Analysis of Visual Symbols Application in Film and Television Animations Creation

Tao Jia
School of Art and Design
Nanjing Institute of Technology
Nanjing, China
e-mail: 272853092@qq.com

Abstract—The visual design of an outstanding film and television animation has higher style and scene design effect and analyzes its cultural values by decoding the film images. By decoding the image elements, the theme and connotation can be mapped. The paper expounds the application and the importance of visual symbols in animation creation. The study puts forward constructive suggestions about the rational use of visual symbols by analyzing the features of visual symbols and scene design in animation production.

Keywords—visual symbol; film and television animation; style design; scene design

I. INTRODUCTION

The concept "symbol" refers to the way of using concrete things and images to reflect abstract ideas indirectly and represent or hint a thing. Or it can also be understood as a meaningful medium and referent to refer to another thing or things with other meanings. In addition, the concept of symbol also refers to using a simple code name to replace another complicated object or concept for convenience. [1] But the visual symbol is an abstract concept based on visual images, a special concept of the visual elements such as images or videos. Nowadays the revolutionary development in visual image field not only makes the visual language change from simple and concise representation to instrumental using, digitalization and the integrated application of multi-media gradually but also makes it stride greatly from plane and static modeling to timeless and network interaction and develops towards integrated media application pioneered by visual symbols.

The development of visual symbol language in modern times not only transcends the traditional drawing and design field but involves dynamic advertisement, film, television, and animations. The form and transmission of visual symbols with typical image features arguably have actually gone to the front and centre of human civilization landscape and the two elements play a more and more important role in information and culture communication. [2] Of course the animation production is also the case. The single study of visual symbols, film and television animations abounds in academic circle. Fruitful research results have been achieved theoretically and practically, although the discussion into the relationship between visual symbols and film and television animations is a bit deficient. How to build a mutual-aid bridge and whether there is necessity between them are topics of modern artists have to study. The two questions are urgent at present and also due to the times.

II. APPLICATION OF VISUAL SYMBOLS IN FILM AND TELEVISION ANIMATIONS

A. Application of Visual Symbols in Character Style Design

For animation creation, character style is often called animation style for short. Its status can be understood as that of actors in film and television works. That is to say, actors are the core communicators of the whole work. All the plot lines and the personalties etc. are mainly completed by characters. Character modeling is the visual center and soul of the whole animation. The excellent and classic animation production must be accompanied by successful character modeling. But a character modeling doesn't cause audience's emotional resonance and cannot precisely convey the work's inner spirit and connotation. Moreover, the results are necessarily not good enough from a business perspective. So the character modeling in animation production is very important.

Our ancestors already created various visual symbols subconsciously on the cave drawings belonging to the primitive society. For example, murals with very typical semiotic features made by primitive men were once discovered in Lascaux in Southern France. The wild boar with eight legs in the murals was the embryonic form of visual symbol application in animations. In fact, the visual symbol has existed since the appearance of primitive drawings. Nowadays with the human civilization's advance, the visual symbol as a cultural form is infiltrated into a variety of designs. Among them is the character modeling with typical features in animations which conveys the cultural values through visual symbols.

In the animation's character modeling process, induction, exaggeration and deformation are often seen and the character style with distinct personality is created depending on the plot. This modeling itself is a transformation from the concrete figure to abstract symbol. During the process we seek design generality. Regardless of design methods or devices, it is

finally shown to audience in the form of visual elements so the character modeling has the same meaning with the symbol.

In terms of the whole animation character modeling, the animation characters all have the visual symbol features regardless of those in early or modern period and from home or abroad. Designers always pursue the character's personality features, such as exaggerated style and props' personification which reflect visual symbol features in animation character modeling. To suit the audience's psychological needs and the film's market effect, choosing visual symbols in character modeling depends on specific script and region the animation style designer in every nation who seeks a feature fit for personality development and draws a different but unique character style based on personal situations and national cultural features. Take the early home animations for example: "landscapes" with ink style; "the nine-color deer" with Dunhuang frescos' characteristics; "Zhang fei shen gua" with shadow play features. Each modeling has its own unique style that cannot be repeated. The visual symbol features are the reflection of Chinese cultural connotation and the reflection of national visual symbols. In general, as for animation character design, whether the visual symbol's creation is clear and vivid has a direct influence on the overall visual style. It can be clearly judged whether it is a Chinese film or an American mental work.

The local visual image modeling of animation character's style is also of great significance. The local image is the symbol of animation character, in other words, the partial form of animation character has very important symbolic meaning and indicating functions and also has strong aesthetic function. Meanwhile, local style owns symbolic features. Props designed for the character style, dress forms of the character for different stages and the furnishing style all have effect on the whole film's success. For instance, the Totoro's modeling in animation of Hayao Miyazaki whose signifier lies in the fact that the animation in theatre conveys a lovely and honest, warm and generous magical elf image to audience; its signified element refers to the audience's psychological state and spiritual concept after seeing the film. The Totoro conveys the spirit "goodness, love, nature" and then digs a deeper meaning ---inspire a childhood resonance once looking familiar and a spirit image advocating mutual help.

B. Application of Visual Symbols in Scene Design

The scene design in animations often refers to providing background space design for the character's activity and plot development based on the script. It offers the basis for director's shot dispatch, the main moving body's dispatch, and the choices of viewpoint, visual horizon and visual angle along with the picture composition, landscape perspective relation, lighting variations and space imagination. Meanwhile it is also the direct reference of shot and background design. It can control and restrict the overall art style and guarantee the narrative rationality and preciseness of situational actions. [3] Scene design's whole and partial elements can't separate from visual symbols, that is, the overall scene design and local elements are all the reflection of the figure's visual symbols regardless of indoor or outdoor scenes, and concrete or abstract scenes.

Firstly, the animation scene design itself is the construction of virtual scene. It has no authenticity of film and television studio but gives a full play to the creators' imagination and creativity. It has great freedom and the feature of visual symbolization in the early stage of design and planning. It also has such feature during expressing and constructing scene style elements. The scene modeling is completed by outlining and dyeing. Line is not only the contour of style but the basic element of style. Both the line and the color are reflections of symbolization.

The visual symbolization feature is also reflected in animation scene manifestation. Some animations purely use color patches, that is, use plane and the symbolic meaning of colors to express the director's creative thinking. The size and form of the plane are used to express the scene form: applying warm and cold colors, saturation and color shadows expresses the symbolic meaning of the color. However, in terms of the form some animations purely use line manifestation which is more similar to straightforward style of drawing in Chinese painting needn't describe the scene's color. Using the thickness, length, denseness, actualities and color's temperature is a way of expressing the scene's structure, form and perspective relation. Such animation more often uses black line against white background or white line against black background to reflect the scene. Application of these form elements reflects strong visual symbolization with apparent characteristics and different styles, which is also an excellent way of short art creation.

Personality, feature and artistry are emphasized repeatedly in animation production so the unique picture styles like refined, rustic, and freehand and abstract in drawing scene have to be achieved. Different styles could bring different feelings to audience. [4] We should seek a suitable expression and form based on the script to make style choice. For instance, the question of what is the priority in making shadow animation should be taken into consideration. The style feature of shadow figures is often reflected and it is what we need absorb and use for reference in producing animations. We should emphasize the decorative, hollowed-out and light-transmitting features in scene creation. The scene should be made finely to reflect its artistry and decorative features. The ink effect is helpful to form the freehand style whereas the abstract style is achieved easily purely using elements like dot, line, plane and color patches. The animation's style surely lays a deep mark on this film based on the reflection of symbols. But the style itself is also a reflection of visual symbols.

III. RATIONAL APPLICATION OF VISUAL SYMBOLS

Different visual symbols are included in each film and television animation and different visual symbols can bring different film and television effect to the animation. Applying the visual symbols to film and television animations aims directly at having effective information communication. Film and television animations are a process where people convey values through symbol system. Symbols carry the information and determine the type and quality of information. So the orientation of visual symbols is extremely important in film and television animation production. If the orientation and

design of visual symbols is not proper, the metaphoric or indicating thing will not be clear which affects the overall animation effect. If the visual symbols are chosen properly, they can make the animation more perfect.

How to locate and design the visual symbols shown in animations correctly depends on the planning in early stage. But a basic principle must be followed. This means the visual symbols reflected and designed must contain some values. Good communication of cultural values and smooth information decoding should be achieved and a proper information context should be created. So it is necessary to make sure that the production is based on the cultural value centered by signifier and signified of visual symbols. From the symbolic information the audience can appreciate the film and television animation's completely with imagery thinking and analyze its rule of designing visual symbols rationally through logical thinking. The Principle is a macro guideline. On the basis of this accurate guideline the designer's imagination and creativity, excellent animations can only be produced.

IV. SUMMARY

Nowadays in view of the globalization trend of film and television animations' development and the aim of visual consumption, we see it as a transmission medium that necessarily has close link to the symbol system in communication studies. Different audience will have various animation needs. However, using symbols to start creation and then transforming these symbols into visual symbols reflected in animations to make the audience understand the language in film and television is a basic means that all the animation productions have to follow. Advance and development in science and technology can only change the eye effect of film and television animations, which makes us get short visual impact pleasure. But only the change of production thinking and the study and creation methods is the essential change. These changes can guide us towards the correct development direction of art production.

REFERENCES

[1] Zhang linhao. Meaning of products [M], China Building Industry Press, 2009, 13.

[2] Roland Barthes. Semiotic aesthetic [M], Shenyang: Liaoning People's Publishing House, 1987.

[3] Han Xinshun. The importance of spatial representations of scene design in in film and television animations[J], Film literature, 2007, 58.

[4] Jia Tao. Discussion into the expression form of scene in short art animation, Beauty and times[J],2010,123.