

Landscape City: Guangzhou Landscape Presentation in Chinese Movies in the New Century

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Abstract: *Guangzhou, as a famous cultural city with rich history of opening to the outside world, has experienced many changes in its urban landscape. From the appearance of the city to the meaning of the landscape inside, Guangzhou landscape shows the other and the gaze in the earth in the context of globalization from the perspective of documentary reality and fiction of drama. Since the new century, Chinese films have presented their Lingnan characteristics and increasingly converging urban culture. The constructed landscape society conveys a deep logic of urban life from the perspective of film.*

Keywords: *Chinese films, Guangzhou, Scenery.*

1. Representation and embodiment of landscape

The common meaning of the word "landscape" refers to the meaning of visual aesthetics. In addition to this aesthetic characteristic, landscape can also refer to a perception area on the cultural level in a broader sense, that is, "the result of the interaction between man and natural elements". In the theory system of French philosopher Guy de Boer, "landscape" generally refers to a concept of modern society, which is a representation product of the concrete existence of real society. At the beginning of his book *landscape society*, he wrote that "in a society with ubiquitous modern production conditions, life itself is shown as a huge accumulation of landscape, and everything that exists directly is transformed into an appearance" [1].

Director Lou Ye's film "a cloud made of rain in the wind" released in 2019 comprehensively reviews the changes in Guangzhou in recent 30 years. We can see that at the beginning of reform and opening up, Guangzhou is still an old tube shaped building of collective dormitory in terms of architectural space, but colorful dance halls, fashionable dresses and Toad mirrors have become popular in the whole society. Before the reunification in 1997, wholesale markets and small shops also became common practice. When the new century comes, viaducts and consumer nightclubs, which represent the vitality of the city, are also active in the urban buildings in Guangzhou. Similarly, the urban population is becoming more and more complex, with migrant workers and domestic and foreign investors flocking. After that, there have been tremendous changes in the past ten years. We have seen one building higher than another, and one viaduct after another and countless expressways constitute the urban artery. The traditional handicraft industry began to transform into a service-oriented enterprise. The manufacturing industry, which was once brilliant, gradually faded to the edge of the city. Luxury goods and famous brand sports cars began to enter the family. Middle school students began to travel to their homes in Guangzhou and schools in Hong Kong. Couriers also officially took up their posts. Of course, the problem of villages in cities brought about by economic development is an unstable social factor, and the surveillance cameras installed in public places have indeed brought good effects to social security.

All of the above constitute a colorful scroll painting of urban landscape, which unfolds slowly and is lifelike. Just for movies, these landscapes are definitely not just a symbolic reference, but the director must give some specific visual objects and characters a real interaction to form a "landscape" image, so as to achieve a unique viewpoint.

2. Record reality and fiction

2.1 Record the image of Guangzhou in the film

In 2000, Jia Zhangke made a film "Platform" looking back on the 1980s. Cui Mingliang, who chose

to stay in "Ideal", received a postcard from Zhang Jun. The landscape on the postcard is Guangzhou, and that is the "world of flowers and flowers" in the eyes of inland people. The documentary film *Useless*, which was also shot by him in 2007, is a story with Kyle, a fashion designer who works and lives in Guangzhou. Through her career, we can see the transformation of Guangzhou in the new century.

Old-fashioned factories are still in operation, the space facilities are outdated, the tailor's scissors still have the sign of state-owned enterprises, and the ready-made garments are sent to the clothing stores in the bustling streets. There has been an obvious change in the urban landscape here, which is different from the cursory brief shooting of *The Shadow Play*. We can clearly see the beginning of commercialization society in the typical urban landscape.

Then there is a dialogue between the city and the international community. From the perspective of movies, we can see that people in the fashion circle are talking about the international fashion styles this year in the LV store of taikoo hui, a landmark building in Tianhe District, Guangzhou. The camera did not deliberately give the positive faces of these characters, but wandered slowly in this space with their voices. As the viewpoint of the camera constantly changes in the colorful crowd, the director seems to have completed a perfect "space dialogue" here, that is, the seamless connection between Guangzhou and Paris. The "world of flowers and flowers" on postcards is no longer a simple photo, but has become realistic in space, and it is connected with the world.

The director completed the urbanization landscape between the images and the audience in a non-fictional way. The film shows us garment factories and specialty stores, but what we can clearly see is the urban transformation from manufacturing to service industry, which reveals the fact that "the relationship between landscape and audience is essentially a firm support of capitalist order".

In the following years, many documentary films based in Guangzhou emerged, and they also provided another profile of Guangzhou landscape, such as *Return train* and *Cha Guan* series. "Return train" tells the story of migrant workers who come to Guangzhou to return home, while "Cha Guan" has a more interesting foothold. The director placed the camera in the police station in the square in front of Guangzhou Railway Station. In *Cha Guan*, we saw people who walked into the police station for various reasons. From the perspective of relatively real scattered transmission, we saw crazy people who claimed to be genius, thieves, vendors without business qualifications, and so on. Of course, there are law enforcers in the city-police stations. We can see the other side of landscape flow from these characters, that is, the formation of space flow to population flow. In "Used", the space is flowing, but the characters seem to be monotonous. In "Cha Guan", the space no longer changes, but the urban population has changed greatly. When the concrete logic in the concrete environment takes place, these floating people must form a part of their city blood.

3. The image of Guangzhou in genre films

Genre film is a typical fictional product, which is characterized by "formulaic plot, stereotyped characters and graphic visual images". In Guy de Boer's theory, if we regard the content of documentary as a real presentation, then the type is 100% fiction. There is no conflict between these two relative concepts. Because he thinks that film culture is actually a fictional culture, and documentary film is also the result of some kind of "elaborate design", which together becomes a screen landscape to be watched by us, and then forms a control means to "enslave" the audience in the commodity society. Behind this "immoral" means is a set of very mature and complete communication logic, which can also be said to be the only way for commercialization. Since the 21st century, the positioning of Chinese genre films is very clear and accurate, that is, to have a dialogue with the international community. International production inevitably needs international themes for dialogue, which will inevitably make genre film writers think carefully when choosing the place where the story takes place.

The film *Inseparable*, released by director Wu Shixian in 2012, is an out-and-out local international production. Hong Kong star Daniel Wu teamed up with Hollywood superstar Kevin Spacey and joined hands with two mainland actresses, Gong Beibi and NI YAN, to launch an absurd "superhero" story in Guangzhou. In order to make the narrative space of the film have a certain landscape of Chinese culture and make the occurrence of this story authentic on the "screen", Guangzhou, which has a long history and rapid development, has become the first choice of the film.

Therefore, we can see that some of the "fictional" landscapes in this film are quite reasonable. We saw Guangzhou, which really "divided" the city into Chengdu, urban white-collar workers working in cubicles, white people coming and going in and out of high-end apartments in Zhujiang New Town,

Guang Zhouta behind the rooftop upstairs, "Batman" and "Superman" who shuttled between buildings sat chatting on the foreign houses at Dongshankou, and saw conflicts created at the busiest intersection of Huangpu Avenue, the headquarters of multinational companies, and so on.

Looking at the development of the whole Chinese film industry, Hong Kong filmmakers are most familiar with the production of genre films, and they introduce a set of mature industrial processes into the whole Chinese film industry. In "Single Men and Women 2" filmed by Hong Kong director Du Qifeng in Guangzhou in 2014, Zhang Shenran played by Louis Koo turned into "Spider-Man" and climbed the building of Guangzhou Hejing International Financial Plaza. Similarly, the film Fire Hero, which was filmed in the same year, put the scene of Hong Kong firefighters rescuing the city in Zhujiang New Town, Guangzhou. The audience did not make any visual leap in space. Both films are successful in the concept of genre. They created such images as "romance", "love", "danger" and "occupation", and made them landscape through accurate pictures, thus achieving a high degree of unity in content and form.

This is the concept from "commodity society" to "landscape society" explained in "Landscape Society". In the fiction of the type, movies no longer play the real role of "education", and entertainment becomes its essence. Actually, the logic behind entertainment is commercialization. Guangzhou skyscrapers and highways, small employees of multinational enterprises and city heroes who put out fires have all become a kind of landscape in genre movies, and then reconstructed into a completed "landscape", which appears in cinemas to form circulation, thus completing the image transformation from on-screen landscape to off-screen landscape.

This is what de Bo said. "Feuerbach made such a judgment according to the reality of his time: his time liked' symbols are better than references; Copy is better than original; Fantasy is better than truth. His judgment has been completely confirmed by the landscape era.

But in this development process, how many successful cases can there be, and what kind of enlightenment will the failed films bring to us?

4. Localization and globalization of landscape

4.1 The other in the perspective of Globalization

There is a very unique Chinese film in 2016, and a local film "Great winds blow upon high hills" produced by three young Hong Kong directors was born. The reason why it is unique is that this film voluntarily gave up the mainland market when the Hong Kong film gradually declined, and the second is that a film which traces back to the turn of the new century appears in the current era environment, and the creative intention behind the main creation is really intriguing.

With three little people as footnotes, the director described the subtle atmosphere that permeated the whole Hong Kong society before the advent of the new century, and spent a lot of effort to restore the style of Guangzhou at the turn of the new century, and made a deeper review and reflection on the identity relationship between Hong Kong and the mainland.

Excessive political symbols and labels abound in Great winds blow upon high hills, and Guangzhou has become a "hodgepodge" when the new century comes. There are people who speak Cantonese, as well as senior officials who speak authentic Beijing films. They take turns to appear with veterans who speak a northern rural dialect. However, even with such a cultural base, the depicted characters are extremely superficial, extremely corrupt officials and illegal immigrants desperate for survival. The landscape construction from the top to the bottom is really a biased "other's vision".

This simple and rude treatment is also reflected in the production team's lack of understanding of landscape presentation. Because during the smuggling in Panyu, we obviously saw that the slogan belonging to the current "Chinese Dream" era "crossed" 20 years ago. This time, we can probably understand that the creator put his "signifier" in front, so as to neglect the real time and space of the "signified".

However, it is inevitable that the image of Guangzhou at the turn of the century provided in Hong Kong movies or in a narrative perspective of Hong Kong, Macao and Taiwan is a kind of "prejudice" in the perspective of globalization. When we go back to the story in 1997 from a film in 2016, we find that the vision of the other, which was used by Westerners to watch the colony, was transplanted into the vision of the colony to see the mother. This is the key problem in the integration of Chinese film industry in Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area after the new century.

4.2 Materialization of gaze in nature

Also in 2016, there was a cinema film that was quite successful in commercial type in mainland films. Most of the scenes of this film were shot in Guangzhou, and the stories happened are close to the current urban life. Just because this story was born in the last century and has undergone many adaptations and remakes, it is inevitable that there is a great degree of backwardness in ideology and social issues. This movie is *Magnificent Scoundrels*.

The story of *Magnificent Scoundrels* is very simple, and the overall narrative angle is relatively simple. The film's main creator has materialized two kinds of female images in the film from the male perspective, namely, a strong woman in the workplace and a sexy woman model. All the landscapes presented in this film are highly commercialized and materialized, and no scene or character has the empathy ability to let the audience walk into their inner world, and those who remain have the consumption of goods.

This kind of consumption is as rough as the globalization viewpoint with a certain political tendency mentioned above, and it is also full of the hegemonic logic of capital. Treating female role as male role's desire projection, "from micro channel to individual directly, affects everyone's body, posture and daily behavior" [3]. The male role is treated as the social 369 and so on, and the location where the film takes place does not reflect any Guangzhou characteristics at all. Whether it is Linjiang Avenue or Chimelong Amusement Park, which appeared at the beginning, they are like the most superficial landscape of a city and cannot convey any regional characteristics. If "inseparable" is a failure to explore genre films, "*Magnificent Scoundrels*" can be regarded as a complete "surrender" of commercial films. This film not only makes the landscape of Guangzhou a fast-selling product, but also makes itself a film that is hard for the audience to open for a second time. This logic is consistent with Guy Debo's criticism of capital.

5. Conclusions

In the process of globalization, the biggest problem that a city, a country and even a culture have to face is how to coexist in diversity while retaining its own characteristics. In the end, we come to the conclusion that the landscape experience of Guangzhou will change in the past 20 years, showing different styles under different visual thresholds, and maintaining a diversified and good urban image for sustainable development. However, under the intervention of some capital logic and creators' self-consciousness, its landscape reflects some ideological cognitive misplacement and the harm of excessive commercialization to its characteristics.

Guangzhou has two important landscape functions in the future Chinese film system. One is how to become a cognitive window under globalization and get rid of its rough political imagination in previous films, especially in completing the Chinese system of Guangdong, Hong Kong and Macao, a common language. Second, how to find unique regional characteristics in the creation of their own filmmakers, and express them with individuality, so as to truly achieve the more national and the more global. The more individual it is, the more worthy it is to watch, not just a commodity or commercial circulation, which makes the individual elements in Chinese movies stronger and more diverse.

References

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