

## The ideographic function of color language in animated film works

Danni Shen<sup>1</sup>, Yu Dong<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Art College, Zhejiang Shuren University, Hangzhou, 310015, China

<sup>2</sup>Zhejiang Shuren University, Hangzhou, 310015, China

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**Abstract:** Color language and image language are two code systems. The reason why image language can't completely cover color language is that factors such as brightness and color in color will affect the effect of color in animation. Color can be used to convey information in film and television works. People have some conventional feelings about different colors. Color and language are similar and can form a combination. Color language and film and television language are two inseparable elements. This paper focuses on the use of color in animation from the perspectives of national cultural background, audience's psychological suggestion and social changes, and makes a multi-level study on the ideographic function of animation color language with reference to the color culture of film art. This paper deconstructs several concrete manifestations of the ideographic function of color language and its influencing factors, providing scientific and diversified reference basis for creating domestic films that better meet the spiritual needs of the audience and improving the humanistic artistry of domestic animation industry.

### 1. Introduction

In animated films, color is a different ideographic symbol and a self-centered way of transmitting information. First, there is a common relationship between color and concept. Second, color language has two kinds of relationships like common language. It differs from ordinary language in [1-2]: It has two characteristics: simulation and performance. Color language and image language are two different concepts, and image language cannot completely contain color language. Its expression and aggregation are given by life. In people's daily life, color and people have formed a very important influence. When watching animated films, people have had some experience in expressing color through life, and formed different intentions among different colors.

### 2. Connotation of color in animated films

#### 2.1. Visual truth and aesthetic value of color

Color in animated film works is a kind of artistic color, which comes from nature and real life, but it is not the true repetition and accumulation of objective colors, but the result of artists' aesthetic activities and a language factor in the works. The result of color beauty is revealed by visual purification of objective colors. Visual purification, "not only requires reflecting the essence of color beauty, but also shows the characteristics of artists' personality and aesthetic activities". In the art of film and television, the form and color in the picture are the basic elements of the visual effect, and they are also interdependent modeling means. Both form and color can play the roles of image recognition, information transmission, image building and emotion transmission.

#### 2.2. Emotional function and symbolism of color

The symbolic meaning of color is obvious. As one of the main components of visual language in film and television, its rich semantic connotation and denotation are manifested in three different levels, namely, the impression of beauty in visual feeling, and the stimulation of emotion and aesthetic color through color is reflected in the aesthetic feeling of the body as an aesthetic object. It is an indisputable fact that color can express feelings. It can be said that under the guidance of

symbols, the body will always cause emotional fluctuations with the change of color consciously or unconsciously through various ways such as association, simile and symbol [3]. The third level of color semantics, that is, its overall symbolic meaning in structure, prominently reflects the accumulation of culture, and forms a confirmation and indication among society, history, individuals and groups.

### 3. Factors affecting the ideographic function of animation color language

#### 3.1. Psychological suggestion

We can see that many excellent animation works, under the sound and light flow shadow, all contain profound cultural connotations, and social life and humanistic tradition inevitably affect the creation of animation. However, the research on the ideographic function of animation color includes not only cultural aspects, but also sensory psychological aspects.

The cognition of color is generally based on concrete objects, and it can also be based on the correlation between color and specific objects, which makes people have psychological association. Long-term social life makes the intrinsic values and characteristics of some objects have formed a specific universal consensus and inherent association relationship, which is also called human psychological suggestion [4]. The ideographic function of color formed by people's psychological suggestion is mainly based on two points: one is the general cognition of objective reality color, and the other is the proper integration of the meaning of color given subjectively to animation color and specific situation.



Figure 1 Wind valley forest



Figure 2 Totoro stills

Green is the color of nature. It symbolizes life, spring and freshness, because the green plants we come into contact with in life give us these feelings and experience. For example, the mysterious dense forest in the valley of the wind, the beautiful natural landscape of Prada (Figure 1), the towering trees where Totoro lives (Figure 2) and the beautiful countryside, etc. In the picture, a large forest is taken as the background, and the colors are mostly green and blue. The multi-level performance creates a kind of visual effect, which causes the audience's spiritual impact.

#### 3.2. Cultural practices

People have different cultural backgrounds and living environments, and their understanding of color is different. The use of color in cartoons is also very different. These color understandings produced by different ethnic groups, different regions, different religious traditions and other factors make the color connotation in animated films have the ideographic function with regional differences formed by cultural customs.

### **3.3. Times change**

The color language of animation is changing quietly with the artistic evolution in different periods. Western classical painting advocates truth and nature in color, shape and light, and focuses on the unity of the relationship between shape and color. Later, in impressionism painting school, color developed from classical painting to modern painting language itself, that is, it became the main body of painting art. Later, the artistic style developed from abstractionism to expressionism, and the position of color in painting gradually developed from the subject to the whole, from reappearing objective nature to expressing people's subjective spirit, which truly showed the artist's unique feelings about the real world and the complex and subtle inner world [5].

## **4. The ideographic function of color language in animated film works**

### **4.1. Symbolic and metaphorical functions**

Color is undoubtedly encoded as a visual language element in animated films. On the one hand, like other language elements, it has visual rhetorical functions such as symbolism, metaphor, juxtaposition, repetition and ellipsis. On the other hand, these rhetorical functions are accomplished through the special ideographic system of visual language. Therefore, creators with modern film concept and humanistic consciousness pay more attention to the role of film visual modeling language in transmitting information and language rhetoric function. From a certain point of view, the visual language in animated films can vividly and profoundly reveal a philosophy full of life sentiment than the character language.

In the Russian animated film *Butterfly*, at first an orange butterfly was flying freely in the golden sunshine, but a bright yellow net held by a little boy approached the butterfly and caught it and put it in a bottle. At this time, there were many butterflies of various colors in the bottle, which were mixed in various colors and were all beating uneasily, trying to fly out of the bottle. Suddenly, a red butterfly in the bottle became huge, broke the bottle and flew out to attack the boy. So the whole screen becomes a colorful butterfly world. The creator intends to use this exaggerated color technique to metaphor the punishment of animals and plants in nature for human beings.

### **4.2. Spatial ideographic function**

The elements such as background, characters, stories and plots in animated films objectively create a space, which not only has one side we see through our eyes, but also has a deep meaning hidden behind the film picture. And color is the biggest carrier of the deep meaning of animated film space. Because color is more independent than plot, characters and other elements, it can get rid of their shackles and open up a new space. The original plot, characters and so on can get better development in this new space [6].

For example, in the Japanese cartoon *Cowboy Bebop*, color and black-and-white interweaving are adopted. When the hero recalls the past, he uses black and white, while when he expresses real life, he uses color. However, with the development of the film, many magnificent and wonderful colors were added to the original black and white screen in the part of memories of the past. It is intended to show the interweaving of memories and reality. Another example is *The Prince of Egypt*, which interweaves real space and fantasy space. When Moses knew that he was not an Egyptian prince, but an enslaved Hebrew, he couldn't accept this reality and hid in a corner of the palace and entered a dream. The color of the whole dream is red, yellow and black, which narrates the Egyptian Pharaoh's massacre of Hebrews. The reason why three colors are used is to show the complex emotional changes of Moses in illusion, and to realize the deep depiction of characters in a new space.

### **4.3. Narrative function**

As a visual modeling element, the most fundamental purpose of animation color is to shape the characters and reproduce the story situation, so as to promote the development of the story plot and vividly describe the story content, and finally affect the inner activities of the viewers. With the help

of animation, color breaks through and creatively describes and grasps typical images, and increases narrative methods and expression means of typical images, thus diversifying them. Color language not only conveys the content of the film story, but also presents diversified visual feelings.



Figure 3 Stories under cherry blossoms

In terms of narrative structure, the film 5 centers per second belongs to the three-stage type. The film uses the difference of color to realize the three-stage segmentation perfectly in the visual audio-visual presentation. The scenery in the first section of stories under cherry blooms (Fig. 3) is based on the scenery of thousands of Yanxia photographed by saijing line, Yudu palace line and Liangmao line. It describes the feelings of love between Guishu and Mingli when they were young and the day when they met again. When the scene is drawn, the color expression is quite different from the previous two paragraphs, which depicts the inner hesitation and confusion of Guishu and Mingli when they grow up. This relatively independent conception of story color mainly depends on the requirements of story narration, and the arrangement of color application also accords with the structural characteristics of narrative paragraphs.

#### 4.4. Time performance function

In literary language, narration shows the time aspect of things' changes and plot development, while description focuses on the space aspect of things' stability. From the aspect of artistic form, it can be divided into time art (music, poetry) and space art (painting, sculpture). The particularity of film art makes it integrate the time and space expression of literature and art. In the movement of animated film, the color of animated film transcends the space limitation of other artistic colors and has the function of time expression.

In order to show different times and times in a film at the same time, creators often choose two color forms, black and white and color. Through two different color discourses, they describe the water-like changes of time, divide the different characteristics of times, and show the galloping spatial imagination. The black-and-white color interweaving structure shows the characteristics of animated film color in time variation [7]. Animation film is an art of time (motion) and space (vision) unification, and the potential of color language is various in time/space expression of animation film, which needs to be further explored. The concept and expression scope of modern animated films have long been based not only on the space and time we live in, but also on the human spiritual space from the real space. In this way, the color of animated films will be more colorful in time and space, and also show the infinite charm of animated films.

#### 4.5. Emotional ideographic function

The psychological effect of color in animated films exists in the audience's subconscious. When color is consistent with the plot and atmosphere of the film, the psychology, emotion and emotion in the film are externalized by means of color.

For example, in the Japanese animated film *perfect blue*, the protagonist Weima was originally a member of a beautiful girl group. Together with this group, she became popular in Japan. *Perfect Blue* was full of warm colors at first, and the yellow furniture and colorful posters created a relaxed and warm environment. However, as time goes by, everything in *Perfect Blue* seems to fade away

and gradually become cold and dark. The change of color is organically integrated with Weima's life and inner changes. That is to say, today's animated films are no longer simple storytellers in the past, but gradually return to the fundamental purpose of artistic creation, that is, the expression of emotions. Color itself has emotional color, and once it matches with the emotion of the film, it can make the depiction and expression of this emotion deeper.

## 5. Conclusions

In a word, the reason why color can be used as a language is that color has certain expressiveness and simulacrity, and color can be used to realize the combination of language; In particular, the color combination forms used in the color language of the screen are obtained on the basis of daily life, and people have formed the color understanding of some things in life. Therefore, in animated films, different colors can express different themes. The collocation of colors in a single composition can present a sense of space, and different colors give people a strong visual impact in opposition, thus promoting the development of the story. Color matching between pictures or lenses fuses different colors together, which can make the pictures coherent, make the pictures not particularly abrupt, and connect the pictures organically.

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