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THE EXPRESSION OF CHINESE TRADITIONAL AESTHETICS IN ANIMATION DESIGN

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Chinese animation is deeply influenced by traditional Chinese culture, showcasing a rich variety of ethnic styles and unique aesthetic features. In terms of expression and visual art, Chinese animation presents traditional Chinese aesthetics. Through case analysis and synthesis, this paper focuses on the presentation of Chinese traditional aesthetics in animation design, and explores its application in aspects such as storytelling, artistic image creation, and scene atmosphere design. It is noted that Chinese animation often draws from local folk stories and mythological legends, using artistic images and aesthetic scene-building to reveal the unique charm and value that traditional aesthetics bring to animation.

Keywords: Chinese Animation, Chinese Aesthetics, Animation Design, Ethnic Style, Aesthetic Philosophy.

INTRODUCTION

Animation, as a comprehensive art form, integrates audiovisual elements in design and presents cultural and artistic charm through its rich imagination and unique expressiveness. In its early stages, Chinese animation consistently explored a Chinese aesthetic style, which is reflected in aspects such as story setting and visual design [1]. On one hand, the era in which animation was created inevitably influenced Chinese animation, as works from various periods were imbued with the stylistic characteristics of their time. On the other hand, the philosophical thoughts, visual presentation, and creative techniques manifested in animation reveal the distinctive imprint of Chinese traditional aesthetics. Integrating Chinese traditional aesthetics into animation design not only injects profound cultural connotations into animation but also allows it to display unique Eastern charm in the international market. Therefore, studying this topic holds significant practical importance.

PURPOSE

This study, through case analysis, selects representative Chinese traditional aesthetic animated works and extracts the modes of expression of Chinese traditional aesthetics from aspects such as animation story text, artistic image creation, and scene atmosphere design. Exploring the expression of traditional aesthetics in Chinese animation helps in understanding the cultural depth behind animation creation.



RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Chinese animation has long been enamored with folk stories and mythological texts, a tendency that contains rich cultural meanings. From early to present, animated works based on texts such as *Journey to the West*, *The Investiture of the Gods*, and *The Legend of the White Snake* have emerged frequently. Mythological heroes like Nezha and Sun Wukong, among others, are commonly featured in animation and are mainstream adapted characters in Chinese animation. This material choice is not accidental, as it embodies the essence of Chinese traditional culture and serves as an important carrier of national spirit.

The visual expression of Chinese traditional aesthetics is directly reflected in the creation of artistic images. By integrating traditional Chinese painting, folk crafts, and other art forms, different drawing techniques and styles are combined to create animated characters with distinct ethnic features.

A prime example is China's unique ink wash animation, which uses the form of Chinese ink painting to create animation. In 1960, Shanghai Film Art Studio produced *Little Tadpoles Look for Their Mother*, which cleverly borrowed techniques from Qi Baishi's painting style, as shown in Figure 1. The varying shades of ink and the dynamic rhythm of the lines were incorporated into the design of the animated characters, showcasing the unique elegance, subtlety, and expressiveness of traditional Chinese aesthetics. This innovation not only gave the animated characters a distinct artistic personality but also created a poetic and picturesque aesthetic. The ink brushwork, from surface to depth, narrates the essence of Chinese aesthetics.

In the 21st century, Chinese animation has further embraced the integration of traditional aesthetics, with the 2023 animated work *Deep Sea* serving as a representative example. This animation introduced the groundbreaking "particle ink wash" technology, merging 2D ink wash with 3D techniques [2]. To simulate the flow of ink, the team conducted hundreds of experiments using mixtures of detergent, acrylic paint, food coloring, and milk. To replicate the fluidity and texture of ink painting, countless particles were used to form ink shapes, breaking the rigid contours of 3D objects. From Figure 2., the varying shades of ink, the straight and curved lines, the dense and sparse brushstrokes, and the varying colors all provide an exceptional visual experience.



Fig. 1. Ink wash animation *Little Tadpoles Look for Their Mother*



Modern technology allows the particle ink wash visuals to straddle the boundary between ink painting and oil painting, with a low-grain, richly layered presentation.



Fig. 2. 3D Ink wash animation *Deep Sea* "particle ink wash" technology

Early Chinese animation also widely incorporated folk art forms such as shadow puppetry, paper folding, puppetry, and paper cutting [3]. These traditional artistic elements enriched the animation's ethnic characteristics. Their combination with animation techniques gave Chinese animation unique artistic styles in areas such as character design and motion expression, conveying distinct national values and aesthetic sensibilities.

In terms of scene atmosphere design, Chinese traditional aesthetics is fully manifested. Traditional Chinese aesthetics emphasizes the beauty of suggestion, focusing on expressing spirit through form and blending emotion with the environment. This aesthetic philosophy is thoroughly reflected in the scene depiction of Chinese animated films. Early Chinese animation, influenced by traditional painting techniques, used concise yet expressive brushstrokes to create summarized scene depictions, evoking a unique atmosphere of meaning.

The 1979 animated film *Nezha Conquers the Dragon King* incorporated elements from traditional door god paintings and Dunhuang murals into its scene design. It also integrated Chinese traditional motifs like cranes and lotuses, with color schemes inspired by those found in traditional mural and folk painting. The strong ethnic characteristics permeated every aspect of the film. The rich mythological atmosphere was enhanced by the Chinese aesthetic scene design, making it even more distinct.

After entering the 21st century, Chinese animation has further embraced Chinese aesthetic features. The 2016 animated film *Big Fish & Begonia* incorporated traditional architectural styles, such as the Fujian Tulou and Hakka roundhouses, to build a mysterious and fantastical underwater world. The unique circular structure and interior layout of the Tulou not only added a strong Eastern flavor to the animation but also cleverly integrated the traditional philosophical concept of "round heaven and square earth." The portrayal of natural landscapes such as mountains, clouds, and stars in the animation was influenced by the techniques of traditional Chinese landscape painting. Through delicate brushstrokes and ethereal imagery, it created a distant and grand visual experience, conveying the reverence and admiration for nature found in Eastern culture.



CONCLUSIONS

Chinese traditional aesthetics holds undeniable value in the creation of Chinese animation. Drawing on traditional Chinese aesthetics and local cultural stories in animation creation has endowed Chinese animation with distinct characteristics of Chinese culture across different periods. The integration of traditional elements in the artistic image creation—ranging from poetic ink-wash imagery to the lively lines of paper-cutting art—embodies the essence of Chinese traditional aesthetics. The use of Chinese aesthetics in scene atmosphere design, rooted in local architectural features, creates a unique ambiance and strengthens the cultural atmosphere.

The incorporation of Chinese traditional aesthetics into animation design not only enriches the artistic expression of animation and enhances the artistic value of the works, but also establishes a unique cultural identity for Chinese animation in the international market, enhancing its cultural influence. In the future, the integration of Chinese traditional aesthetics and animation design will open up broader opportunities for the development of the Chinese animation industry, pushing Chinese animation to new artistic heights.

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ВІДОБРАЖЕННЯ КИТАЙСЬКОЇ ТРАДИЦІЙНОЇ ЕСТЕТИКИ В ДИЗАЙНІ АНІМАЦІЇ

Китайська анімація перебуває під глибоким впливом традиційної китайської культури, демонструючи багате розмаїття етнічних стилів та унікальні естетичні особливості. З точки зору вираження та візуального мистецтва, китайська анімація представляє традиційну китайську естетику. Шляхом аналізу та синтезу конкретних прикладів ця стаття зосереджується на представленні китайської традиційної естетики в анімаційному дизайні та досліджує її застосування в таких аспектах, як розповідь історії, створення художнього образу та дизайн атмосфери сцени. Зазначається, що китайська анімація часто спирається на місцеві народні історії та міфологічні легенди, використовуючи художні образи та естетичну побудову сцен, щоб розкрити унікальний шарм і цінність, які традиційна естетика привносить в анімацію.

Ключові слова: китайська анімація, китайська естетика, анімаційний дизайн, етнічний стиль, естетична філософія.