

Research on the Artistic Characteristics of Hark Tsui's Martial Arts Films

Xiaojing Guo

School of Broadcast And Television, Communication University of China, Nanjing Jiangsu 211172

ABSTRACT

Hark Tsui is one of the well-known representative directors in Hong Kong, China, known for his unique martial arts film style. In his martial arts film creation and shooting, he innovatively integrated diverse traditional martial arts elements and advanced modern film production techniques, successfully creating a "new style of martial arts". Hark Tsui films have unique and distinctive personal artistic characteristics, which have had a profound impact on Chinese language films. This paper will further analyze and explore the artistic characteristics of Hark Tsui's martial arts films, aiming to help people better understand their martial arts film features and connotations.

KEYWORDS

Hark Tsui; Martial arts films; Artistic features

1 Introduction

Martial arts films are an important part of Chinese film art and also one of the symbols of ethnic films. The martial arts films created and filmed by director Hark Tsui hold a pivotal position in the Chinese martial arts film market; He was one of the earliest film directors to attempt to combine traditional martial arts with modern special effects techniques; His martial arts films have created a large number of classic martial arts characters, full of chivalrous spirit, showcasing deep cultural connotations and the unique artistic atmosphere of ancient rivers and lakes to the audience. Director Hark Tsui's martial arts films not only inherit and continue the traditional definition of martial arts in Hong Kong, but also deeply explore the development path of national traditional culture. He effectively integrates the essence of traditional culture into various works, allowing the audience to fully appreciate the charm of excellent traditional culture while enjoying the exciting fighting scenes and stories in the martial arts world.

2 The Artistic Characteristics of Hark Tsui Martial Arts Films

2.1 Unique and Innovative Narrative Style

The martial arts films produced by Hark Tsui typically have extremely compact and clear narrative rhythms; Whether it is the expression of the camera screen or the language expression of the story plot development, it appears relatively smooth and fluent, which can bring the audience a wonderful audio-visual experience. Taking the plot control in director Hark Tsui's martial arts films as an example, he excels at setting suspense in the development of the plot while using narrative techniques to enhance the humor of the film's artistic expression. This can not only effectively alleviate the tense atmosphere of the movie's story scenes, but also bring a certain sense of relaxation and joy to the audience, leaving a deep impression on them. [1] For example, in the martial arts film *New Dragon Gate Inn* that he led, the story scene of Zhou Huai'an and Eastern Depot fighting has a strong tension; In a situation where the audience believed that a fierce fight was about to occur between the two sides, the director inserted a humorous and witty plot, which instantly changed the atmosphere of the scene. This not only alleviates the discomfort caused by the audience's nervousness, but also increases the joy of the viewing process, effectively meeting the audience's entertainment experience needs.

2.2 Exciting and Diverse Visual Communication Language

Hark Tsui's martial arts films have extremely unique and rich visual communication language artistic characteristics. He uses advanced special effects and filming techniques to create and showcase various imaginative film art scenes to the audience. Director Hark Tsui is skilled in using lighting layout to create different visual art effects in his martial arts films, highlighting the themes of the films and portraying the personalities of different characters. For example, when upright characters appear in his martial arts films, director Hark Tsui usually uses stronger lighting to set up the scene lighting, in order to shape the image of upright, bright, and graceful upright characters. When female characters appear, the director will adjust the use of softer lighting for the layout of on-site light and shadow art effects, in order to showcase the softness and gentleness of Eastern women. In the martial arts film series *Wong Fei-hung* directed by Hark Tsui, the director skillfully used lighting layout techniques to create and convey rich visual art images to the audience. For example, Hark Tsui created a tense atmosphere of intense fighting in the film by using a layout setting that changes the brightness of the lights;

The rapid adjustment and switching of light and shadow enhances the sense of rhythm in the development of the story plot, while also effectively enhancing the dramatic tension of the movie's visuals. In addition to using lighting to enrich the visual language of the film, director Hark Tsui also introduced advanced computer special effects technology in various martial arts productions, bringing the audience a strong sense of light and shadow. For example, in his martial arts film *Flying Swords of Dragon Gate*, director Hark Tsui used advanced 3D shooting technology to greatly enhance the spatial sense of the movie scenes and martial arts actions. The audience can intuitively and clearly feel the spatial sense of the vast desert, castle and other scenes in the film. During the filming process, the director also employed advanced motion capture technology to meticulously and completely record the actors' movements, and convert them into digital models to ensure the authenticity and fluency of the actors' martial arts movements in the play. In addition, the director also introduced and applied CGI technology in the film, which effectively created a large number of complex natural environments based on the auxiliary application of this technology, such as grand environmental images of sandstorms, storms, etc. This greatly enhances the immersion and realism of the visual art in the film, allowing the audience to experience a sense of immersion.

2.3 Unconventional and Exotic Auditory Elements

The artistic characteristics of Hark Tsui's martial arts films are also reflected in the extraordinary and exotic auditory elements in their works. In the filming and production of various martial arts films by Hark Tsui, he used a large number of traditional musical instruments with strong ethnic characteristics. The blowing, pulling, playing, and striking of these traditional ethnic instruments not only allow the audience to enjoy beautiful and pleasant sounds, but also convey a strong exotic cultural atmosphere to them, enhance the expressive power of film visual art, and play an extremely important role in shaping distinctive character images. For example, the martial arts film *Green Snake* directed by Hark Tsui has a core martial arts story, but innovatively incorporates a large number of fantasy and love elements, which can be said to have added a new perspective and interpretation of film art on the basis of traditional martial arts. [2] The theme background music *Evil* of this movie is mainly intended to accurately convey to the audience the ideological connotation of the antagonist character Fahai and the inner demons constantly struggling in the film. The first half and second half of the background music respectively use traditional Chinese instruments such as suona horn and flute, and the interweaving of sounds from various ethnic instruments. This has distorted the artistic space of film music and fully demonstrated the intense struggle and resistance within the Fahai in specific scenes of the film. In addition, in the scene of the movie's "water filling the temple", the creative team specially added the sound of the pipa (4-stringed Chinese lute) to highlight the dramatic conflicts between the characters in the play, and played the melody using the pipa rolling technique. This makes the plot more compact and intense, giving people a sense of ups and downs in their inner emotions.

3 Pursuit and Creation of Aesthetic Imagery in Hark Tsui's Martial Arts Films

Looking at the numerous martial arts films created by director Hark Tsui, audiences can not only appreciate the trendy and rich audio-visual language art, but also personally experience the unique charm of the martial arts world. Although Hark Tsui created a large number of martial arts film works, these martial arts films all have a unified and distinct artistic style, which effectively reflects the aesthetic conception created by Hark Tsui behind his image creation.

3.1 Portrayal of Chivalrous Characters in Shaping the Spiritual Atmosphere of China

The martial arts films created and released by Hark Tsui fully demonstrate his strong chivalrous spirit and resilient character to the market audience. During the viewing process, the audience can feel that the characters in Hark Tsui's martial arts films always carry a sense of mission towards the country, society, and national righteousness. For example, in the martial arts film series *Wong Fei Hung* created by Hark Tsui, it not only carries profound historical and social significance, but also expresses a strong sense of great mission. By portraying the classic character of Huang Feihong in the film, the creative team aims to promote the national spirit to the general public; Huang Feihong always adhered to justice and defended national dignity in the face of foreign invasion and internal troubles. As a master of martial arts, Huang Feihong's story in the film showcases the profound and ethical spirit of Chinese martial arts. He not only teaches his disciples martial arts skills, but also emphasizes the cultivation of martial ethics, emphasizing the concept of "stopping conflicts with martial arts". [3] Hark Tsui's martial arts film creation is not limited to inheriting and promoting the pursuit of beautiful character in traditional Chinese martial arts culture, but also reflects deeply on human nature. The *Wong Fei Hung* series of martial arts films explores the struggle between justice and evil through Huang Feihong's battles with villains. Huang Feihong always adheres to justice and fears no power, reflecting the brilliance of human nature. In addition, Huang Feihong in the film not only focuses on personal growth, but also cares about the fate of the collective. He led his disciples and the people to fight against foreign enemies together, reflecting the close connection between individuals and collectives. The portrayal and evolution of other classic characters in Hark Tsui's martial arts films, such as

Fahai, Jin Xiangyu, or De Mingqi, are all cinematic expressions of Hark Tsui's integration of traditional Chinese culture and Western philosophical thought. Hark Tsui is skilled in using various film art creation techniques to integrate personal experiences, insights, and inner emotions into the creation of martial arts films. This allows the audience to deeply appreciate the spiritual connotations beyond the art of film, and obtain a deeper level of spiritual imagery from it, satisfying their experiential needs for spiritual and cultural life.

3.2 Rhythm and Artistic Conception in the Aesthetic Effect of Martial Arts World

Hark Tsui's martial arts films have a strong sense of storytelling. He pursues a tense and exciting plot rhythm, and is skilled at adding twists and turns to various storylines to push the film to its climax. For example, Hark Tsui is keen on incorporating comedic elements into the filming and production of martial arts films. On the one hand, this can ease the audience's tense nerves; on the other hand, it can lay the groundwork for the next tense situation, promoting the development of the story plot to always be in a flexible state of change. In order to highlight the tense and exciting rhythm of martial arts films and allow the audience to experience and enjoy the wonderful sense of martial arts fighting, director Hark Tsui also uses complex and varied motion shots during the filming process, effectively enhancing the sense of movement and impact of character fighting performances in the film based on rich photography techniques. In addition, in the editing of sports scenes, relevant editors will practice the use of fast crossover shot editing techniques to pursue the brilliant and unparalleled martial arts actions in martial arts movies. [4] For example, in the classic martial arts film *Wong Fei-Hung, King of Lion Dance* created and filmed by Hark Tsui, the flag grabbing scene perfectly presents the changing moves of Huang Feihong, Gwai Geuk Chat (Gui Jiaoqi), and enemies in the film through the flexible use of fast editing techniques, enabling the audience to fully feel the crisis of the current fighting environment and ultimately achieve a "situational" state that resonates with the characters in the film.

3.3 Strange and Extraordinary Objects in Visual Art

Ridiculousness is one of the important aesthetic features of Hark Tsui's martial arts films. He is skilled at using a variety of visual art elements to firmly capture the audience's attention and bring them a strong visual impact. For example, during the filming and production of the martial arts film *Green Snake*, the director created a surreal visual art effect by using contrasting colors such as green and red, greatly enhancing the drama and mystery of the film. In the scene of Fahai's cultivation in the film, the light from the old temple constantly jumps during Fahai's meditation, accompanied by the constantly changing rich red and blue light; This highly expressionist filming technique effectively endows the film with a novel visual effect of spatial scenery. [5] For example, in the filming of *A Chinese Fairy Tale*, the director used complex and varied light and shadow designs to portray various characters in the development of the story as mysterious and unpredictable, creating a unique and novel ghostly atmosphere. It is precisely because director Hark Tsui tirelessly strives to create a large number of novel and extraordinary environments in the visual language of martial arts films, always grasping the aesthetic taste of market audiences, that his martial arts films have won more support and attention from audiences.

4 Conclusion

In summary, the martial arts films created by Hark Tsui have rich artistic characteristics. It not only embodies the profound spirit of chivalry, but also demonstrates the director's pursuit of aesthetic style with ingenuity, bringing a perfect audio-visual feast to the market audience. In the production of martial arts films, Hark Tsui integrated traditional martial arts elements and modern filming techniques, boldly attempted innovation on the basis of tradition, and ultimately achieved the integration and development of film art and personality.

About the Author

Xiaojing Guo (1983.7-), female, Han People; Wuhan, Hubei Province; a master's degree, a lecturer, School of Radio and Television, Communication University of China Nanjing; research direction: radio and television art, film and television art research.

References

- [1] Zuo Aiping. The Spiritual Connotation and Aesthetic Style of Hark Tsui's Martial Arts Films [J]. Masterpieces Review, 2024, (20):63-65.
- [2] Jin Shoubo. On the Jianghu Narrative in Hark Tsui's Martial Arts Films [J]. Journal of Mudanjiang College of Education, 2020, (09):5-7.
- [3] Chen Ying. A Brief Discussion on Hark Tsui's New Martial Arts Films [J]. West China Broadcasting TV, 2022, 43 (22): 128-130.
- [4] Wang Weiwei, Wang Mengmeng. Exploration of Chinese Opera in Hark Tsui's Films [J]. Home Drama, 2022, (25):51-53.
- [5] Wang Song. From Hong Kong filmmaker to Chinese filmmaker - Hark Tsui's Constantly Seeking New Career in the Film Industry [J]. Mixed Accent, 2022, (09): 32-53.