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The Influence of CG Technology on The Aesthetics of Chinese Magic Films Take The Candle in The Tomb Film Series for Example

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to investigate the impact of computer-generated imagery (CG) on the aesthetic context and innovation of oriental gods and creatures in Chinese magical film footage. This study focuses on the analysis and research of CG technology in Chinese magical film lens images, as well as the aesthetic habits and aesthetic psychology of contemporary audiences towards oriental gods and creatures. This research employs a qualitative research approach because it is appropriate for examining the cultural background and aesthetic habits of Chinese magical film lens images created using CG technology, as well as the aesthetic emotions that the film evokes in its audience. This study specifically examines the aesthetic expression and breakthrough innovation of oriental gods and monsters in the CG screen effects of the film series Candle In The Tomb, as well as the operation process of Chinese magical film CG technology and its expression based on and the generative context and breakthrough innovation of oriental gods' aesthetic style. This study will provide a theory of the CG technology used to guide the visual aesthetics of Chinese fantasy films. It will benefit creators of Chinese magic films, researchers, academicians, students, and those interested in the subject's study and preservation.

Keywords: Chinese fantasy films; CG technology; the aesthetics of oriental gods and creatures

1 INTRODUCTION

As the most representative film of Chinese folk culture, magic film captivates audiences with its rich folk culture symbols, fantastic plot, and visual effects. Nevertheless, the fantasy sequences in the films feature distinctive spatial forms, powerful visual effect styles, and aesthetic values that are distinct from those of other film genres. This also means that Chinese magical films face a significant challenge, namely, how to develop or even break through this type of film with distinctive Chinese characteristics based on generating the aesthetics of oriental gods and monsters to construct an aesthetic theory for the scene design of Chinese magical films. The emergence of CG technology has provided Chinese fantasy filmmakers with unprecedented licence. This research will use the Candle in The Tomb series of Chinese magical films as an example to examine the role of CG technology in creating visual wonders, providing innovative special effects, generating emotional resonance, and generating and surpassing the innovation of oriental gods and monsters' aesthetic contexts in the lens images of Chinese magical films. By analysing the use of CG technology in this film's lens images, we can gain a better understanding of the significance of CG technology to the aesthetics of Chinese magical fantasy films and provide valuable insights for the future creation of similar works.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1   The Development and Characteristics of Chinese Magical Films

The definition of magic film, Liu Sijia (2013) depicts the contemporary situation of magic film, discusses the market, spiritual core, narrative mode, and dilemma of Chinese magic film from the perspectives of narrative style, audience, and landscape of film studies, and argues that "empty world" is not only an obvious characteristic of magic film, but also its essential composition. She contends that "empty world" is not only the most obvious characteristic of magic films, but also their fundamental composition. She compares the development of Chinese magical films to that of Western magical films and argues that Chinese magical films are still in the process of developing, and despite the fact that they have not yet formed a distinct genre, they continue to attract a large number of cinemagoers and have a promising future.

Magic film, according to Li Xi (2010), is a film produced in recent years with the development of digital technology, with non-realistic or magically endowed characters as the protagonists, based on mythological tales, and integrating primordial imagery with real-world settings. He also discussed the historical inevitability of the existence and success of magical films, that is, the relationship between magical films and primitive myths and the practical function of becoming the carrier of modern myths, and analysed the changes in the images of the main characters, the new meanings of the totem symbols, the archetypes of the stories, and the thematic implications of some of the films, thereby pointing to the genre's underlying fascination.

Chen Yishui (2013) analyses the geo-landscape of the Oriental community and the cultural rights relationship between the Western centre and the Oriental community in Chinese magical films, thereby demonstrating that China's magical films embody "Westernisation" and "Americanisation", resulting in cultural incoherence（Chen, 2013). Li Qing (2016) notes that while contemporary local magic films are heavily influenced by traditional Chinese spirit and demon culture, they are heavily hybridised with Hollywood blockbusters' image characteristics and narrative style (Li, 2016).

Ruan Kaiyu (2015) discusses the influence of CG technology on Chinese magic films and the characteristics of Chinese magic films under the new technology. However, the article does not highlight the distinctive aesthetic qualities of Chinese magic films, and its analysis of technological effects is applicable to Western magic films as well (Ruan,2015).

Zhang & Tang (2019) argued that Chinese magic films appear to be attempting to satisfy the public's demand for visual appreciation of spectacle without displaying the corresponding technical aesthetics. Only when the technical performance of Chinese magic films aligns with the aesthetic habits and aesthetic psychology of the current audience towards gods, monsters, and ghosts can the audience be more immersed in the aesthetic situation created by the films (Zhang & Tang, 2019). Chinese magical films, according to Qin Xiaoling (2021), have continuously mined cultural resources from the fertile soil of Chinese culture, expressed the spirit of oriental aesthetics with the help of various cultural factors of traditional Chinese culture, achieved cross-regional dissemination of Chinese films and organic fusion of oriental cultures, and realised localised derivation of genre films, which can be regarded as a significant contribution to the development of cinema (Qin, 2021).

Through a review of the literature on the evolution and characteristics of Chinese magic films, it is possible to discern the rise and influence of these films on the film market. The distinctive subject matter of Chinese magical films and the expression of oriental deity and monster aesthetics distinguish them from Western magical films and have garnered widespread attention domestically and internationally.CG technology plays a crucial role in the evolution of Chinese mystical films, providing filmmakers with an abundance of visual creativity and artistic expression options.

2.2   CG Technology and Film Aesthetics

Gao Zimin (2008) uses the transition from image to mimesis as the starting point to examine the evolution of human visual aesthetic paradigm in the image era, focusing on the analysis of the technological and sociological logic behind the evolution of visual aesthetic paradigm in the image era along with the aesthetic change of image technology, and proposing such concepts as "Hyper-real Implosion: Consumer Society and Mimesis" and "Narrative Dreaming: Culture and Narrative" Simultaneously, he proposes innovative concepts such as "Hyper-reality implosion: consumer society and mimesis" and "Narrative dream-making: culture industry and cinema" (Gao, 2008).

According to Marc Furstenau (2004), CG technology has led to a conflict in the understanding of film ontology from the perspectives of structuralism and film semiotics, and this conflict has led to scholars' scepticism about the authenticity of digital images and their eagerness to explore the relationship between reality and images, as opposed to studying the logical correlation and necessary continuity of images in terms of their representations of reality a priori (Furstenau, 2004).

Berys Gaut (2010) situates the image created by CG technology within the framework of classical film theory and attempts to establish a critical basis for the image created by CG technology based on classical aesthetic theory (Gaut, B, 2010). Peng Jixiang (2019) provided an in-depth analysis of virtual aesthetics and other aspects of the era of CG technology, as well as a comprehensive summary of the significant changes introduced by CG technology to film art as mankind entered the digital era in the 21st century (Peng, 2019).

Jin Danwon & Xu Wenming (2000) examined the aesthetics and cultural characteristics of CG technology in contemporary films from the perspectives of contemporary consumer culture context, film aesthetic culture, visual culture, humanism, scientism, and film identity, as well as the digital survival of folk culture films in the context of globalisation (Jin & Xu, 2000).

In conclusion, the application of CG technology to film aesthetics has had a significant impact on the visual effect, narrative structure, and audience experience of motion pictures. It gives filmmakers more creative licence and the ability to create visual effects that transcend reality, but it also presents some aesthetic challenges. These studies provide valuable references for understanding the application and influence of CG technology on the aesthetics of film.

2.3   Manifestations and Characteristics of the Aesthetics of Oriental Gods and Monsters

The concept of Western culture, Huang Mingfen & Wei Rong (2014) start from the postmodern context and take the contemporary artification of the image of monsters related to the scientific and technological revolution, social transformation, and interstellar communication as the object of research on the "aesthetics of monsters", exploring diverse issues such as the aesthetic positioning and cultural reflections on the monster, and proposing the concept of "monstration." The study investigates the aesthetic positioning of "monsters" and cultural reflection and introduces the term "monster aesthetics."(Huang & Wei ,2014)

Zhang Lulu (2020) asserts that "Oriental Monster Aesthetics" is founded on traditional Oriental culture and national aesthetic psychology; it is based on the aesthetic consciousness of monsters and goddesses from the perspective of Oriental aesthetics; and it is a way to comprehend the image of monsters and goddesses and monster stories on a philosophical and aesthetic level. The aesthetics of oriental gods and creatures are a natural extension and development of primitive thought, which preserves the beauty of a life landscape in which man and nature coexist in harmony. The art of oriental gods and monsters frequently humanises and inspires the natural world's vegetation and animals. People rely on direct recognition and perception of nature, the birds and creatures of nature, flowers, demons, grasses, and monsters can all have human form and humanity after the illusion of time and space has

been dispelled. The aesthetics of oriental gods and monsters involve many transcendent daily sensory experience and logical rationality, metaphysical and mysterious surreal things, such as gods and fairies, Buddha's path, the six paths of reincarnation, the illusion of Taixu and other Western paradises, the heavenly realm of the underworld, etc., which cannot be scientifically and rationally interpreted and verified. This detachment from rational analysis renders the language of the art of gods and monsters typically nebulous, subjective, and polysemous, revealing the distinctive aesthetic orientation of eastern gods and monsters (Zhang, 2020).

By depicting supernatural power and mysterious phenomena, "Oriental Monster Aesthetics" creates an artistic expression distinct from Western monster aesthetics. These studies provide useful references to help us comprehend the meaning of "Oriental Monster Aesthetics" and its implementation in film.

3 METHODOLOGY

The expressive force of Chinese magical films pioneered using CG technology in Chinese magical films is influencing the aesthetic evolution of Chinese magical films without a doubt. To examine the impact of CG technology on the aesthetics of Chinese fantastical films, this paper utilises the Ghostbusters film series as a case study. This study predominantly employs qualitative research methodology. Referring to Lu Yilong (2022), the qualitative study accumulates a large quantity of empirical data through online databases such as CNki, Science Direct, and Google Scholar. The data sources include articles and journals on film aesthetics research and Chinese magic film research. To examine the impact of spatial representation, folk culture presentation, and digital CG technology on the aesthetics of Chinese mystical cinema.

4 RESULT AND DISCUSSION

4.1 The use of computer-generated imagery in a fantasy film

In 1977, George Lucas's "Star Wars" was released, establishing the precedent for the application of computer-generated imagery (CG) technology and film creation. CG technology then began to enter the field of film production on a large scale.

Most of the content displayed in magical films is illusory, and producers typically need to construct a vast worldview prior to filming. They must use CG technology to carry out the preliminary conception and sketch design of fantasy characters and virtual scenes. At the outset of the film "Candle In The Tomb of the Ancient City of Jingjie," for instance, the concept designer Li Tao created the renderings of the Kunlun Glacier, Taklamakan Desert, the Ancient City of Jingjie, and the underground Ghost Cave, etc.

Secondly, during the mid-production phase of the film, the creators will use CG technology to perform 3D modelling and digital mapping of virtual characters and locations, in accordance with the early conceptual design. During the actual filming process, the digital effects team will use the scene environment and props to construct the 3D model's texture. In the film's post-production phase, digital technology is used for non-linear editing, digital post-processing, digital compositing, digital output, and other operational aspects. Scenes of various geomorphological environments, such as mausoleums, crypts, and snow-covered mountains, were constructed to produce Ghostbusters, along with a significant number of green screens. In a later stage, the creators employ CG technology, which, through special effects scene restoration, scene extension, auxiliary models, etc., can combine those magical landscapes with the physical shooting of the film material to present the dream and imaginary images to the audience in the form of visual materialisation.

Looking at the magic film production before, during, and after, digital technology is still an indispensable technical means for magic film while saving cost and improving efficiency, which can not only push the fantasy of magic film to the extreme, but also enable the producers to give full play

to creative thinking and diversify the visual expression of magic elements, so as to create a unique implication and aesthetic pursuit in the visual screen.

4.2 CG Technology's Constructive Thoughts on the Aesthetics of Chinese Magical Films

These ghosts, spirits, monsters, demons, and devils accumulated in the conceptual world passed down from generation to generation, are infused with the oriental people's ideals of life and attitudes towards reality, are injected into the spirit of the development of the times, are the support for the individual's joy, anger, sadness, love, and evil desires, and are endowed with the beauty, ugliness, and evil desires. (Zhang, Lulu & Tang, Rui, 2019). The traditional Eastern culture of gods and monsters contains a great deal of archetypal imagery, from the mythological stories, illustrations of gods and monsters, and novels of gods and monsters recorded in ancient literature, to the works of art and artifact such as sculptures, frescoes, paintings on silk, and cultural artifact modelling and decorations unearthed by archaeological artifact, and then to the folklore and epic poems passed down orally, which ha By virtue of their transcendental existence, these archetypal images can become the dominant force of emotional expression in images and guide CG technology to convey the content in accordance with the aesthetic psychology of the target audience.

In his analysis of the relationship between form and entity at the semantic level, Greimas notes, "The depiction of any ideational set can be carried out at two different levels, namely the level of the sense elements or forms and the level of the semantic layer or entities, with different outcomes." Thus, a form and an entity are able to determine an ideographic language set. Digital cinema technology can be viewed as the expressive form level of Chinese magical films, while the cultural archetypes of oriental gods and monsters can be viewed as the entity manifestation on the non-formal level. Both can work together to create the ideographic language of Chinese magical films, which reflects the technological aesthetics characteristics of Chinese magical films. In accordance with the research ideas of film semiotics regarding the perceptual, narrative, and poetic layers, we can divide the video images of the fusion of digital technology and the culture of oriental gods and creatures into three research levels.

First, image simulation. The concept of gods and demons stems from the soul's belief that everything is spiritual. Plato's spiritual philosophy viewed the soul as a spiritual entity opposed to physical appetites, resulting in a tradition of spiritual and physical dichotomy and the separation of spirit and matter in Europe governed by Christianity in Ancient Greece. The Chinese, in contrast, believe that the soul is not opposed to the body and place greater emphasis on the soul and divinity than on the body. This idea is reflected in the art of oriental gods and monsters, which tends to accentuate "god" over "form." Rather than being limited to the realism of specific "shapes" to achieve the effect of "transmitting the spirit", the presentation of prototypes in the film based on CG technology can be accomplished through exaggerations and deformations using subjective knowledge and subjective thoughts. In Ghost Blown Lantern of the Nine Layers of the Demon Tower, for instance, there is the enigmatic and transcendent Wang Curator. Second, the narrative of odd emotions. In traditional Chinese gods and monsters, the story of human and alien love has a long history, and in the film, this thread of love is frequently intertwined with the primary narrative line of the conflict between good and evil and is sometimes even regarded as the narrative's core. For instance, the films "Painted Skin," "Journey to the West of the Daughters of the Kingdom of," and so on all use "strange love" as the inner driving force of the spectacle narrative, and it is under the dominance of special emotions that the protagonists commit a series of shocking and horrifying acts, such as "skin-changing," "pulling out the heart," and so on. Under the influence of unique emotions, the protagonists commit a series of startling acts, including "skin-changing" and "heart-stealing." Finally, the manifestation of ethical significance. This tradition can be traced back to the earliest gods-and-monsters' cultures. The Chinese are adept at conveying non-ethical things in terms of ethics, combining, and penetrating the characteristics of all things in the world with national ethical standards. In magical films, ethical meanings are frequently constructed using computer-generated imagery (CG) to create a type of implicit and restrained image symbols with metaphorical or symbolic meanings, leaving the space for contemplation for its admirers so they can

appreciate the beauty on a deeper level. Using CG technology, the film "Ghost Blows the Dragon" presents many "non-realistic" metaphors, such as the terrifying shadow of a samurai warrior and the magnificent tomb of a deity, among others. This technical performance is allegorical and introverted, and in conjunction with the film's coherence and comprehensibility, it elicits a series of reflections on the ultimate propositions of humanity and their destiny, ideas, and beliefs. It inspires a series of contemplations on the ultimate propositions of man and destiny, ideas, and beliefs.

5 CONCLUSION

The subject matter of Chinese magic films should not only be rooted in the traditional oriental culture of gods and creatures, but the CG-based images should also reflect the aesthetic preferences of the Chinese people. Based on mastering the operation process and expression of western film and television creation technology, we should also use it to develop our own oriental technical aesthetic style.

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AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Zhou Shibo was responsible for the acquisition of data and writing of the paper, while Md Nagib Padil and College of Creative Arts reviewed and directed the paper's content.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

This thesis focuses on Dr. Lulu Zhang's research findings on Chinese sorcery films and cites the Candle in The Tomb series' creative materials. But no conflict of interest existed.

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