesthetic realm with infinite meaning through the artistic law of virtual and real coexistence. The Chinese school of animated films consciously inherits this aesthetic gene, infusing the poetic wisdom of traditional painting into the language system of animation, opening up a space for the integration of poetry and painting beyond the narrative dimension, and forming a unique Eastern style "unity of heaven and man" artistic paradigm.

The classic scene of the ink wash animation "Landscape Love" perfectly embodies this aesthetic pursuit: when the old qin player completes his spiritual entrustment to the fisherman, his figure gradually disappears into the vast mountain scenery and blends with the natural world. The creator ingeniously constructs a multidimensional artistic space with imagery groups such as the soaring eagle, the mournful cry of a lone goose, and the vastness of the river - the flapping eagle symbolizes the ascent of spiritual inheritance, the lonely goose implies the melancholy of finding kin-

dred spirits, and the surging river symbolizes the eternal philosophical thoughts of time. These images of the interplay between reality and virtuality not only extend the physical space of the picture, but also elevate the concrete scene of separation into a cosmic consciousness of 'the beauty of heaven and earth is indescribable' in the aesthetic creation of 'everything without painting becomes a wonderful realm'. In this artistic space, the audience not only experiences the profound friendship between master and disciple, but also a transcendent perception of the cycle of life and the eternity of art, ultimately achieving aesthetic transcendence from visual aesthetics to philosophical contemplation in the "harmony beyond rhyme".

In traditional Chinese culture, leaving blank space is a subtle beauty that is indescribable and evokes imagination. As Noel Burch said, "To understand the space of film, it may be beneficial to consider it as actually including two different types of space, namely the space within the frame and the space outside the frame ."Chinese animation inherits this advantage by fully utilizing blank space in the visual design of films to create artistic conception. The various shapes of blank spaces in Chinese painting create a rhythmic change, providing infinite space for the viewer and possessing irreplaceable artistic effects. In the ink wash animations "Little Tadpole Looking for Mom" (1961), "Wild Goose Formation" (1991), "Pastoral Flute" (1963), "Deer Bell" (1982), and "Landscape Love" (1988), the use of blank space is maximized, highlighting the subject and expanding the artistic conception of the work, enhancing the expressive effect of the work, making Chinese animation look more light and elegant, full of poetry. These works differ from the realism of Western oil painting in their expressive techniques, as they do not focus on shaping the form, but instead use the floating of water plants to represent rivers and color changes to depict the four seasons. The Chinese school of animated films expresses their meaning in an immersive way, highlighting the subtle beauty of Eastern culture and making its charm indescribable.

In summary, the artistic achievements of Chinese school animated films stem from their deep exploration and creative transformation of the essence of traditional Chinese culture. At the level of aesthetic construction, creators start from multiple dimensions such as emotion, reason, meaning, rhyme, interest, and taste, and integrate the poetic wisdom of traditional aesthetics into the language of animation art. Through the dialectical unity of "emotion" and "scenery", they achieve a perfect integration of the aesthetic subject's internal emotions and external objects, and construct an artistic realm of "thinking and environment together". At the level of artistic expression, the works inherit the essence of traditional aesthetics and endow them with distinct characteristics of the times through a language that combines form and spirit, a concise and vivid narrative style, magnificent and rich artistic imagination, and bold and exaggerated techniques. More importantly, these works creatively transform the values and concepts of traditional culture into an organic dialogue with contemporary spirit, realizing the contemporary expression of tradi-

tional aesthetic values and providing an important paradigm for building an animation aesthetic system with Chinese characteristics.

1.2. Visualization of Traditional Cultural Images

The 'Chinese School' is a diachronic concept with rich connotations. Its creation and researchers have preserved both respect for past history and exploration of cutting-edge fields; It not only summarizes past experiences, but also attempts to build its own ecosystem in the context of the new era . The "Chinese School" excels in skillfully integrating traditional symbols into creation, showcasing the unique differences between Chinese and Western animation through the most intuitive artistic style, and deeply reflecting national cultural thinking through audio-visual language, thereby effectively strengthening cultural memory. In 20th century animated works, a large number of traditional cultural elements are ingeniously integrated into character shaping, such as the classic character Sun Wukong in "The Monkey King", whose image is outlined with simple and smooth lines, and whose face cleverly uses the facial makeup elements of the Monkey King in traditional Chinese opera, supplemented by vivid and bright colors, vividly reproducing the most straightforward and strong national characteristics. Entering a new era, animated films are no longer confined to tradition. Instead, they actively explore new constructions of traditional cultural symbols based on the advantages of the 20th century, demonstrating strong cultural inclusiveness and cleverly integrating other cultural elements. Under the fictional worldview framework, they form a unique interpretation of cultural integration.

At the level of character design, the "Chinese School" draws on the essence of tradition, carries forward it through inheritance, and endows characters with characteristics that are more in line with the aesthetic of the times without destroying their original image. Li Yunxiang in "New Gods List: Rebirth of Nezha" almost subverts the traditional image of Nezha, but during the battle against the Dragon Palace, the classic images of Huntian Ling and Qiankun Circle instantly bring the audience's memories back to the past. The image of the white snake in "The White Snake: Origins" is inspired by the makeup of the female lead, presenting an Eastern charm of jade face, red lips, and slender eyebrows and eyes, with a slight blush between the edges of the eyes, showcasing the beauty of Eastern aesthetics.

1.3. New quality productivity helps traditional culture

The rapid development of digital production technology has provided convenient technical means for art creators. In the field of art in the new era, workers are adept at mastering these emerging technologies, skillfully constructing imagery, and creating profound artistic conception, aiming to effectively inherit and promote the unique aesthetic essence of China in the context of globalization. These animated works often cleverly draw on traditional techniques such as ink rendering and line drawing in classical painting, combined with modern technologies such as 3D, to

carefully create a visual style rich in freehand charm. At the same time, combined with highly ethnic music elements, the traditional art style and contemporary aesthetic orientation have been successfully integrated, achieving a subtle infiltration of cultural essence and achieving a deep cultural dissemination effect.

Compared to Western animation, the "Chinese School" demonstrates more unique craftsmanship in creating artistic conception. In the animation creation of the new era, the integration of advanced technology has given new vitality to the construction of visual imagery, promoting the "imagery" and "aura" in classical painting to appear on the screen in a more intuitive and innovative visual form. Animated works not only have profound visual connotations and full emotions, but their artistic conception is also closely related to contemporary aesthetic trends, deeply carrying the communication of meaning and emotion, bringing the audience a long "aftertaste" of visual and narrative aspects, greatly stimulating the audience's participation and emotional resonance, and building a bridge for the audience to deeply understand the content of the film. Yang Jian sailed his boat through the sky, surrounded by clouds and mist, creating an extraordinary and serene scenery; Bai Suzhen and Xu Xuan wander between mountains and waters, with elegant yet rich layers in their paintings, bright yet not vulgar; Xiaoqing is fighting in the Black Wind Cave, and the scene is lively and elegant, like a flowing ink painting. These classic scenes are all inspired by traditional Chinese landscape painting, ingeniously extracting and condensing the essence of Chinese art. Through unique artistic language, they shape vivid visual images, and then use these images to convey profound artistic conception beyond the image itself, highlighting the unique artistic charm and profound cultural heritage of Chinese animation. In 'Big Fish and Begonia', traditional instruments such as gongs, cymbals, erhu, bone flutes, and guzheng are cleverly used to weave a peaceful and distant musical picture; Chang'an 30000 Miles "goes further on the path of innovation by incorporating Chinese poetry as narrative elements directly into the film through recitation. It not only conveys a strong Chinese flavor, but also showcases distinct national characteristics, opening up a new path for cultural expression in animated works.

2. Thoughts on the Path of Chinese Comic IP

At the beginning of 2024, "Boonie Bears: Time Reversal" was released and grossed 2.006 billion yuan at the box office, surpassing the 1.824 billion yuan box office of the 2023 summer season "Chang'an 30000 Miles" and ranking second in the history of Chinese animated films. In the Spring Festival season of 2025, "Ne Zha: The Mind of the Demon Child" became the box office champion in Chinese film history with a box office of 8.2 billion yuan, surpassing the first film "Ne Zha: The Birth of the Demon Child" with a box office of 5 billion yuan. As a result, the total box office of the ten works in the "Boonie Bears" series exceeded 7.5 billion yuan, and the total box office of the "Nezha" series exceeded 13.2 billion yuan. Regardless of the specific

performance of a single unit, the overall effect brought by its series is dominant in the market. Looking at the development of Chinese animated films, small-scale independent animated films can no longer meet the needs of the market and audiences. "Series animated films" are becoming mainstream, and the battle for "series" has become the key to victory.

Although the development of Chinese animated film series IP has achieved considerable results so far, the degree of serialization is not high enough, and there are too few "series IPs", which hinder its progress towards becoming a major or powerful country in animated film. Although top animation companies such as Chasing Light Animation continue to produce high-quality original works, the advantages of series and branding are still not obvious. Undoubtedly, the core of the operation of animated film series relies on a certain "brand" effect established by the first successful work, using the symbolic value of the brand or using it as an "IP" for sustainable reproduction as its winning strategy .So far, "branding has become an important part of the film industry. The 'Tang Tan' series and the 'Me and My' series have both formed their own brands, their own IPs, and their own branded operations". The aesthetic principles of the film industry divide film brands into six elements, namely "based on the object world/story, theme brand, film text/product, series brand, based on artist/producer, and post brand expansion" . IP source re cultivation. Domestic animation films should maintain the vitality of the source of IP development, combine the "mass innovation" power given by the Internet, value the huge energy of each potential creator, encourage more diversified creation, systematically support potential network writers and animation creators, and look forward to creating more super IPs.

IP development serialization and industrialization. High quality works and character designs are just the starting point of IP. The continuous development of IP requires one excellent story after another with a complete worldview, experiencing symbiosis in multiple fields to explore the true value and vitality of IP. The serialization and branding construction based on the "six elements" is also based on one of the core principles of film industry aesthetics - imaginative consumption, and the skeleton that supports the series of animated films - the story universe.

2.1.The promotion of 'imaginative consumption'

Animated movies have integration, as a genre that is more closely related to technical language and relatively independent and self-sufficient, it can be used for film game fusion or science fiction. Imagination consumption, as its original meaning of sculpture and the historical significance of 'spectacle and attraction' in film, gathers the aesthetic constructiveness of spiritual creation, breaking away from experience, as well as the high expressiveness, novelty, fictionality, spatiality, and other characteristics of images . The "Mythical" series of animations uses game thinking to showcase distant imagination. For example, in "Ne Zha: The Birth of the Demon Child", Nezha, Taiyi Zhenren, Shen Gongbao, and Ao Bing fight against each other

using the unique "copy" design in electronic games, entering the "Mountain, River, and Country Map" from the main world where the story takes place. In addition, the setting of "equipment" also adds luster to the playability of the story. Equipment "is a common item in electronic games, and due to its scarcity and powerful functionality, binding it can elevate players' gaming experience to a higher level. It can be borrowed from movies, such as the" Ink Taiji Diagram "in" New God List: Yang Jian "and Ao Bing's" Ten Thousand Scales Armor "in" Ne Zha: The Demonic Child Descends ", etc., and upgraded and modified based on the prototype to better meet the needs of the film.

2.2. Diversification of the Universe

In animated film series, the story universe should be more open and diverse, not just referring to the "place of occurrence" that relies on the energy of the story IP, but also capable of producing new stories on its own, serving as a "meta" universe for cross media storytelling of the story IP. Referring to the operational logic of the Marvel Cinematic Universe: using superhero IPs such as "Iron Man," "Captain America," "Thor," and other film series as "points," adding several character subplots to participate in the main narrative, accompanied by countless parallel worlds, theoretically the protagonist team is "immortal" and the number of people continues to increase. The complete logical loop and massive narrative system constitute the vast worldview of the Marvel Universe. In contrast, China's story universe is even broader. Apart from the current domestic animations such as "Fengshen Bang" and "Journey to the West" produced by Caitiao House and Zhuguang Animation, there will still be a massive amount of traditional mythological stories waiting to be developed in the future. The potential of the "China Story Universe" as a large-scale IP cannot be ignored. In this world, there are not only stories of Nezha, Yang Jian, and Sun Wukong, but also stories of other people, gods, and demons that run parallel, but their stories have not yet been released as movies.

With the development of animated film series, the consumption of imagination and the diversification of the "universe" continue to increase. Animated film series can also be narrated across media with dramas, short films, electronic games, digital collections, blind boxes, etc., creating a broader cross media universe world. It not only creates industrial production of the entire industry chain IP, but also creates a cross media, all media universe world.

3. Localized integration and reconstruction

Since "The Return of the Monkey King" injected confidence into the film market, domestic animated films have become regular guests during the Spring Festival and summer seasons. The industrial landscape of the "domestic animation universe" is becoming increasingly clear today, with pillar level IPs having passed market tests and possessing stable audience groups. The "White Snake" series produced by Chasing Light Animation is positioned as "youth oriented" and has received enthu-

siastic feedback from the female market; The second is the "Lion Youth" series produced by Beijing Wonderful and Guangzhou Yidong Entertainment, which uses the spirit of realism to depict the "Chinese Youth Universe"; The third is the "Nezha" series produced by Chengdu Cocoa Bean and Color Bar House, which adheres to the "family fun" route, leads technological innovation, and ignites the inner passion of all age groups throughout the year . The "Chang'an 30000 Miles" produced by Chasing Light Animation has greatly expanded the aesthetic boundaries of domestic animated films due to its cultural interest and epic temperament.

The current animation industry chain starts with creative resources and ends at the consumer market, but the starting and ending points are not fixed and unchanging. Its value added is not limited to the simple screening of original films or generalized physical toys, but rather a development model of "animation+" . The common feature of blockbuster works that have achieved high box office in recent years is the organic integration of ethnic forms and Chinese stories. In the Spring Festival of 2025, the animated film "Ne Zha: The Demonic Children Roar in the Sea" made a strong debut and became the box office champion in Chinese film history after nine days of release, and will significantly break records. The movie 'Ne Zha: The Demonic Children of the Sea' has developed a strong empathy mechanism with Chinese audiences, with narrative strategies that hit contemporary anxiety. Ne Zha's rebellious spirit has touched people's hearts, and to some extent, it has shaped a powerful worldview of the domestic animation universe. Exploring the bidirectional symbiosis between mythological IP and the cultural tourism industry, and even from the perspective of expanding sales channels, its combination with digital technology can be an effective derivative strategy . For example, after the popularity of "Luo Xiaohei's War", which has both good reputation and box office, it quickly launched related theme wallpaper and Sogou skin. For example, "The Devil Child of Nezha Comes into the World", it also creatively produced a large number of expression packs with the characteristics of "cute culture". These free virtual digital symbols used in the Internet platform can not only cater to the aesthetic interest of fans, but also promote the creation of animation brands.

After a detailed analysis of Chinese animated films from the 1940s to the 1970s, scholar Du Yan came to a preliminary conclusion: "The history of Chinese animation was first global before it became national ." In the new era, domestic animated films offer a completely new interpretation of the story by subverting the visual and auditory experience of the "father generation" technique. Starting from traditional myths with a large audience base, we extract aesthetic elements with Eastern connotations, draw inspiration from the style of Hollywood steampunk and the construction of future cities in Japanese anime, and combine them to create a spectacular universe of Chinese animated films. Whether it's Penglai City in "New God List: Yang Jian" or Shura City in "White Snake 2"; Whether it's Donghai in "New Gods List: Nezha Reborn" or the Deep Sea Hotel in "Deep Sea", and so on All of them incorpo-

rate wasteland style and cyberpunk into traditional Chinese architecture, forming a symbolic space that is recognizable by science. In the modern context, it has become crucial to reshape the traits of mythological characters and infuse them with values that meet the expectations of modern audiences.

Since then, the "Chinese School" has begun to build a road of "taking nationality as the core competitiveness of Chinese animation, taking the coverage of the whole age model as the audience, and taking industrialization production as the basic process" to create a new era with unique Chinese characteristics "new China-Chic, new national style, and new national style". The nationalization of the original text and the modernization of its intrinsic values are balanced in the film.

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