

Research on Experimental Film

–Based on Comparison of Experimental Film and Traditional Film

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Abstract: Experimental film is an important type of cinematic expression that originated from Europe in the 20th century. The content of experimental film is more flexible and diverse than any other cinematic form. However, people nowadays seem to prefer traditional Hollywood films than experimental films. This paper analyses on experimental films. The reasons why experimental film works are not as popular among the general public as mainstream films may involve a variety of factors, including the nature of art, audience acceptance and aesthetic habits, limitations in publicity and marketing, cultural differences and language restrictions, film industry and commercialization pressures, financial and production conditions, as well as the influence of social and cultural backgrounds. The combination of these factors may make experimental film works more limited in terms of popularity, popularity and box office performance among the general public. However, as an art form, experimental film works still have their unique value and significance. By breaking away from traditional film forms, structures and contents, experimental film works usually explore new artistic expressions, challenge audiences' aesthetic experiences, and provoke thoughts and discussions. These works may have a profound impact on niche and specific audience groups, promoting the innovation and development of film art.

Keywords: experimental film, traditional film, contribution

1. Introduction

Experimental film is a unique form of cinematic expression that has been in existence for several decades. It is an art form that seeks to challenge traditional filmmaking conventions, and it is often characterized by its avant-garde style and unconventional narrative structures. Experimental film is an important part of the art of cinema, and it has contributed significantly to the evolution and innovation of the medium. In this research article, the author will examine the history of experimental film, compare its production methods and expressions to those of traditional films, and analyze the differences and connections between the two. The author will also explain why experimental film not as mainstream and popular as traditional films is, and why it is important to recognize its significance in the world of cinema.

2. The Origin of Experimental Film

The origin of experimental film can be traced back to the early 20th century when artists began experimenting with motion pictures as a new medium for artistic expression. The Italian Futurists, for example, were among the first to use film to create abstract, non-narrative works. Later, in the 1920s, artists in Europe and the United States began to experiment with film as a way to break away from the conventions of traditional narrative cinema. This led to the development of the avant-garde film movement, which sought to create new forms of cinematic expression that were more focused on the visual and auditory elements of filmmaking [1].

3. Techniques and Technologies in Experimental Film

Experimental films are produced using a wide range of techniques and technologies, and they often involve the use of non-traditional filming and editing methods. For example, experimental filmmakers might use unconventional camera angles, lighting, or sound effects to create a unique visual or auditory experience for the viewer. For example, in the movie “Enter the Void” by Gaspar Noe, the use of subjective camera is phenomenal. The highly use of subjective camera allows audience to really emerge into the scenes of the movie since audience are literally in the same perspective of the characters [2]. This attempt of camera placement is unconventional and creates a sense of intimacy. This tactic is also adopted by many other experimental films. They might also use montage techniques, such as rapid cutting or superimposition, to create a sense of disorientation or fragmentation. In the short film “Un Chien Andalou” directed by Luis Buñuel and Salvador Dalí the conventional narrative is completely shattered. “For example, one scene occurs and suddenly, a title card reads, ‘8 years later.’ It utilizes unorthodox camera angles and editing techniques” [3]. The use of montage in the film is also innovative and unconventional. The most famous example perhaps is the match-cut scene where a knife cutting an eyeball is quickly cut to some clouds cutting the moon. Basically, the purpose of experimental films is to challenge the conventional way of film making instead of following the mainstream in order to cater the audience. However, the range of experimental films is quite broad. Some films dabble in experimentation, using a camera angle or a taboo or unconventional subject matter. Other films really push the boundaries, sometimes so much that we can’t even really decide if it’s a film or not [4]. For example, “Frank ‘s Cock,” directed by Mike Hoolboom in 1993, “is as bold as its title suggests, celebrating homo-erotic sexuality in the realm of AIDS rather than simply condoning it, as mainstream films do [5]. At a time when homosexuality and AIDS were so blatantly talked about, and when hoolboom used numerous and direct homosexual scenes to express his innermost thoughts. The film’s narrative is disorganized. The narrator is a true experienter, monologuing to the camera, talking to himself and his feelings about frank. The film is not edited in any traditional way, which is reflected in the use of split screens, with separate images, so that people can empathize and think while finding the connection between the images.

4. Traditional Films

In contrast, traditional films tend to follow a more structured and formulaic approach to filmmaking. They are typically driven by a clear narrative structure, and they rely on well-established techniques for camera placement, lighting, and sound design to create a cohesive and immersive viewing experience. Usually, every conventional film follows the “180 Degree Rule”, which means “the two or more characters in a scene should always have the same left or right relationship with each other” [6]. The purpose of this camera placement rule is to make sure audience are able to keep track with the characters orientation so that confusion can be avoided. Otherwise, the scene might seem confusing, messy and unprofessional. Traditional films also tend to be more accessible to mainstream audiences, as they often feature recognizable actresses’ actors, clear plotlines, and familiar genres.

Traditional films' plots rely heavily on restricted forms. Most traditional films, especially those Classic-Hollywood films, have the same script structure. The film must have a conflict, a clear setting, a climax or a clever twist... These restrictions indeed help audience better understand the film, however, there is an increasing distinct phenomenon that films in the 21 century is lacking innovation comparing to the films before. Using recognizable actors and actresses is also a common way how filmmakers nowadays attract audience.

Therefore, many famous actors and actresses often act as the main character in every movie, leaving less opportunities for other talented actors and actresses to achieve their dreams in Hollywood. Most of the films nowadays, especially action movies, rely heavily on visual effects and high-tech effects.

The aim is to please the audience in order to sell high box office, and movie is seen as a commodity to be sold to the audience.

5. Comparison Between the Experimental and Traditional Films

Despite the differences between experimental and traditional films, there are also many connections between the two. For example, both forms of filmmaking share a common interest in exploring the limits of the medium and pushing the boundaries of what is possible. They both use visual and auditory elements to create emotional and intellectual responses in the viewer, and they both seek to engage the audience on multiple levels.

However, experimental film is not as mainstream and popular as traditional films is that it can be more challenging and difficult for audiences to understand and appreciate. Often, "people don't like films when they don't fit in with Hollywood pattern [7]. There are many factors that contribute to this phenomenon. To begin with the complex artistry and ideology of experimental film. Experimental films usually pursue artistry and ideology, using unique forms of expression and technical techniques to explore the boundaries of film language and form. These works may contain abstract artistic elements, profound philosophical concepts, multiple interpretations of plots and characters, and have a profound impact on viewers' perceptions and emotions. However, this complexity may make it difficult for some audiences to understand and accept, thus limiting the audience for experimental films [8]. Compared with mainstream films, experimental films are usually more limited in terms of market size and resources. Experimental film works usually face challenges in terms of production costs, box office revenues, marketing and promotion, which are difficult to compare with mainstream films [9]. There are also relatively few venues for experimental films, and many experimental film works may only be shown in niche cinemas, art houses or film festivals, limiting their dissemination and visibility among mass audiences. Also, Experimental film works usually have strong cultural and linguistic characteristics and may contain culture- or region-specific symbols, metaphors and contexts, which place certain demands on the cultural background and linguistic ability of the audience. This may result in experimental films facing certain obstacles in cross-cultural and cross-linguistic dissemination, limiting their popularity on a global scale. Another challenge is the audiences' reliance on traditional film concepts and aesthetics. Experimental films usually pursue innovation and challenge traditional film concepts and aesthetic standards, and may employ techniques such as non-linear narratives, emphasis on form, and subversion of traditional film grammar, which challenge the audience's habits and expectations. Such subversion of traditional film concepts and aesthetics may cause some audiences to resist experimental films, thus limiting their acceptance and popularity among mass audiences. Inadequate publicity and promotion also act as an important factor. Compared with mainstream films, experimental films usually have less publicity and promotion efforts. Due to the limitations of experimental films in terms of market size and resources, filmmakers may not have enough funds and channels to conduct extensive publicity and promotion activities, thus limiting the visibility and audience of their works. This may also lead to a

lower exposure of experimental film productions to mass audiences, thus affecting their popularity. Moreover, experimental film requires a high level of moviegoing experience and cognitive engagement: Experimental film works usually require a certain level of moviegoing experience and cognitive engagement from the audience. Audiences need to interpret the artistic elements and ideological connotations of the works through in-depth understanding and experience of film language and forms. This may be a challenge for some audiences who have not received film school education or lack film appreciation experience, thus affecting their interest in and acceptance of experimental films. Experimental films usually reflect the director's profound reflections and explorations on social and cultural phenomena, but such reflections and explorations may differ to some extent from the social and cultural background of the audience. Some experimental film works may have deeper references and metaphors to specific social, historical or cultural contexts, which may be more difficult to understand for audiences unfamiliar with these contexts. Such social and cultural contextual constraints may limit the popularity of experimental films in a cross-cultural and cross-geographical context. Last but not least, experimental films do not cater commercialization and consumerist orientation. Experimental films usually emphasize independence, autonomy and artistry, and do not pursue commercialization and consumerist orientation. This is different from the trend of mainstream films to pursue commercial profits and popular tastes. Experimental film works may focus more on exploring and expressing the director's personal creativity and concepts rather than catering to the market and audience's needs. This lack of commercialization and consumerist orientation may make experimental films less commercially popular than mainstream films.

6. Contributions Experimental Film Made

Despite these challenges, experimental film has made significant contributions to the art of cinema. It has inspired new techniques and technologies for filmmaking, and it has helped to expand the range of creative possibilities within the medium. Experimental films have also been influential in shaping popular culture, with many of their visual and aesthetic elements being incorporated into music videos, advertisements, and other forms of media. Science fiction film has always been a popular genre among movie fans. The film "A Trip to the Moon" directed by Georges Méliès in 1902 is the ever first sci-fi film in movie history. At that time, technology and human development haven't allow people to make impressive sci-fi films. Georges Méliès was the first to experience this type of film using purely imagination. "A Trip to the Moon" certainly resonates. While the inspiration may not have been as immediate, a whole host of other works about space travel emerged in its wake. One could argue that the success of Star Wars, the Apollo series and countless others owe their success to Méliès' groundbreaking work [10]. Many experimental film works have received recognition and esteem in several international film festivals, art exhibitions and academic research. Some film directors and artists have explored their personal creative styles and expressed their unique artistic views through experimental film works, which have gained attention and praise from professional judges and academics. In addition, some experimental film works may be screened and promoted in niche cinemas, art theaters, independent film festivals, etc., attracting a certain amount of audience attention. And with the development of digital technology and the popularity of the Internet, experimental film works have also been given more opportunities to be displayed on online platforms. Some online film platforms, social media and art websites provide a wider distribution channel for experimental film works, enabling these works to reach a wider audience. In addition, some film festivals, film academic institutions and art organizations are also promoting the promotion and dissemination of experimental film works, facilitating the development of experimental film works in the art field. For filmmakers, experimental film offers a unique opportunity to explore the possibilities of the medium and to push the boundaries of what is possible. By experimenting with different techniques and approaches to filmmaking, filmmakers can create works that are truly original and groundbreaking. However, it is

important for filmmakers to remember that experimental film is not just about breaking the rules, but about creating works that are meaningful and engaging for audiences. For audiences, experimental film offers a chance to experience something new and exciting. While it may be challenging to understand and appreciate experimental films at first, they offer a chance to see cinema in a new light and to explore the many different ways in which the medium can be used to convey emotion and meaning. It is important for audiences to approach experimental film with an open mind and a willingness to engage with the film on its own terms, rather than expecting it to conform to traditional narrative structures or cinematic conventions.

7. Conclusions

In conclusion, experimental film is an important and significant form of cinematic expression that has made important contributions to the evolution and innovation of the medium. Although experimental film works may be relatively low in terms of commercial box office and public attention, they still play an important role in the film and art worlds as a unique form of cinematic art. By breaking away from traditional film language and forms and exploring new forms of artistic expression, experimental film works have enriched the diversity of film art and have had a positive impact on film creation and audience experience. It offers a unique opportunity for filmmakers and audiences alike to explore the many different possibilities of cinema and to push the boundaries of what is possible within the medium. By understanding the history and significance of experimental film, people can gain a greater appreciation for the art of cinema as a whole and for the many different ways in which it can be used to create meaningful and engaging works of art.

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