



# Construction of Urban Landscape in Films by Ning Hao

Suzhen Bai, Wenwen Pang

Northwest Normal University, Lanzhou 730070, Gansu, China

DOI: 10.32629/asc.v3i2.904

**Abstract:** As a new young director, Ning Hao has created a series of miracles with low-cost and high box office, and each work produced unexpected results with new visions among the audience, which is the concentrated embodiment of the director's unique artistic temperament, known as "director with unique ability" in the industry. From connotation to extension, his works are permeated with the strong tension of surprise. The personality based discourse based on his unique characteristics, such as focuses on sensitive topics as the film clips in shooting, cult expression of audio-visual language, extreme rhetoric of film space, discussion on human nature in post-modern context, is constantly rewriting the solidified cognition of film ontology. Therefore, this paper takes films by Ning Hao as an example to extract the urban landscape in his film space for in-depth analysis with comprehensive explanation on the urban landscape in his works from multiple perspectives, such as construction mode, existence state and expression form.

**Keywords:** Ning Hao, cult expression, postmodern, urban landscape, construction

## 1. Introduction

Ninghao re-demonstrate numerous phenomenal topics in current society with his unique "Ning style" humor to raise the questions such as what is the reality under representation, what is the meaning of love, what is the orientation of humanity under mainstream ideology, etc. Through the film's situational metaphorical writing, the author makes a profound reflection. The occurrence of these problems were brought about most based on the city that is regarded as a symbol of the evolution of modern civilization, and the city landscape, as the carrier of film narrative space, presents the madness and civilization, drama and historical facts, faith and reality, the presence and concealment of multidimensional attention.

This paper constructs the identity of "micro cult urban landscape" by presenting the characteristics of the diversified types of postmodern film expression, the blurred boundary of multiple value meaning, the cross intervention of multiple narrative incision, and the hidden expression of absence of presence. The author will take the film directed by Ning Hao as an example to further analyze the image construction of urban landscape in the film narrative.

## 2. Sideshow exposure in a mad age

Ning Hao's series films based on madness created miracles in high box office with unprecedented low cost with subtle narrative suture based on multi-clues, unique audio-visual language, stylized character group portrait, which, at the same time, presented us a different city landscape in today's society.

"Crazy Stone" (Hereinafter referred to as "Stone") and the "Crazy Racer" (Hereinafter referred to as "Racer") were made with urban landscape as the reference center of geographic coordinates. It pays homage to Guy Ritchie through multi-clue guidance and multiple narrative techniques., which is also mixed with Quentin Tarantino's cult expression, presenting part of the representation of cult films Through a serial theft case triggered by a "stone", the film "Stone" is stripped of layers of alternative landscapes such as factory ruins, temples and exhibition halls, underground pipelines and crime bases covered by modern urban civilization by the appearance of different characters, to form the multi-scene convergence based panoramic three-dimensional presentation of scenes with people to represent line, integration of multiple lines, and line to display scenes.

The rhetoric of black humor gives it a three-dimensional representation of the city with the crazy combination intention full of imagination, such as terror and violence, rebellious thoughts and decadent aesthetics, and then to simulate the flourishing landscape beyond the conventional concept in the form of repeated lens and multi-lateral exposure. Such an ablative structure, which uses multi-element hybrid vocabulary to give orientation to the pure meaning, not only diverges the specific reference of narrative ontology, but also further deconstructs the established identity of modern urban landscape.

The term "sideshow" originally refers to the acrobatics performed by a circus or busker. It is a kind of self-structure based on oneself rather than on the reaction of the audience. Eisenstein's sideshow based montage concept was integrated and sequenced in a certain manner to strip two scenes from different time and locations from original space continuity. It

creates a representation as a new quality, it creates concepts that are not inherent in the footage of the unedited film. They are not related to each other, but when they are put together at the will of the editor, they often go against their intention and produce something third and become related to each other

Ning Hao successfully interpreted the "sideshow" scenes through the two box office of "Crazy Stone" (Hereinafter referred to as "Stone") and "Crazy Racer" (Hereinafter referred to as "Racer") to realize the urban landscape constructed by the transcendent vocabulary of "1+1>2" and carried by the non-mainstream underlying reverse growth culture. However, its constructed form is contrary to the established aesthetic rules of the mainstream ideology. Racer was presented with juxtaposition and antagonistic presentation based on health care products, life time ban, drugs and bone ashes, police and gangsters. In a variety of ways, the author interpreted the phenomenological paradoxes that are difficult to find and reconcile in the city and the maligned landscapes hidden behind the formalization of civilization.

### **3. Occult reproduction of the central urban landscape**

Both "Mongolian Ping Pong" and "No Man's Land" are located in the geographic coordinate system far away from the central urban area, while the urban landscape is an imaginary construction hidden in the vast Mongolian steppe as well as a comparative construction in the primitive and savage no man's land. They show the desire, anxiety and access to modern urban landscape from different perspectives.

Unknown and imagination. "Mongolian Ping Pong" is a "proposition composition" about grassland, children and table tennis. At the beginning, a group photo of Mongolian families in modern clothes in front of Tian'anmen serves as the premise of the film. When the camera stretches to the panorama, it returns to the prairie fire and the vast Mongolian grassland. This situational description not only reflects the symbol of modern civilization — "photography" has broken the blockade layout of grassland culture. Tian'anmen in the background of Beijing is full of grassland people's expectation and desire for the capital — the central city scene. Table tennis is used as theatrical props to promote narrative development throughout the film. The process of discovery, definition, return and rupture releases the national cultural memory hidden deep in consciousness or subconscious and conflicts with the new cultural cognition all the time. This conflict, with the temporary victory of modern civilization, constructs their exploration and care of table-tennis and national ball, as well as their imagination of the unknown urban landscape. At the end of the whole story, Bilige step out of the grassland for the urban landscape that has always been accompanied by imagination. The sound of table tennis brings him into the contemporaneous presence space where he was absent before. This unknown representation of black screen is the confusion between modernity and tradition, center and edge, reality and imagination, which is also the reflection on the deep survival imagination space of urban landscape that symbolizes modern civilization.

Violence and civilization. Reviewing "No Man's Land", which is famous for its violent aesthetics, and "Mongolian Ping Pong", Ning Hao's works isolate the positive image of urban landscape from our visual range, leaving us the primitive and savage desert. Compared with the confusion brought to us by the urban landscape symbolizing modern civilization, what we present here is the deep temptation brought by such absent landscape under barbarism and violence. The film demonized the Western Sunshine, the hot, dry and smokeless desert, the night Paris full of animalistic, abnormal and humanoid creatures, and the desperate land of serial killing in the night journey. Through the hero Pan Xiao's death journey, the meaning of life, which is devoid of humanity, rekindled and redeemed by itself, and the urban landscape, which symbolizes modern civilization, are transformed from confrontation to unification.

However, urban landscape, as the incubation of modern civilization, can only be rationally constructed by corresponding entities because of its absent identity. Pan Xiao as representative of the modern urban civilization and representing the raw brutality of poaching by the comparative attention eldest brother "vegetarian" and "nonhuman" predatory extreme contrast between slit and Pan Xiao to destination and escape from trouble to action, we can easily find the corresponding entity prototype comparing the outline. The presentation of such violent landscape reflects the yearning of human beings for civilized society with a positive attitude and the praise of the spiritual value orientation constructed by the urban landscape verified by the end of life.

### **4. Dramatic expression of historical reality**

Ning Hao's "Guns and Roses" is a reflection of the previous crazy works "personal pleasure" advocating the "responsibility" of domestic narrative. With the help of the "Xiao Dongbei", that is, the growth motif of the grassroots image, the film constructs the grand national historical theme of the national narrative. As a serious subject full of revolutionary discourse, the author made a dramatic expression of it through his usual "Ning style humor".

The story takes place in the territory of the Puppet Manchukuo established by Japan's occupation of the Three Northeastern

provinces, and the city it occupies must also present a chaotic puppet landscape. However, the film constructs an exciting, tragic and dramatic wartime urban landscape through multiple linguistic models such as performational narration, dramatic characters and deconstructive scenes. The dramatization of the national principle hidden in the depth of the subconscious by floating form highlights the reconstruction of the national deification by the young directors from the perspective of post-modernism.

The expression mode of play within play. The overall design style of the film strengthens the sense of stage with artificial traces, and the members of the National Salvation Association, who are constructed as actors, present a new landscape for the dramatization of the film. The process of narration, a parody of Anti-Japanese War based urban landscape is constructed with the mode of play within play. When the National Salvation Council bought guns and ammunition to hijack the gold, and as they found to be cheated after the sword to go astray, their expertise was adopted to perform air raid drama, as a result, they successfully robbed gold. Drama was adopted to further strengthen the sensitivity and wisdom of Chinese anti-Japanese elements. Toyama yunosuke's game-style killing of the Chinese people's lives with trampling also further exposed their inhuman and sinister intentions.

The dramatic personal growth based story constructs the urban landscape in which the hero creates the national myth. "Xiao Dongbei", a marginal figure living at the bottom of the society, was forcibly bound to two people who had nothing to do with the heroic hero of national salvation. It transforms the character's growth trajectory from a thief — helper of the Protector — a dutiful son who avenges his father into a hero who saves the country. From a thief who deviated from the basic moral principles of society to a national hero who took up the banner of reversing the destiny of the country, he constructed the national myth of Chinese history in a dramatic way.

A deconstructive scene of a play. In the selection of scenes, the film mostly uses deconstruction to carry out multiple points of meaning, taking churches and rehearsal venues as examples. The church is mostly a place of soul redemption, where the author intentionally compares the soul redemption of God as a stolen treasury for thieves. Land-based processing into the national Rescue shelter; Symbolically treated as the burial place of his father in the Xiao Dongbei. Regards is not only as an actor rehearsals field, at the same time JiuGuoHui plotting performance hijacked gold to realize saving plans of military bases, the dramatic performance over serious significance for resisting Japan and saving the nation, finally realizes the pun intended to polysemy of deconstruction type scene narrative, and then build the multiple significance, pointing to the dramatic urban landscape.

## 5. Realistic criticism of lack of belief

As the carrier of social civilization, urban landscape bears and breeds the supreme spiritual belief. However, when the belief granted by modern civilization is linked with the fetishism of money, rights, interests and so on, the spiritual belief space constructed by the symbol of civilization collapses instantly, and the so-called belief is just the function tool of different interest objects. The author Ning Hao took "Incense" as an opportunity to adhere to the faith, and the faith of the young monk was transformed to be the guardian in the rural temple. In order to repair the collapsed Buddha statue in the temple, and solve the villager's evil of slaughtering sheep and the temple's lasting incense, he went to town every time to seek 3,000 yuan to repair the Buddha statue to complete his adherence to the faith. Because of the young monk's continuous pursuit and the failure of the end, the connotation of the faith in the urban landscape was rewrote with the construction of the image with the lack of connotation.

The existence of faith in urban landscape interprets its unique achievements of civilization evolution with various roles. By constructing the objective representation of the basic elements of the urban landscape: The objective representation of ordinary people and marginalized people in government temples to get money to repair Buddha statues reappeared the current lack of faith in the urban landscape given by civilization. For government faith and image construction characterization, when the young monk came to Buddhism and cultural relics under the jurisdiction of the government departments for fruit, the government's inaction is demonstrated by shirking responsibility to each other and they were advised to resale cultural relics in the name of the government, blatant duty blasphemy and Shouting in the face of the law. As a public official, what is the party spirit, what is the faith?

For a monk in an urbanized temple, where faith is a vested interest, the young monk again reaches out to his elder brother in the big city, who does not directly help him in his current predicament but rather urges him to leave and come to his own monastery. in fact is to change your beliefs to off-the-shelf survival means to make a living. It's a way of making a living out of faith. For the ordinary people in the city, they put their faith in the monks' mythological prophecy of the material world, and they realized their wishes by donating money. For prostitutes of the marginal class, it is to donate money to repair Buddha statues to achieve spiritual comfort. Whether it is political achievement, industry, mythological prophecy or spiritual

comfort, faith is admonished and dominated by the spiritual paradigm endowed by the urban landscape, which gives it a new meaning in the form of its religious shell.

Thus, we can see that the little monk's rejection not only shows the materialization tendency of human belief in the current society, but also shows the lack of belief in the urban landscape wrapped by the shell of civilization from another perspective. This so-called absence is not only the internal digestion of the ego but also the joint effect of circular radiation. The little monk's belief in the city wall is also declining in the temptation and frustration of the city. After the bad means of begging for alms, fortune-telling and cheating in the Yue Opera, the city wall that the belief sticks to completely collapses, even if it is to repair the Buddha statue, even if it is to continue the incense, but its essence has changed. The lack of faith and integrity and the breach of spiritual protection are the SINS that cannot be resolved by a clay statue of Buddha. What is the difference between mending the shell of faith by deception and the collapsed faith in the construction of urban landscape? Finally in order to accelerate the urbanization process to expand the road on the grounds of the demolition of the temple to destroy the last so-called religious body.

## 6. Conclusion

This paper takes the urban landscape in Ning Hao's films as the starting point of view and creates different urban landscape appearances through the visual presentation of different time and space. Moreover, the deep spiritual core elucidated by theme narration gives it the soul trend of crazy concealment drama and material reality outside the form.

## Acknowledgments

This paper is supported by the following projects: 2021 Young Teachers Research Ability Enhancement Program (Project No.NWNU-SKQN2021-33); Cultural Inheritance And Innovation Strategy Research Project of Intangible Cultural Heritage Animation Drama, Interior Decoration Engineering Renovation Project (Funding No.: 50090553).

## References

---

- [1] Zhao Yuexia. The awkward situation between "Freedom" and "Fusion" — Discussion on the writing of mongolian cultural situation in the film Mongolian Ping Pong[J]. *Journal of Inner Mongolia University for the Nationalities (Social Sciences)*. 2014; 4: 52-55.
- [2] Mari Currie, *Post-modern Narrative Theory*[M]. Translated by Ning Yizhong. Beijing: Peking University Press; 2003: 22.
- [3] Ning Hao, Zheng Dongtian, Jia Leilei, Yin Hong. Crazy Racer[J]. *Contemporary Film, "New Work Review"*, 2009; 3.
- [4] Tian Zhaoyao. Discussion on Eisenstein's Rational Montage Theory[J]. *The Artists*. 2004: 77.