

Bringing Painting into Film: A Comparison of the Application of Chinese and Western Classical Painting Art in Movies

Ang Li¹, Biyun Zhang^{2,*}, Heng Li³

¹Beijing Union University, Beijing, China

²Beijing Children's Palace, Beijing, China

³Beijing Film Academy, Beijing, China

583761433@qq.com

*Corresponding author

Abstract: Film is an art form that appeared later than painting. One is moving and the other is static. However, to a large extent, film draws on paintings of different periods and genres to achieve better aesthetic value and emotional expression. In the history of traditional Chinese painting and Western classical painting, countless art masters have emerged. Due to the differences in history, culture, regional characteristics, economic development and many other aspects, they have produced different aesthetic connotations. By comparing the application of painting art in films such as "Yellow Earth", "Withered Trees Revive", "Return to Dust", "The Mill and the Cross", this paper analyzes the influence of Chinese and Western classical painting on film composition, color, light, emotion and so on, in order to provide reference value for the practice of film creation.

Keywords: Chinese traditional painting, Western classical painting, Film

1. Introduction

As early as the late Paleolithic period, 25,000 to 30,000 years ago, paintings and art works appeared in Europe, and China also had painted pottery decorations and petroglyphs in the Neolithic Age. The development of Chinese and Western painting, due to the different characteristics of their respective cultures, presents a distinct but colorful visual experience and spiritual connotation. For example, Chinese traditional painting pays attention to artistic conception, while Western classical painting emphasizes precise anatomy and perspective.

Film, the application of its visual language, including composition, angle, scene, light and shadow, shape, color, etc., is an art form in which various arts interact and integrate. Many directors will get inspiration from paintings to build a harmonious and aesthetically appealing picture. French film theorist André Bazin once said: "Films expressing paintings are the aesthetic symbiosis of the screen and paintings, just as lichens are the symbiosis of algae and fungi." ^[1] This also explains to a large extent the huge influence of painting on the visual expression of movies.

2. The application of Chinese traditional painting art in movies

2.1. Aesthetic implication in traditional Chinese painting

2.1.1. Learning from nature

The creation process of ancient Chinese paintings is not accomplished overnight, but the painters go deep into nature and observe life, thus creating classic works handed down from generation to generation.

"Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains" by Huang Gongwang in the Yuan Dynasty depicts the scenery along the Fuchun River in Zhejiang. The whole painting is divided into five parts. The painter used his unique "long-cloth mochi" brushwork to express the unique climate characteristics of the humid mountains and rivers in the south of the Yangtze River. See Figure 1.



Figure 1: "Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains" (partial, full painting 33x636.9 cm).

The reason why the scenery of the south of the Yangtze River can be depicted so delicately is that the artist has lived in the area of Fuchun River for a long time. He has observed and felt the scenery of the four seasons and carried a pen and paper with him for sketching. "Dwelling in the Fuchun Mountains" took seven years from conception to final completion. It is precisely because of this long-term in-depth observation and life experience that this classic masterpiece can be published.

The painter did not conceive in the traditional way in terms of composition, but used a cinematic lens method to browse, move, and overlap viewpoints, or wide-angle and far-reaching, or close-up close-ups, so that the viewer can watch this painting. During the process of the work, the visual effect is free and unrestrained, and the angles are fully changed. This is reflected in the film "Switch" directed by Sun Jianjun.

2.1.2. Lively charm

Nan Qi Xie He put forward the theory of "six methods" in his book "Paintings", which is an important standard and aesthetic principle for the evaluation of ancient Chinese fine arts. The "six methods" say "vivid charm", which means that in addition to drawing the "shape" of the object, the painting should also reflect the momentum of all things in the world, the spiritual temperament and charm of people, and finally achieve natural vividness and full of vitality. And the aesthetic realm of appeal ^[2]. And this realm has been raised to a higher level by the Tang Dynasty painter Zhang Yu's saying that "learn from nature and learn from the heart", which puts more emphasis on the painter's own self-feeling and life experience. ^[3] These painting theories directly influenced the development direction of Chinese traditional painting. Today's film creation is increasingly reflecting the creator's subjective sensibility.

2.1.3. Embodying emotions in scenery

Expressing the artistic conception in traditional Chinese painting can usually be achieved by "embracing emotion in the scene". As Ma Zhiyuan said in "Sunny Sand·Autumn Thoughts": "Withered vines, old trees, dark crows, small bridges and flowing water..." Every object in this Sanqu gives people a strong spiritual feeling, like what I have seen with my own eyes reveals a lonely and desolate artistic conception, and expresses the writer's sadness. Even if Yuan opera can express emotions through objects, painting, as a visual art, has a unique advantage in expressing emotions on scenes. Chen Kaige's film "Yellow Earth" attaches great importance to the relationship between "scenery" and "emotion". People are as simple and natural as the color of the picture. The modeling style of the environment and scenery established the aesthetic spirit of the whole film.

2.2. Form and layout

2.2.1. Long scroll

Judging from the existing material materials, traditional Chinese scroll paintings roughly began in the Wei and Jin Dynasties. The surviving Eastern Jin Dynasty painter Gu Kaizhi's "Luoshen Appraisal Painting" is the earliest scroll painting that can be seen so far. It was created by Gu Kaizhi based on the poem of the same name written by Cao Zhi, a writer of the Han and Wei Dynasties. ^[4] It describes the touching story that Cao Zhi met and fell in love with Luoshen when he was crossing Luoshui on the way back from the capital to the fief, but separated because man and god could not be combined. The whole painting is 27.1 centimeters in length and 572.8 centimeters in width. It is a classic long scroll work. The artist guides the viewer from the beginning of the picture to read the stories one after another like a camera transition. The plot is ups and downs and hearty.

The use of long shots in movies is like the visual effect presented to viewers by scroll-style paintings. The panoramas and scheduling shots in many movie works reflect the extension of swimming viewpoints and horizontal spaces. When director Zheng Junli was creating the film "Withered Trees Revive", he once admitted that "Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival" inspired him. ^[5] When filming this film, the living room of Zheng Junli's house happened to be hung with "Riverside

Scene at Qingming Festival", so he had a new inspiration. With delicate shooting techniques and poetic visual images, the director tells the story of the successful elimination of schistosomiasis in rural areas in the south of the Yangtze River, showing the importance and care that the party and the state attach to the healthy life of the people. The conception of the film montage and the borrowed long-scrolling horizontally moving long shot in classical Chinese painting were very novel and unique at the time. Make the film present a fresh and timeless artistic aesthetic conception and strong lyrical color.

This painting depicts the urban and rural areas, markets, and human customs during the Qingming Festival on both sides of the Bianhe River in Bianjing, the capital of the Northern Song Dynasty, so it is called "Riverside Scene at Qingming Festival". It can be divided into three parts. The suburban scene is like the "prologue" in the movie, and the "Hongqiao" part is the "climax" in the movie where boats meet and people come and go, forming a dramatic scene. The whole painting is like a moving camera, capturing the bustling scenes of the street market at that time.

2.2.2. Space blank

The art of blank space in Chinese paintings also provides a reference for the expression of artistic conception in movies. Movie shooting adopts the angle of looking down or looking up, leaving a large area of sky or earth, making the picture wider and adding a sense of profoundness and silence. For example, the films "Yellow Earth", "One Second", and "Return to Dust" all use large areas of reserved sky or endless yellow land and deserts to set off the main tone of the film's desolation, loneliness and sense of the times.

2.3. The application of traditional Chinese coloring

Chinese traditional colors are actually beautiful and vast, such as jade color, moon white, green luan, etc., which fit the beautiful vision of our Chinese people. In the use of color in movies, the spiritual meaning of color is also considered. The film "I Am Not Madame Bovary" deeply uses the color technique of green landscapes. The screen tries to create the aesthetic mood of Chinese landscape paintings. The Jiangnan buildings with white walls and gray tiles are placed between a large area of blue-green sky and water. Film artists the purity and saturation of the colors are deliberately reduced, so that the overall vision shows the slightly depressed and depressed inner world of the characters. [6]

3. The application of Western classical painting art in movies

3.1. Composition: angle and balance

The film "The Mill and the Cross" is based on the painter Bruegel's "Path of Passion". The original painting is a work of religious themes. It describes the scene of Christians being led to the execution ground with Jesus. The picture is magnificent and rich in details. Although there are many characters in the picture, it is extremely valuable to be able to portray different characters. The whole painting adopts a panoramic composition from a top-down perspective, highlighting the spatial layers and depth of the picture. The film "The Mill and the Cross" uses Brueghel's painting language to reproduce the picture very well, and uses the movement, distance, perspective and space under the long lens of the film to make the two-dimensional plane into a three-dimensional picture. [7] Through the design of the foreground, middle ground and distant view in the lens, the effect of visual balance is achieved.

3.2. Color: harmony and contrast

Whether it is in painting or in movies, the expressiveness of color is very important. What kind of color affects the style of paintings or movies to a certain extent. The film "Girl with a Pearl Earring" by British director Peter Weber is based on the classic painting "Girl with a Pearl Earring" created by Dutch painter Vermeer. The story of working as a model in the studio, the calm and beautiful Griet gave Vermeer a great source of creativity. In the film, Peter Weber tried his best to restore the painter's use of color, and carefully designed many details. See Figure 2.

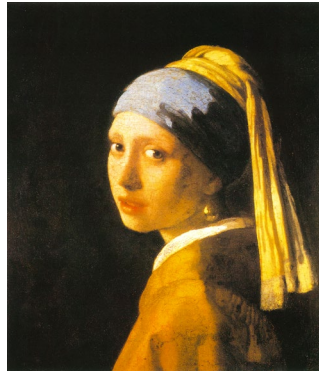


Figure 2: "Girl with a Pearl Earring".

In the film, the heroine Greeter's turban is a combination of light blue and yellow, which basically restores the colors created by the painter. In addition to the sharp contrast between yellow and blue, blue represents the girl's melancholy, calm and ideal, yellow is full of jumping and cheerfulness. [8] Due to family reasons, Vermeer can only pin his feelings for Griet in his heart, which is an unlikely vision, and the blue and yellow headscarf is exactly the reflection of this vision.

3.3. Light: stereoscopic and emotional

Rembrandt, the greatest painter in the seventeenth century in the Netherlands, made a major contribution to painting by creating a new light technique "a little light", using precise triangular three-dimensional light in the picture to reflect the contrast between light and dark, and lighting in movies widely used in. The American film "Apocalypse Now" can be regarded as the culmination of Rembrandt lighting. Through the use of Rembrandt light, Curtz's mental state is expressed. Usually, backlighting can express kindness, but in this film it does the opposite, reflecting Curtz's madness in reverse. Rembrandt is also reflected in "The Grandmaster", "Lust, Caution" and other films.

4. The comparison and enlightenment of Chinese and Western aesthetic implications applied in movies

Chinese traditional painting and Western classical painting, affected by their time, region, culture, etc., present different artistic effects and aesthetic connotations, but they all have a certain degree of influence on the visual language of Chinese and Western movies.

Chinese traditional painting has its unique artistic conception and aesthetics, shining in the long history. In recent years, film works have increasingly used the beauty of traditional Chinese artistic conception and the spirit of humanism to construct lens language and picture effects, presenting an audio-visual feast with Chinese characteristics. Western classical painting takes composition, color, and light as the basic research elements. For movies, these elements are also particularly important. The significance of the times.

The film "Return to Dust" has been favored by the audience since its release. In addition to the humanistic thinking brought to the audience by the story itself, the film uses a lot of classical painting composition, color, and light, especially the use and reference of Miller's works. It gives the viewer a deeper visual experience. See Figure 3.



Figure 3: The still from the film "Return to Dust".

5. Conclusion

Analyzing and comparing the influence of Chinese and Western classical paintings on film can provide some reference and basis for future research and practice. Excellent works with spiritual connotations still need to be improved. The film "I Am Not Madame Bovary" has caused different controversies to a certain extent on the composition and color application of Chinese paintings. Some viewers think that the circular composition of literati paintings and the artistic conception of ink paintings are very beautiful, but there are also audiences who feel that discomfort. The use of Miller and Van Gogh's painting techniques in "Return to Dust" is also praised and criticized. How to apply Chinese and Western classical paintings in a harmonious and humanistic way is an issue that we need to break through in the future.

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