

The Spatial Aesthetics of Hu Jinquan's Martial Arts Films

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Abstract: The main purpose of this article is to understand the artistic style of Hu Jinquan's films and his clever use of film space through the analysis of his martial arts films. He also explores how he perfectly integrates real history, Chinese cultural contexts and Chinese philosophy into film space, forming unique The aesthetics of film space with “Chinese characteristics”.

1. Introduction

Throughout China's thousands of years of history, dynastic changes and shifts in the centers of power, as well as the preferences of the people, have been inextricably linked to repression by force, which has led us to pay particular attention to the “martial arts” in the cultural sphere. Director Hu Jinquan unifies the ideological concept and formal expression of art, inherits the spirit of traditional Chinese culture, and continuously explores martial arts films with the spirit and aesthetic characteristics of Chinese art.

2. The Realistic Nature of Film Space

Hu Jinquan uses the audio-visual language of film to convey his pursuit of Chinese film aesthetics to the public, forming a unique art film space. In the space of Hu Jinquan's martial arts films, the authenticity of space cannot be ignored. The authenticity mentioned in the text is not a complete restoration of history, but rather that he uses film to tell stories that restore social life and human interactions in the most realistic way.

First of all, Hu Jinquan's films respect real history to the greatest extent and attach importance to the textural expression of images. Hu Jinquan's works often like to take a particular historical event as the narrative background and reasonably add a vividly imagined chivalrous story. For example, “The Dragon Inn” is about a chivalrous warrior saving the descendants of loyal subjects during the great changes of the Ming Dynasty; “The Storm of Yingchun Pavilion” is about the righteous act of a chivalrous warrior assassinating the famous general Li Chahan at the end of the Yuan Dynasty. Although these stories are fictional, they all have a sorrowful and tragic sense of history, giving people a sense of real space reproduction. In the layout of the film scenes, Hu Jinquan was very rigorous, whether it was the structure of the ancient house or the display of objects in the house, he made detailed inquiries into historical materials in an effort to recreate the real historical scenes for

the audience. It is also to quickly let the audience have emotional resonance with the characters in the film, and also to convey his sense of historical mission as a Chinese person.

Secondly, Second, Hu Jinquan's martial arts films do not only show specific historical scenes, but also a spiritual reconstruction of historical space. The historical background of Hu Jinquan's films is mostly set in the Song, Yuan, and Ming dynasties, with the Ming dynasty being the most chosen as the background. Precisely because the Ming Dynasty was the most turbulent social environment, and cultural development was so unfettered that the people could not say whatever they wanted. At the same time, Ming Dynasty is also the most intense era of Chinese history spy war, the background of this era is most suitable for making martial arts films. In the film, Hu Jinquan expresses his hatred for the agents of the Ming Dynasty, which we can also understand as his strong dissatisfaction with harsh reality. The portrayal of perfect characters in art is both a spiritual compensation for harsh reality and the creator's emotional attachment to his country. This extension of space is also an important part of the authenticity of Hu Jinquan's films.

3. The Imaginative Nature of Space

Imagery in films is an image that is created in the viewer's mind through their own cognitive experience under the effect of associations generated by watching the images. This space of imagery is to break through the limited image and seek the infinite beyond the image in limited space, and is often presented through the form of metaphor. Through the metaphorical way can help the director to express the character's emotions implicitly, is a favorable promoter in the film narrative, clearly conveying development of events and changes of characters in the film to the audience.

With a deep understanding of the beauty of classical Chinese art, he understands the importance of a sense of detachment in art. In the film, he is good at using elements such as fog and light to create a sense of ethereality to bring out the quiet beauty of the martial arts world. For example, in the scene of "The Warrior's Daughter", when Yang Huizhen and the others are being chased in the bamboo forest, the mist in the air and the dappled light intertwine, suggesting that the protagonists' future is uncertain. Then in the fierce close-range kill, the fog steeply increased, obstructing the viewer's vision and increasing the tension atmosphere. When the final assassination was completed, the fog suddenly dispersed, presenting a sense of silence and tranquility. There is also in the final battle of the desert, a red sun hanging high, Master Huiyuan slowly walked to the top of the mountain and sat down, the sun behind him forming a circle of Buddhist light around him, suggesting that the master has become one with nature. Through this form of expression, the main theme of the film has transcended success or failure of the martial arts struggle and further entered the spiritual dimension, conveying to the audience a sense of transcendence.

4. The Mindful Rhythm of Space

Through the understanding of Chinese traditional culture, Hu Jinquan integrates history, martial arts, Confucianism, Buddhism and Taoism, poetry and painting into his film space, which gives film space unique aesthetic value, and this artistic performance relies heavily on Hu Jinquan's grasp of the rhythm of space. His film space shifts back and forth between open and closed, expressing the conflicts between characters, the unfolding of the story and the sublimation of the theme in the right way.

A distinctive feature of Hu Jinquan's martial arts films is the clever use of enclosed space. Hu Jinquan once said, "I have always felt that the ancient inn is really the most dramatic place. There are very few places where time and space can be brought together like this. All conflicts have the potential to erupt here."^[1] Although the inn is a closed building with extremely limited space, it can

create multi-level scenes for the fight scenes. This gives a great contrast between the dynamic fighting action and static closed space. At the same time with the use of gongs, drums, clappers and other musical instruments as background music to render the atmosphere, and focus on shooting from multiple angles to create depth of scene, greatly enhancing the dramatic effect, driving the audience's inner rhythm. Of course, Hu Jinquan not only focuses on static space when strengthening the rhythm of film, but also chooses open natural space such as desert, deep mountains, bamboo forest, etc. The profound meaning of the film is expressed naturally in the mountains and the wilderness. This fusion of art and nature allows art to reach an ideal state of purity and beauty.

Hu Jinquan's martial arts films are filled with a love of classical music and a display of poetic and pictorial space. He also has deeply understanding the traditional aesthetics contains a rich philosophy of life, which is an expression of the highest state of art. "He does not just turn to any single means or art form (such as Peking Opera or Chinese painting), but brings together a mixed relationship of various artistic types and philosophical traditions in order to form a comprehensive 'image of Chinese characteristics'." [2]The world of martial arts that he shows us is no longer a bloody battle of death, but a combination of martial arts and Buddhism. The film's spiritual realm of "the way to the invisible" is something that no martial arts film has ever seen before, and it is also the philosophy of life that he has realized in real life.

The art form of film was first introduced from the West. Through the influence of Western film concepts, martial arts films have gradually formed an image paradigm that integrates heroes, imagination, martial arts, commerce and spectacle^[3]. In the process of integrating film with local Chinese culture, Chinese filmmakers have sought to find a Chinese cinema that can be distinguished from Western cinema in their theoretical and practical exploration. The artistic achievement of Hu Jinquan's martial arts films far surpasses other martial arts films, mainly because the films are based on Chinese national culture and the spirit of traditional aesthetics, and the film's expression is the flexible use of space from multiple angles. This unified and integrated spatial art expression is a perfection of the previous martial arts films in terms of spatial narrative and a transcendence of the spiritual realm, and it is also an exploration of the spatial aesthetics of "Chinese characteristics" in martial arts films. To make a film with true Chinese artistic spiritual character, it must not leave the traditional Chinese culture and artistic cultivation. Only a film rooted in Chinese national culture and with cultural self-awareness is a martial arts film that truly carries the traditional Chinese aesthetics. This is also the direction of exploration and progress for Chinese filmmakers.

References

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