



Studies on Artistic Style of Chinese Ink Deckle-Edged Paper-Cutting Animation

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Abstract. This article elaborates processes of the production and development of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation and summarizes its artistic style. The overall style of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation has the unique beauty of artistic conception of Chinese traditional arts, modeling of character is featured on fine and delicate, and has characteristic of shading in Chinese ink painting. Its theme is refined and rich in philosophy. At the same time, this article also explores problems existed and future development of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation.

Keyword: Artistic style of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation

1 Introduction

Chinese ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation is a unique form of paper-cutting animation in China, it creatively uses hand-tearing to form deckle edge and ink dot-dyeing process to make paper-cutting animated characters, making its characters natural, delicate, plush and cute. Its rich national characteristics and unique artistic style are favored by the majority of the audience, and won several international awards, making a glorious chapter in the history of Chinese animation.

However, with the passage of time, animation technology is changing with each passing day, and ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation technology is not advancing with the times, coupled with the death of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation master, the techniques of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation are lack of heritage and successor, and is at risk of losing. This article tries to sort out and summarize the artistic style of Chinese ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation, hoping to promote the inheritance and development of this precious national animation.

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2 Production and Development of Ink Deckle-Edged Paper-Cutting Animation

2.1 Paper-Cutting Animation

Paper-cutting animation comes from the Chinese folk shadow play, and shadow play as far as written records, has more than 2,000 years of history. China's truly paper-cutting animation appeared in the late 50s of last century, in 1957, Shanghai Animation Film Studio was set up, Wan Guchan formed a paper-cut film testing group, collaborating with Hu Jinqing, Zhan Tong, etc., they divided the role into head, body, limbs and combined them, making it moving by manually adjusting the location of the various parts of the role. After more than a year of effort, Wan Guchan et al. successful shot China's first paper-cutting animation "Zhu Bajie eats watermelon", for the first time taking paper-cut and shadow art in the design and production of animation, refreshing the audience and created China's first paper-cutting animation in the history. Since then, technology of paper-cutting animation has become more and more mature, Animation Film Studio successively shot "Ginseng Doll", "The Fishing Child", "Golden Conch", "Lift The Donkey" and a series of excellent paper-cutting animation [1] (Figs. 1 and 2).



Fig. 1. Zhu Bajie eats watermelon



Fig. 2. The Fishing Child

2.2 Ink Deckle-Edged Paper-Cutting Animation

During the Cultural Revolution, China's animation industry was basically in a state of stagnation. In 1976, the Cultural Revolution ended, Chinese animation art breathed new life, animated masters burst into a huge creative enthusiasm, and the ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation was born in this period. Hu Jinqing and other animation masters applied the new ink deckle-edged technology to the creation of paper-cutting animation characters, thus created this unique form of paper-cutting animation, the ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation, which gained unanimous praise both at home and abroad. From 1976 to the beginning of 1980s, it was the development period of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation, China's first ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation was "Bamboo Shoots in the House", taken in 1976; in the 80's, the flourishing period of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation, many good animations such as "Scarecrow", "Struggle Between Snipe and Clam", "Monkeys Grasp for the Moon" were created during this period, and won a number of domestic and foreign awards; in the 90's, due to the great changes in social economy, Chinese animation wholly trended to decline, ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation works were basically gone, "Snow Fox", whose content was miserable, was the last work of paper deckle-edged paper-cutting animation [2] (Figs. 3, 4, 5 and 6).



Fig. 3. Struggle Between Snipe and Clam



Fig. 4. Monkeys Grasp for the Moon



Fig. 5. Scarecrow



Fig. 6. Scarecrow

3 Artistic Style of Ink Deckle-Edged Paper-Cutting Animation

3.1 The Overall Style Has the Unique Beauty of Artistic Conception of Chinese Traditional Arts

The ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation looks fresh, natural, elegant and has a naive and simple ink taste, which exudes a rich traditional Chinese culture charm. When audiences enjoy the animated film, it looks like reading an ancient text, concise speech, lively spirit and charm, make sense reasonable and meaningful. For example, in the film of “Struggle Between Snipe and Clam”, mountains seem like smoke, reeds are green, all of the things are misted, a fisherman alone fishing in the river quietly with a Chinese ancient raincoat and hat, happy and contented, fishes lively and vivid. The picture is simple and natural, ethereal and elegance, the man is in harmony with nature, full of poetic. Although the whole film does not have a line, people cannot help but think of Zhang Zhihe’s “Fishing Boat” (a Chinese Song Poetry), which describes vividly the fisherman’s quiet and comfortable, interest of fishing and nature.

3.2 Modeling of Character Is Featured on Fine and Delicate

Hu Jinqing, the founder of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation, believes that “fine and delicate” is the most important artistic characteristics of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animated characters [3]. Modeling of paper-cutting animated character is angular, lines are too simple, having apparent cutting traces, and color on the edge is blunt. Hu Jinqing and other older animation artists give full play to creativity, they use Chinese mulberry paper as the main material, firstly paints the outline of characters on the page, and then tear the characters down along the outline, which cleverly let the long fibers in the paper scattered on the edge of the characters, so that ink colors can shading naturally along the fibers, thus making the lines of characters soft and full, colors on the edge shading naturally and transmitting harmoniously, especially when depicting animal images, it making small animals seem plush, cute and lifelike.

For example, the image of golden monkey in the film of “The Naughty”, with the application of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting technology, making the golden monkey’s fur appears supple naturally and vivid. In the ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation “Scarecrow”, the animated masters make full use of this style, in order to make the water bird’s long neck rotating flexibly, after several experiments, the water bird’s neck is divided into more than a hundred joints, and then linked together with hair, so that the water bird’s neck can move smoothly.

3.3 It Has Characteristic of Shading in Chinese Ink Painting

Chinese ink painting is a painting artistic form that expresses Chinese people’s cultural feelings, and has unique aesthetic spirit and aesthetic taste of Chinese people. Chinese scholar-bureaucrats are the main body in creation of Chinese ink painting, having profound traditional culture background, they emphases on transmitting feelings by paintings, painting follow their hearts, getting back to nature, totally natural, so that they often do not pay attention to be similar in appearance and ask for similarity in spirit, they put their own ambitions and feelings into the ink painting and focus on the overall artistic conception and charm.

Ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation makes a good use of drawing methods of Chinese ink painting, it uses ink painting techniques to express their feelings with poetic style. The overall style of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation is fresh and natural, for example, in the film of “Struggle Between Snipe and Clam”, the ink deckle-edged style is further improved, the snipe has a feeling of fluffy, with the use of ink painting techniques, style of the whole film is fresh and beautiful, filled with poetic, as well as rich in philosophy [4].

3.4 Its Theme Is Refined and Rich in Philosophy

Although process of making deckle-edged paper-cutting animation is more simple than ink animation, the process is still cumbersome, its production cost is still high, and its cycle is relatively long. Therefore, the ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation is not suitable for stories whose plot is too complex, so that characters cannot be too much, and its subject matter is relatively short, small and refined. However, Chinese classical

literature and folk tales are just good at narrating a philosophical story by means of a short and condensed script. For example, the ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation of “Struggle Between Snipe and Clam” is derived from the “Strategies of the Warring States”, the whole story has only 65 words. At that time, Su Dai just persuades the king of Zhao state not to invade Yan state by means of this short story; Meanwhile, the film of “Monkeys Grasp for the Moon” comes out of Chinese folk tales. Other works like “Scarecrow” and “The Naughty” are also similar to Chinese classical literature and folk tales, though they are originally created by screenwriters. They all have short story, uncomplicated content, vivid plot and enrich in philosophy, which make audience impressed and memorable [5].

4 Problems Existed and Future Development

Chinese traditional ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation is a highlight of Chinese national animation, ink animated character created by use of deckle-edged paper-cutting technique, not only maintains feelings and charm of ink animation, but also makes modeling of animated character natural, delicate, plush and cute, it has distinctive national features and unique artistic style. However, the traditional ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation has complex production process, great technical difficulties, long production cycle, low efficiency and high cost, it can only produce a small amount of works, which can not meet the requirements of modern animation industry, which greatly limits the development of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation. After the 90’s, ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation gradually disappeared [6].

We must protect, inherit and develop the traditional ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation, otherwise, the precious national animation art is at risk of dying. On one hand, we should collect, organize and summarize materials of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation, research and inherit its production techniques, and cultivate special talents. On the other hand, we should explore ways to combine modern computer animation production technologies and tradition ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation technology, on the basis of ensuring its art style and quality, to simplify process, improve efficiency and reduce cost, so that to meet needs of modern animation industry and promote the development of ink deckle-edged paper-cutting animation.

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