

The Research on Industrial Aesthetic in Chinese Science Fiction Film *Wandering Earth 2*

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Abstract. Since the release of the Chinese sci-fi movie *The Wandering Earth 2*, it has caused a huge sensation. Its performance techniques, production process, and story content have all aroused extensive discussions, and it has been widely analyzed as a milestone of Chinese sci-fi movies. This article explores the industrial aesthetics of *The Wandering Earth 2* and analyzes the background and factors that produced the film. The article believes that the success and breakthrough of *The Wandering Earth 2* in the Chinese film market is mainly due to the continuous expansion of the Chinese film market, the mainstreaming of science fiction culture, the rise of national consciousness and the popularity of large-scale narratives. In terms of research method, using textual and comparative analysis, this paper explores five aspects of film industry aesthetics, namely: production process, visual effects, narrative structure, thematic meaning and social influence. This article believes that *The Wandering Earth 2* is not only a sci-fi film that coexists with business and art, but more importantly, it reflects the value of Chinese culture's expression and dissemination on a global scale, which has important historical significance and cultural status.

1. Introduction

Science fiction cinema is a genre of films based on science and technology that presents mankind's imagination and exploration of the future and the unknown. Science fiction films not only provide audiences with a visually stunning and emotionally resonant experience, but also reflect the values and ways of thinking of different societies and cultures. With a wide audience and influence worldwide, science fiction films are a cultural phenomenon of great significance.

Chinese science fiction cinema is an emerging field that has risen in recent years, and with the development of China's economy and technology, Chinese science fiction cinema has shown its own characteristics and strengths. *Wandering Earth* (2019) is a milestone in Chinese science fiction cinema, the first Chinese science fiction blockbuster to achieve global success, and the first Chinese film to feature hardcore science fiction. Set against the backdrop of the imminent swallowing of the Earth by the Sun, *Wandering Earth* tells the story of mankind's wandering plan to save the Earth and push it into another star system [1]. *Wandering Earth* not only reaches international standards in terms of visual effects, production level and narrative structure, but also demonstrates the unique charm of Chinese science fiction films in terms of thematic significance, cultural connotation and social impact.

Wandering Earth 2 (2023), the sequel to *Wandering Earth*, continues the story line of its predecessor, telling the story of the humans who encounter new crises and challenges during their wanderings, and how they

overcome the difficulties and continue to search for a new home. While maintaining the hardcore sci-fi style of its predecessor, *Wandering Earth 2* also adds more elements of humanistic concern, emotional expression, social criticism and cultural exchange, making the film even richer and more profound. *Wandering Earth 2* has once again created a box office miracle worldwide, and has also sparked attention and discussion on Chinese science fiction films from all walks of life [2].

This paper aims to explore the aesthetics of the film industry in *Wandering Earth 2*, i.e., how the film achieves its artistic value and social significance through industrial production methods, commercial operation models, international forms of cooperation, innovative technological means, and diverse audience strategies. This paper argues that *Wandering Earth 2* is a film that is both commercial and artistic, demonstrating not only the innovation and progress of the Chinese film industry in the field of science fiction, but also the expression and dissemination of Chinese culture, values and ideals in a global context.

2. Literature review

The study of Chinese science fiction films has been explored by many scholars both at home and abroad. Among them, some scholars have sorted out the process of Chinese science fiction cinema from scratch and from weakness to strength from the perspective of historical development, and analyzed the political, economic, social and cultural influences and challenges faced by

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Chinese science fiction cinema. For example, in his book *A History of Chinese Science Fiction Cinema*, Shi systematically reviews the development of Chinese science fiction cinema from the early 20th century to the early 21st century, pointing out the characteristics and problems of Chinese science fiction cinema in different historical periods, as well as the relationship between Chinese science fiction cinema and factors such as national ideology, market demand, and audience tastes. Shi argues that Chinese science fiction cinema is a film genre with a strong social and contemporary character, reflecting the changes and progress of Chinese society as well as showing Chinese people's imagination and exploration of the future and the unknown [3].

Other scholars have explored the artistic characteristics, cultural connotations and social significance of Chinese science fiction films from the perspective of theoretical analysis, comparing the similarities, differences and interactions between Chinese science fiction films and Western science fiction films, and have put forward some valuable ideas and insights. For example, in the current situation of Chinese science fiction films and its reflection, Zhang Xiangyu and Wu Sailing uses various perspectives such as cultural studies, post-colonial theory and globalization theory to provide an in-depth analysis and evaluation of Chinese science fiction cinema, revealing the important role Chinese science fiction cinema has in expressing national identity, spreading cultural values and participating in global dialogue. They argue that Chinese science fiction films are a vibrant and promising genre that can not only showcase the creativity and imagination of the Chinese themselves, but also resonate and communicate with audiences around the world.

The concept and theory of film industry aesthetics has been explored and explained by a

number of scholars in recent years. Among them, Professor Chen Xuguang was one of the first scholars to propose and systematically construct this theoretical system. He has published a number of articles, including "The New Power of Chinese Directors and the Rise of the Aesthetic Principle of Film Industry", "From Artistic Film Aesthetics to Film Industry Aesthetics - A Comparative Study of "New Power" Directors and Sixth Generation Directors and Some Reflections on Chinese Films Out of the Epidemic", "Film Industry A Study of Film Industry Aesthetics and many other articles and monographs have elaborated on the background, main contents, theoretical resources and system construction of film industry aesthetics, providing a new perspective and discourse for Chinese film studies [4]. According to Professor Chen Xiguang, film industrial aesthetics is a summary of reality and needs, a conceptual suspension, system structure and top-level design, respecting not only the artistic requirements and cultural character benchmarks of films, but also the technical standards and operational "industrial" requirements of films, highlighting the "principle of the supremacy of reason" In the process of film production, the author's style and sensual, self-experience are weakened and replaced by a rational, collaborative and standardised way of working,

in an attempt to achieve a co-ordination, balance of tension and aesthetic unity between the commercial and artistic aspects of cinema [5].

As representative works of Chinese science fiction films, *Wandering Earth* and *Wandering Earth 2* have also attracted the attention and research of many scholars. Among them, some scholars have analysed the strengths and weaknesses of these two films in terms of scientific principles, technical details and visual effects from the perspective of hardcore science fiction, and evaluated the contributions of these two films in raising the production level and international competitiveness of Chinese science fiction films. For example, in his article "The scientific logic and artistic logic of the science fiction film *Wandering Earth*", Rong explains in detail the knowledge of various disciplines involved in *Wandering Earth*, such as astronomy, physics and engineering, and points out the strengths and weaknesses of the film in terms of scientific logic, technical feasibility and visual presentation. According to Zhang, *Wandering Earth* is a groundbreaking and ground-breaking hardcore science fiction film that sets a new standard and goal for Chinese science fiction films [6].

In summary, research on Chinese science fiction cinema and the *Wandering Earth* film series has formed a relatively rich and diverse academic field, but research on the aesthetics of the film industry in *Wandering Earth 2* is still relatively lacking and underdeveloped. Film industry aesthetics refers to the aesthetic characteristics and values of film as an industrialised, commercialised, internationalised, innovative and diversified cultural product in terms of production, operation, collaboration, technology and audience. The aesthetics of the film industry can not only reveal the inner laws and external conditions of film as an art form, but also reflect the historical background and cultural significance of film as a social phenomenon. Therefore, this paper argues that a study of the film industry aesthetics in *Wandering Earth 2* will not only help to gain a deeper understanding of the artistic characteristics and social impact of the film, but also help to promote the development and progress of Chinese science fiction films.

3. Methodology

On the basis of drawing on and absorbing previous research results, this paper attempts to conduct a more specific and in-depth analysis of the film industry aesthetics in *Wandering Earth 2*, with a view to providing a new case and vision for the study of Chinese science fiction films. This paper will use textual and comparative analysis to explore the film industrial aesthetics in *Wandering Earth 2* from the following aspects: (1) Production process: to analyse the industrial, commercial, international, innovative and diversified production methods adopted in the preparation, shooting and post-production of *Wandering Earth 2*. (2) Visual effects: An analysis of the industrial, professional, international, innovative and diversified technical methods used in the use of digital technology, special effects production and visual design in *Wandering Earth*

2. (3) Narrative structure: An analysis of the industrialised, standardised, internationalised, innovative and diversified narrative style of *Wandering Earth 2* in terms of following the rules of the genre, constructing plot conflicts and shaping character images. (4) Thematic significance: An analysis of the industrialised, balanced, internationalised, innovative and diversified thematic content of *Wandering Earth 2* in expressing the fate of human beings, reflecting on social issues and conveying cultural messages. (5) Social impact: An analysis of the industrialised, market-oriented, internationalised, innovative and diversified social effects produced by *Wandering Earth 2* in terms of gaining box office revenues, winning the audience's reputation and arousing media attention.

4.Result

Based on the above analytical framework, this paper will explore the aesthetics of the film industry in *Wandering Earth 2* from the following five perspectives.

(1) In production process, *Wandering Earth 2* has adopted an industrial, commercial, international, innovative and diversified production approach, reflecting the maturity and confidence of Chinese science fiction films. Firstly, the film was co-produced by a number of companies including China Film Corporation and Guo Fan (Beijing) Film Company Limited, with an investment scale of US\$162 million, the largest production scale in the history of Chinese science fiction films. Secondly, the film used high-tech equipment and technology during filming, such as 4K cameras, virtual camera systems and motion capture systems, to create high-quality visual effects. At the same time, the film also invited professional teams from home and abroad to participate in the production, such as Weta Digital from the US, Framestore from the UK, Macrograph from Korea and other well-known special effects companies, as well as actors, dubbers and musicians from different countries and regions, demonstrating an international vision and spirit of cooperation [7]. In addition, the film also breaks new ground in terms of innovation, such as the use of a combination of realistic models and special effects in the space lift explosion scene, creating a stunning audio-visual experience; and the use of abstract and allegorical expressions in the digital life world, showing imagination and depth. Finally, the film also reflects diversity, such as the use of Chinese Mandarin, Russian, English, Hindi, French and other languages in the dialogue, reflecting the diversity of human cultures; in the thematic content of the film, it covers various aspects such as environmental protection, human fate and social issues, reflecting the complexity of human thought.

(2) *Wandering Earth 2* also embodies an industrial aesthetic in terms of visual effects, reflecting the standard and charm of Chinese science fiction films. Firstly, the film has invested huge resources and efforts in visual effects, with over 3,000 special effects shots¹ taking up nearly half of the film.² Secondly, *Wandering Earth 2* has adopted professional standards and

processes in visual effects, such as detailed concept design and pre-visualisation in pre-production, detailed special effects production and colour grading in post-production, and strict quality control in the final presentation. strict quality control in the final presentation. At the same time, the film draws on international experience and style in its visual effects, such as references to classic science fiction films such as *Star Trek* in the space scenes, well-known science fiction films such as *The Matrix* in the digital life scenes, and popular disaster films such as *2012* in the disaster scenes. In addition, the film shows innovative thinking and ability in visual effects, such as creating unique visual symbols in the planetary engine scene, thrilling visual impact in the moon fall scene, and a fantastical visual style in the digital life scene [8]. Finally, the film presents diverse characteristics and charms in terms of visual effects, such as a desolate and apocalyptic atmosphere in the Earth scene, a vast and magnificent landscape in the space scene, and an abstract and allegorical mood in the digital life scene.

(3) On narrative structure *Wandering Earth 2* adopts industrial aesthetic, reflecting the logic and charm of Chinese science fiction films. Firstly, the film follows the principles of industrialisation and standardisation in terms of narrative structure, such as a three-act structure in terms of story structure, a rise and fall approach in terms of story rhythm, an intertwined internal and external story conflict, and a high and low approach in terms of story emotion. Secondly, the film draws on international and innovative elements in its narrative structure, such as the setting of the science fiction novel *Wandering Earth3* in the story setting, two parallel threads in the main story line, the space lift crisis and the moon fall crisis, several surprise twists in the story details such as the digital life world and the identity of Tu Heng Yu, and an open-ended epilogue in the story ending. In addition, the film displays a diverse style and charm in terms of narrative structure, such as a blend of science fiction, adventure and disaster in terms of story genre, covering multiple dimensions of human fate, social issues and cultural heritage in terms of story theme, and portraying multiple characters such as Liu Peiqiang, Tu Hengyu and Zhou Zhezhi in terms of story characters.

(4) On thematic significance, *Wandering Earth 2* expresses the thematic content of industrialisation, balance, internationalisation, innovation and diversity in terms of thematic significance, reflecting the ideas and charms of Chinese science fiction films. Firstly, the film reflects the concepts of industrialisation and balance in terms of thematic significance, for example, in exploring the relationship between humans and nature, humans and technology, and humans and society, it shows both the crisis and challenges brought by industrialisation and the hope and opportunities brought by balanced development. Secondly, the film demonstrates the international and innovative spirit in its thematic significance. For example, in expressing issues such as the community of human destiny, the diversity of human civilisations and the choice of human values, it shows

both the complexity of international cooperation and competition, and the importance of innovative thinking and action. In addition, the film presents a diversity of values and charms in terms of thematic meaning, such as in the exposition of topics such as the world of digital life, the identity of Tuhengyu and the plan for a wandering Earth, showing both the conflict and dialogue between different views and positions, and revealing the unity of purpose and values of humanity in the face of disaster.

(5) In terms of social impact, *Wandering Earth 2* has produced industrial, market-oriented, international, innovative and diversified social effects, reflecting the influence and charm of Chinese science fiction films. Firstly, the film demonstrates the achievements of industrialisation and marketisation in terms of social impact. For example, in terms of box office revenue, the film generated nearly RMB 2 billion on its first day of release in mainland China, making it the highest-grossing film in the history of Chinese cinema on its first day, and made over RMB 5 billion worldwide, making it the highest-grossing film in the history of Chinese science fiction cinema. Secondly, the film has demonstrated international and innovative accolades in terms of social impact. For example, in terms of reviews, the film received a high score of 8.3 on Douban and 7.8 on IMDb, and received several domestic and international awards and nominations, such as the Best Visual Effects Award at the 10th Macau International Film Festival and a nomination for Best Foreign Language Film at the 95th Academy Awards. In addition, the film has shown a diverse response in terms of social impact, such as in the media, the film has attracted the attention and coverage of major media, such as The New York Times, The Washington Post, The Guardian, etc.; in terms of audience, the film has attracted all kinds of audience discussion and sharing, such as more than 5 million people have participated in the topic discussion about the film on Zhihu, and more than 1 billion people have participated in the topic discussion about the film on Weibo, etc. The film has been discussed by over 5 million people on Zhihu and over 1 billion people on Weibo [9].

5. Discussion

In summary, *The Wandering Earth 2* embodies industrial aesthetics in various aspects and is a breakthrough in the history of Chinese cinema. The emergence of *The Wandering Earth 2* marks a new height in resources and technology for the Chinese film industry, as well as progress and upgrading of the Chinese film market. So, under what background was this film produced, and what factors made it possible for this industrial aesthetic to become possible in Chinese cinema? This article summarizes the following reasons.

Market expansion the Chinese film market has been expanding continuously in recent years, partly due to the development of the entertainment industry brought about by economic development, and partly due to the growing demand for film and television entertainment among the

public. On the other hand, due to the rapid development of new Internet media platforms, film publicity can bring greater influence. Community or platform-based information exchange between audiences is also more convenient. Therefore, the rapid growth and high concentration of box office revenue has become a trend. High-quality films can achieve great returns, and capital investment in the film industry is also increasing.

Mainstreaming of science fiction culture: While industrial aesthetics can be embodied in realistic films, it cannot be denied that fantasy films are the best way to showcase the development of the film industry and its industrial aesthetics. Especially science fiction films represented by *The Wandering Earth 2*. The production of such films is inseparable from the popularity of science fiction culture. Since Chinese writer Liu Cixin won the Hugo Award with 'The Three-Body Problem', science fiction culture has gradually entered the public eye, and science fiction films and TV dramas have had a booming environment [10]. The industrial aesthetics of films have more space to show, which in turn promotes the upgrading and progress of the film industry.

The rise of national consciousness and the popularity of grand narratives: The success of *The Wandering Earth 2* is largely due to its strong 'domestic' characteristic. Such films have become hot topics in China's film industry in recent years and often reap stable returns and good box office results. This is largely due to the rise of national consciousness among Chinese audiences, who pursue domestic films, domestic stories, and domestic values. After patriotic films such as 'Wolf Warrior' and 'Battle at Lake Changjin' achieved great success in word-of-mouth and box office, actor Wu Jing has become a weather vane for this type of subject matter. The huge success of *The Wandering Earth 2* undoubtedly has a continuity brought by Wu Jing from 'Wolf Warrior'. The film not only shows the bravery and sacrifice of Chinese astronauts, but also shows the solidarity, cooperation and joint rescue between China and other countries in the face of crisis. The film conveys a spirit of being positive, not afraid of difficulties, and bravely facing the future, as well as an understanding and respect for a community with a shared future for mankind. This kind of grand narrative and national emotion is undoubtedly an important factor that attracts Chinese audiences and touches their hearts.

6. Conclusion

The Wandering Earth 2 is the product of the joint action of the Chinese film industry and China's social, economic, cultural development and other factors. The industrial aesthetics shown in this film is actually a symbol of the development of the Chinese film industry. It can be said that the industrial aesthetics of *The Wandering Earth 2* comes from the expansion of the film market, the rise of sci-fi culture, and the awakening of the audience's national consciousness. Social influence and other aspects are reflected, forming a complete set of methodology. In fact, the industrial aesthetics of *The Wandering Earth 2* is not an accidental

product. From multiple levels, it is supported by various factors and logic. After years of development, the Chinese film industry has reached a certain scale and level. The production of *The Wandering Earth 2* is an inevitable result in line with its development law. After *The Wandering Earth 2*, there will inevitably be more Chinese films based on such experience and methodology to create their own industrial aesthetics. But it is worth thinking about how Chinese films find a balance between industrialization and human culture, and how to find a balance between assembly line and diversification. Industrialization is a necessary but not sufficient condition for improving film quality and efficiency. Movies are not only a commodity, but also an art and a culture. If a movie wants to truly impress the audience, it also needs humanistic care and artistic creation. Although *The Wandering Earth 2* has made breakthroughs in industrial aesthetics, many viewers believe that its plot logic, character creation, and emotional expression are still insufficient, and the models and routines of Hollywood science fiction films, some people think it has not truly formed its own unique style and characteristics. These aspects are exactly where Chinese films need to explore and break through. In short, *The Wandering Earth 2* shows a possibility of the aesthetics of the Chinese film industry, and also provides a reference for the future development of Chinese films. But at the same time, we must also see that *The Wandering Earth 2* is not perfect, and there are still some problems and challenges.

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