

Aesthetic characteristics and creative practice of micro-films from the perspective of directors

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Abstract: *This article delves into the aesthetic characteristics and creative practice of micro-films from the director's perspective. Firstly, by interpreting the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films, including aspects such as storytelling, visual expression, and emotional resonance, it reveals their unique artistic charm. Secondly, by incorporating creative practice cases, it explores the methods and strategies employed by directors in micro-film creation, analyzing how to utilize creativity, techniques, and teamwork to achieve artistic expression in micro-films. The research results indicate that directors play a pivotal role in micro-film creation, and through precise grasp of aesthetic characteristics and flexible application of creative techniques, they can create micro-films with profound content and extensive influence.*

Keywords: *micro-films, aesthetic characteristics, creative practice, director's perspective*

1. Introduction

Micro-film creation is a comprehensive art that involves various aspects such as scriptwriting, acting, cinematography, and sound effects.^[1] From the director's perspective, the creation of a micro-film is a systematic process requiring careful planning, execution, and adjustment. As an emerging film art form, micro-films have gained widespread attention due to their concise yet powerful and creative nature. From the director's perspective, the aesthetic characteristics and creative practice of micro-films have become significant areas of research. This article will interpret the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films and explore the methods and strategies employed by directors in micro-film creation through case studies of creative practice.^[2]

2. The aesthetic characteristics of micro-films

2.1 Creative storylines

One of the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films is their creative storylines. Given their concise and powerful form, micro-films need to present a complete and engaging story within a limited timeframe, which requires a highly creative storyline. Firstly, a creative storyline can quickly capture the audience's attention. In the limited time of a micro-film, it is crucial to grab the audience's attention from the start. By setting a novel and unique plot starting point or adopting an unexpected narrative style, micro-films can spark curiosity in viewers and encourage them to continue watching. Secondly, a creative storyline helps micro-films shape profound characters and convey rich thematic connotations. Although micro-films are short, it does not mean that their character development and theme expression should be superficial. Through well-designed plot twists and conflicts, micro-films can delve into the inner world of characters, revealing the complexity and diversity of human nature. What's more, a creative storyline can also trigger viewers' reflections on social phenomena, life philosophies, and other issues, giving microfilms a deeper level of meaning. Additionally, a creative storyline enhances the watchability and entertainment value of microfilms. As a product of popular culture, one of the purposes of microfilms is to provide entertainment and enjoyment for the audience. By constructing a storyline filled with fun and surprises, microfilms can satisfy the audience's aesthetic needs while also bringing them a pleasant emotional experience. In summary, a creative storyline is an essential component of the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films. It not only captures the audience's attention, shapes profound characters, and expresses rich themes, but also enhances the watchability and entertainment value of micro-films. Therefore, it is crucial to emphasize the creativity of the storyline in micro-film creation. By continuously

exploring and new narrative techniques and plot setups, directors can create more outstanding and appealing micro-films.^[3]

2.2 Fragmented storytelling style

Among the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films, the fragmented storytelling style is a significant and important feature. This narrative approach not only adapts to the concise and succinct form of micro-films but also endows them with unique artistic charm. The fragmented storytelling style is mainly reflected in the fragmentation and reorganization of the plot. Micro-films often employ a nonlinear, multi-threaded narrative method, dividing the story into multiple fragments and then reassemble these fragments through specific techniques to form a complete and tense story. This narrative approach breaks the linear narrative pattern of traditional films, requiring the audience to actively participate and reflect during the viewing process, thereby enhancing the interaction and attraction of micro-films. The fragmented storytelling style also helps micro-films to deeply explore the inner world of characters and reveal complex emotional changes. By dividing the story into multiple fragments, micro-films can more delicately depict the inner world of characters, reflecting their emotional changes and inner conflicts in different situations. This in-depth portrayal makes the characters more three-dimensional and vivid, and easier to evoke the audience's resonance and emotional projection. In addition, the fragmented storytelling style can also enhance the rhythm and visual impact of micro-films. By dividing the story into multiple short segments, micro-films can more flexibly utilize cinematographic language, sound effects, and music to create an atmosphere of tension, suspense, or sentimentality. This fast-paced, high-intensity narrative approach makes micro-films more visually impactful and easier to capture the audience's attention. Overall, the fragmented storytelling style is an essential component of the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films. It not only adapts to the form of micro-films but also deeply explores the inner world of characters, reveals complex emotional changes, and enhances the rhythm and visual impact of micro-films. This narrative approach enables micro-films to present richer, deeper, and more engaging stories within a limited time frame.^[4]

2.3 Detailed photography techniques

Among the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films, detailed photography techniques play an indispensable role. This approach is crucial in the production of micro-films, making them more visually appealing and profound. For one thing, detailed photography techniques can highlight the themes and emotions of micro-films. By capturing and emphasizing the detailed elements in the scene, the photographer can precisely convey the themes and emotions intended to be expressed in the micro-film. In *Fruit Candy*, the use of a telephoto lens makes a simple push-rail shot much more interesting (as shown in the figure 1). Use a wide angle lens to push the camera closer to the actor, because a wide Angle lens will increase the sense of speed of the push rail, and the object will become large and disappear quickly. These details may be characters' expressions, actions, or specific objects or colors in the environment. Through careful selection and presentation of these details, micro-films can leave a deep impression on the audience.^[5]



Figure 1: The motion lens makes the frame dynamic

For another, detailed photography helps to create the atmosphere and situation of the micro-film. Micro-films often need to create a specific atmosphere and emotional tone in a short time, and detailed photography is an important means to achieve this goal. By using specific light and shadow effects, color combinations and composition methods, photographers can create a visual atmosphere that matches the emotional tone of the micro-film, making it easier for the audience to immerse themselves in it. In addition, detailed photography techniques can also enhance the artistic sense and aesthetic value of micro-films. Through the use of various photographic skills and techniques, the photographer will depict and present the detailed elements in the frame, making the micro-film more delicate in vision. This attention and pursuit of details not only improves the artistic quality of micro-films, but also enables the audience to obtain a richer visual experience in the process of watching.

2.4 Unique visual expression techniques

Among the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films, the unique visual expression is particularly prominent. This uniqueness is not only reflected in the composition of the frame, the use of color and the language of the shot, but also in how it conveys the emotion and theme of the story through visual elements. Firstly, micro-films often break the rules in fame composition, using asymmetric, diagonal composition and other tension composition to highlight the focus of the story and the emotional changes of the characters. This composition method not only makes the frame more dynamic and visually striking, but also effectively guides the audience's line of sight and enhances the sense of representation of the story. Additionally, micro-films are also unique in the use of color, such as *New Dragon Gate Inn*, in which the story happens in the remote desert. The background of the story is the Ming Dynasty eunuch dictatorship, social darkness, political corruption, and the people struggle to live. Thus, the dim and dark tone of the film is used, creating a beautiful but depressed artistic atmosphere (as shown in the figure 2).^[6]



Figure 2: Dim film tone of *New Dragon Gate Inn*

By utilizing specific color harmony and contrast, micro-films can create a distinctive visual atmosphere and effectively convey the emotional tone of the story. For instance, warm colors can be employed to depict cozy and sweet scenes, while cool tones can create a sense of tension and melancholy. This deliberate use of color not only enhances the aesthetic appeal of the frame but also enriches the emotional depth of the storytelling. Furthermore, micro-films distinguish themselves through their adept use of cinematography techniques. Through various lens types such as close-ups, wide shots, and angles, micro-films can accurately capture characters' emotional fluctuations and action details, thereby highlighting nuanced aspects of the story. Additionally, micro-films excel in employing shot transitions and editing techniques to craft a compelling sense of rhythm and suspense that captivates audience. Lastly, visual expression in micro-films is further exemplified by its manipulation of light and shadow as well as incorporation of special effects. By skillfully leveraging light and shadow effects, micro-films can cultivate a unique visual style that enhances the sense of depth and dimensionality in the frames. The inclusion of special effects also makes micro-films more creative and imaginative visually, providing audience with a new visual experience.

2.5 Strong emotional resonance

Among the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films, the strong emotional resonance is one of the remarkable characteristics. This strong emotional resonance enables micro-films to quickly touch the hearts of viewers and evoke empathy within a limited time. Firstly, the emotional resonance of micro-films derives from the compactness of the storyline and the directness of emotional expression. Due to their short length, micro-films need to tell a complete story in a short time, so the storyline is often tight and emotionally-focused. This direct and powerful expression of emotion allows viewers to quickly immerse themselves in the story and resonate with the characters. Moreover, micro-films are good at using audio-visual language to enhance emotional resonance. Through the clever use of lens, frame composition and color schemes, micro-films can create a strong emotional atmosphere. Additionally, the integration of music, sound effects and other elements also provides strong support for the emotional expression of micro-films. These audio-visual elements cooperate with each other to create a strong and profound emotional effect, leading to a profound emotional resonance among viewers. In addition, micro-films also emphasize the portrayal of characters and emotional details. Through the in-depth exploration and delicate description of characters' personalities and emotional changes, micro-films make the characters more vivid and three-dimensional, and the emotional expression more authentic and moving. For example, the micro-film *Three Grams of a Dream* tells a sincere story about a child's dream filled with innocence and aspirations, making it natural, vivid, real and touching, which resonates deeply with viewers (as shown in figure 3).

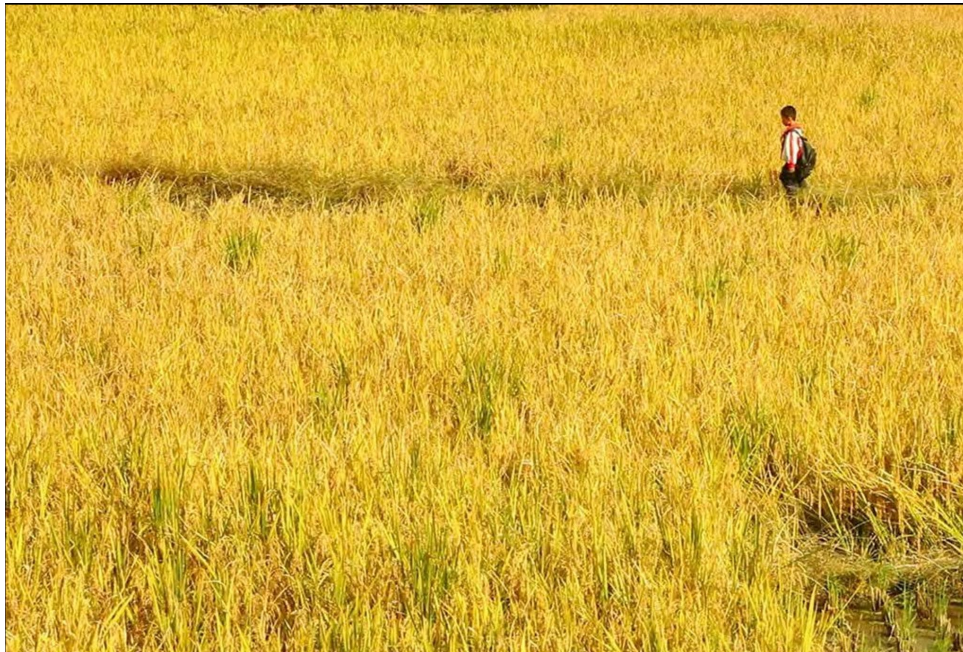


Figure 3: Micro-film *Three Grams of a Dream* focuses on emotional resonance

In short, the strong emotional resonance of micro-films is one of its important aesthetic characteristics. Through the tight storyline, direct expression of emotions and rich audio-visual language and emotional details, micro-films can successfully touch viewers and evoke a strong resonance. Regarding the creative methods, the director needs to flexibly use various methods and techniques in the creation of micro-films. Firstly, the theme and target audience should be clearly defined to provide clear guidance for story creation. Secondly, through creative conception and plot design, an engaging story framework is constructed. Finally, in the process of filming and post-production, attention should be paid to details and the aesthetic appeal of the frames to present the best visual effects.

2.6 Align with the context of the times

Micro-films, with their concise and powerful form, keenly capture and reflect the hot topics and changes in contemporary society. They can quickly showcase various aspects of modern society through refined plots and vivid images within a limited time. This rapid response and highly-summarized ability enable micro-films to quickly adapt to and integrate into the context of the times, becoming an essential part of contemporary culture. For example, *Son, It's Meal Time* examines the condensed daily life of a

father and son from the perspective of a bystander, adopting a small-scale approach to reflect the loneliness and indifference between people under the alienation of modern cities, as well as the “difficulty of communication” between fathers and sons of different generations, capturing the unusual aspects of ordinary people’s lives (as shown in figure 4).



Figure 4: Son, It's Meal Time is aligned with the context of the times

Additionally, micro-films exhibit distinct characteristics of the contemporary era in terms of storytelling methods and techniques. They frequently employ modern techniques such as non-linear and multi-perspective narration to disrupt traditional film narratives and resonate with the aesthetic preferences of modern audience. Moreover, micro-films adeptly utilize a variety of modern technological means, including special effects, animation, and sound effects, to create visually innovative and imaginative experiences. Furthermore, the themes and content of micro-films are closely aligned with contemporary societal contexts, focusing on the living conditions, emotional experiences, values of modern individuals while also reflecting various challenges faced by today’s society through vivid storylines and characters. This in-depth exploration and authentic portrayal of real life endow micro-films with a strong sense of social responsibility and people-centered awareness. Lastly, the aesthetic characteristics of micro-films are also reflected in their unique artistic styles and expressions. They often integrate various artistic elements and techniques, such as music, painting, and photography, to form distinctive artistic styles and expressions. This cross-boundary artistic practice not only enriches the artistic connotation of micro-films but also makes them more in line with the aesthetic demands of contemporary audience.

3. Practical opinions on the micro-film creation from the director’s perspective

3.1 Topic selection and creative conception

The topic selection is the starting point of micro-film creation, which should focus on contemporary social hot topics, changes in people’s lives, and emotional needs. Creative conception requires the director to fully utilize their imagination and innovative thinking to create an engaging storyline through a unique perspective and expression. The topic selection and creative conception should be closely integrated to ensure that the micro-film not only align with the context of the times but also possesses artistic value. Furthermore, the script is the foundation of the micro-film creation, requiring a complete story structure, vivid characters, and tight storyline. The director should focus on the theme, emotional expression, conflicts, and resolutions of the story during the script design phase. In the refinement stage, the director should further develop the character design, dialogues, and scene descriptions to ensure the script’s feasibility.

3.2 Actor selection and training

Actors play a crucial role in the creation of micro-films, and their performances directly impact the

success or failure of the work. When selecting actors, directors should carefully consider the character traits, appearance requirements, and acting abilities of each actor. Additionally, for non-professional actors or those with limited experience, directors should provide necessary training and guidance to help them fully embody their roles and enhance performance. Furthermore, the choice of location and lighting are essential for creating the desired atmosphere and visual effects in micro-films. Directors should select suitable filming locations and arrange them according to script requirements. Moreover, the selection and use of lighting is also pivotal; directors should emphasize emotional atmosphere and visual effects through strategic lighting adjustments.

3.3 Filming and preparation

Firstly, a filming plan is the key link of the micro-film creation, including arrangements for shooting time, location, personnel division of labor. The director should make a detailed filming plan in advance to ensure that all resources are fully utilized. In the preparation stage of shooting, the director should also pay attention to the preparation of photography equipment, props, costumes and other aspects to ensure that the shooting goes smoothly. Secondly, in the shooting process, the director needs to pay close attention to the shooting progress and effect, and make necessary adjustments according to the actual situation. This includes the adjustment of lens use, actors' performances, shooting angle and so on. The director should have keen observation and adaptability, find problems in time and take effective measures to solve them. Finally, post-editing and sound processing is the last stage of micro-film creation, and it is also an important link to improve the quality of the work. The director should be involved in the editing process, screening and combining the shots to form a smooth and coherent storyline. At the same time, the selection and processing of sound effects are also essential, and the director should focus on the coordination of sound effects and frames to create an appropriate atmosphere and emotion.

3.4 Focus on aesthetic design

First of all, in the creation of micro films, clear narrative logic is the key to ensure that the audience can smoothly understand the development of the story. The director should grasp the overall framework of the story from a macro perspective to ensure the coherence and rationality of the plot. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the polishing of details, so that every plot twist is natural and smooth, and avoid causing problems to the audience. When constructing narrative logic, the director can use flashbacks, interstitials and other techniques to enrich the sense of hierarchy and interest of the story. Secondly, picture composition is an important part of the visual expression of micro film. The director should be good at using the lens language, and create a unique visual beauty through reasonable picture layout and element collocation. In the composition, we should pay attention to the sense of balance, layer and space of the picture, as well as the contrast and echo of the elements. In addition, the director can also highlight key elements through different shooting techniques such as close-ups and vistas to guide the audience's visual focus. Finally, before the creation of micro films, the director should clarify the target audience and market demand, and accurately position the work. This helps to ensure that the works can arouse the resonance and attention of the target audience, and improve the communication effect and market competitiveness of the works. At the same time, accurate positioning also helps the director to grasp the direction more clearly in the creative process, to avoid deviating from the theme or audience preferences.

Case study: *A Dog Under Bridge*

"*A Dog Under Bridge*" is the graduation design work of Tang Lihao, a master student of China Academy of Art.^[7] The film takes a stray dog under the bridge as the protagonist, from the dog's perspective, borrowing the dog's language to show us the survival of people and dogs near the bridge. The director restores this living field in a highly realistic style, and at the same time integrates the color design and exaggeration elements that animation is good at, completing the construction of the virtual scene on the edge of the city.

Through the use of modeling, tone, sound and other means of expression, Tang Lihao successfully created for us a virtual field at the bottom of the bridge on the edge of the city in the animation, reflecting the edge heterogeneity of narrative that is different from the mainstream and the center. In contrast to the modern urban scene in the center of Hangzhou, the space under the bridge presents a strong sense of abandonment. In the picture, a large gray color of steel and concrete, a large empty and empty distant scene, shows the mirror image of the protagonist's dog on the edge of the city, as the dog says in the beginning: "*After the last season's dog-beating action, I may be the only dog in the neighborhood.*" The

empty, seemingly abandoned bridge Park and one of the abandoned insignificant animals is the meaning of the film's title "*A Dog Under Bridge*". The geographical location of the city island and the life image of the social edge intertwine, resulting in a strong feeling of loneliness. Under the rule of social Darwinism, no matter the small people on the edge of the region or under the edge of the region, they are not only the edge of the life of the world, but also the others in the cultural construction, and their narratives are constantly rejected and squeezed. Tang Lihao's short animation extends the tentacles depicted to the outer edge of the urban space, depicting the pulsation of the urban edge rich in mechanism and texture with unique media means, showing a strong aesthetic tension (as shown in figure 5).



Figure 5: The film *A Dog Under Bridge*

4. Summary

In summary, micro-film creation from the director's perspective requires attention to various aspects, including topic selection and creative conception, script design and refinement, actor selection and training, filming plans and preparations, scene setup and lighting, filming execution and adjustments, as well as post-production editing and sound effects. Only with thorough preparation and careful implementation in these areas can outstanding micro-films be created. This article delves into the aesthetic characteristics and creative practice of micro-films from the director's perspective. By analyzing the aesthetic features of micro-films and the methods and strategies employed by directors in their creative practice, we can observe the pivotal role of the director in micro-film creation. Through precise grasp of aesthetic features and flexible application of creative techniques, directors can curate micro-films that possess profound meanings and widespread influence. In the future, with the continuous development and innovation of micro-films, we look forward to the emergence of more outstanding directors and works, bringing richer aesthetic experiences to the audience.

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