

# Current Research Status and Development Trends of Chinese Film Aesthetics (2000–2025) —Visual Analysis Based on CiteSpace

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## Abstract

This paper systematically reviews the current research status, knowledge structure, and development trends in the field of Chinese film aesthetics from 2000 to 2025, reveals key research topics, evolutionary pathways, and future directions in this field, and provides a reference for theoretical innovation in Chinese film aesthetics and the development of film culture in China. Utilizing the CiteSpace and CNKI visualization analysis tools, this study takes 394 core literature articles related to Chinese film aesthetics indexed in the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database from 2000 to 2025 as its research object, constructs a knowledge graph, and conducts bibliometric analysis from multiple dimensions, including the number of publications, disciplinary distribution, core authors, research institutions, highly cited papers, frequently used keywords, and key research topics. The analysis leads to the following three conclusions: (1) From 2000 to 2025, research on Chinese film aesthetics has exhibited a sustained growth trend, which can be divided into three developmental stages: initial exploration, rapid growth, and deepening and expansion; the number of publications shows strong synchronization with national film industry policies, the process of film industrialization, and advancements in digital technology; (2) Research efforts are primarily concentrated at universities and research institutions such as Peking University, Beijing Film Academy, and Shanghai University, forming a core research community represented by scholars like Chen Xuguang and Rao Shuguang; however, the collaboration network among authors and institutions remains relatively fragmented, indicating significant room for improvement in cross-institutional collaborative research; (3) Research hotspots have evolved from traditional topics such as "Chinese cinema," "film aesthetics," "nationalization," and "realism" toward directions including "industrial aesthetics," "communal aesthetics," "digital cinema," "film industry," and "cultural digitization," reflecting a shift in Chinese film aesthetics research from traditional theoretical interpretation toward industrial practice, integration with digital technologies, and interdisciplinary development.

## Keywords

Chinese film aesthetics; CiteSpace; knowledge graph; bibliometrics; research hotspots; development trends

## I. Introduction

Over the 120-year development of Chinese cinema, it has been deeply influenced by traditional Chinese aesthetic concepts, integrating inherited aesthetic tastes and aesthetic ideas into its works [1]. Since entering the 21st century, amid the rapid advancement of the film industry, digital technologies, and the globalized cultural context, film aesthetics have undergone continuous reshaping and redefinition, while Chinese film aesthetics have also experienced significant transformation and expansion. On one hand, based on a review and reflection of China's film develop-

ment trajectory and creative history, scholars have sought to uncover the underlying principles of film aesthetics and summarized relevant experiences from film creation and practice; on the other hand, greater emphasis has been placed on drawing inspiration from China's excellent traditional culture to enrich the content of film aesthetics; simultaneously, in advancing the construction of film aesthetics, scholars have studied Western film aesthetics theories to continually broaden new perspectives in this field [2]. With the disciplinary development of film studies, numerous scholars in the field of Chinese film aesthetics

have conducted research from various angles—covering areas such as industrial criticism, genre studies, cultural analysis, and philosophy of technology—accumulating substantial scholarly achievements. However, existing research lacks a systematic overview of the evolutionary path of Chinese film aesthetics as an integrated conceptual framework since the beginning of the new century, as well as macro-level descriptions and empirical support grounded in big data.

At present, Chinese cinema is undergoing a critical transition from being a major film country to a strong film nation. Research on film aesthetics not only pertains to the development of film art theory but also relates to enhancing the country's cultural soft power and its capacity for international dissemination of Chinese culture. Existing studies have predominantly explored this topic from single perspectives such as film texts, directorial creativity, aesthetic thought, or industry development, yet they often lack a systematic review of the overall developmental trajectory and knowledge structure of Chinese film aesthetics research based on bibliometric methods. This paper employs the CiteSpace knowledge graph technique to conduct a visual analysis of research outcomes on Chinese film aesthetics from 2000 to 2025, systematically revealing key research topics, knowledge evolution pathways, and academic collaboration networks. Such an analysis not only helps in comprehensively understanding the current state and future trends of this field but also provides data support and theoretical references for theoretical innovation in film aesthetics, the high-quality development of the film industry, and the establishment of a Chinese film aesthetics system within the context of the cultural digitalization strategy.

## II. Data Collection and Research Methods

### (1) Data Collection

The samples used in this study were sourced from the CNKI database. Through a search conducted with the time range set from January 1, 2000, to December 31, 2025, using "中国电影美学" as the keyword, a total of 412 search results were obtained. To ensure the quality of the literature, each search record was reviewed and evaluated individually, and articles such as editorials, work introductions, duplicate entries, and those with low relevance to Chinese film aesthetics research were manually excluded, resulting in 394 effective literature entries. Through the search and screening process, it was found that the earliest published literature in the CNKI core database dates back to 2000. Given the temporal constraints of this study, the literature search for this paper was terminated on December 31, 2025. Therefore, the analysis in this paper focuses on literature published between January 1, 2000, and December 31, 2025.

### (2) Research Methods

CiteSpace is a tool for academic bibliometric analysis and knowledge graph visualization, capable of tracking and presenting research hotspots and trend evolution across different periods in academic fields, transforming relevant data into a knowledge graph, and subsequently conducting in-depth analysis of the nodes and edges within the graph. This study employs bibliometric methods and knowledge graph techniques, utilizing Chinese core journals from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database as sources, with 394 selected articles serving as the analytical sample. Using the CiteSpace software and CNKI's built-in visualization tools, we performed keyword co-occurrence analysis and constructed a knowledge graph. The RefWorks-format text exported from CNKI was standardized by assigning all data files the uniform filename "download\_xx.txt" to ensure compatibility with the software. Based on the CiteSpace software, we conducted visual analysis of the research literature using the following parameters: Time Slicing = from 2000 to 2025; Years Per Slice = 1 (aligning the time interval with the research literature); Node Types = Author/Institution/Keyword (in this order); the g-index algorithm was used to set the threshold Top N = 50; Links (the association strength between network nodes) was set using the Cosine algorithm; and Pruning (the network pruning method) was selected as Pathfinder-Network. The 394 screened literature sources were subjected to visual processing to analyze the research hotspots and development trends in Chinese film aesthetics.

## III. Analysis of Current Research Status

### (1) Number of publications

Based on the search results from the CNKI database, a year-by-year distribution map of the number of publications (Figure 1) can be obtained, which illustrates the publication volume of literature on Chinese film aesthetics research from 2000 to 2025. As shown in the figure, the overall trend is upward, with the development process divided into three stages: a slow initial phase, a fluctuating growth phase, and a rapid development phase.

The initial stage (2000–2007): During this period, the aesthetics of Chinese cinema experienced a phase of stable continuity, with an overall relatively low level of development and minimal fluctuations between years. On March 25, 2000, the "Seminar on Film Aesthetics in the 21st Century" was held at the Beijing Radio and Television University, where numerous scholars and experts discussed the evolution of Chinese film aesthetics. Hu Zhifeng, deputy editor-in-chief of *Modern Communication*, distinguished between the concepts of film and television aesthetics and film and television culture, clarifying their relationship; Professor Liu Jinan, president of the Beijing Radio and Television University, pointed out that

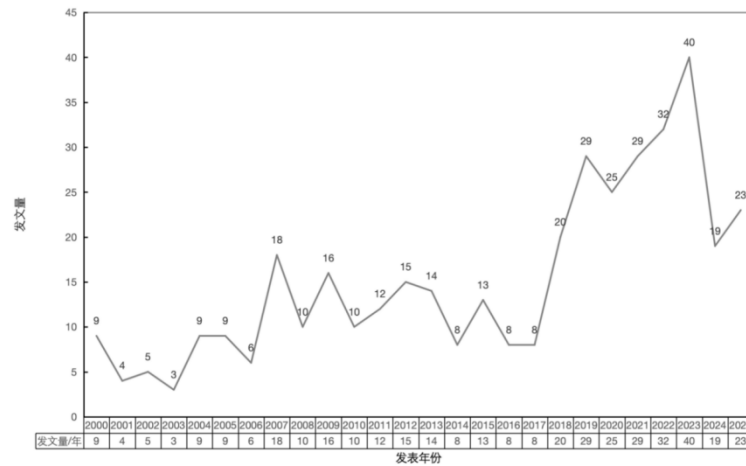


Figure 1. Distribution of Literature Count

since the Third Plenary Session of the 11th Central Committee of the Communist Party of China, Chinese cinema has made significant progress, yet its film industry has also faced challenges from foreign blockbusters. China boasts a long history, rich cultural heritage, and profound aesthetic traditions, which have provided a wealth of aesthetic foundations for film creation, enabling Chinese cinema to secure a place on the global stage. At the same time, globalization has brought not only opportunities but also competitive pressure from the international film industry. In 2002, \*Hero\* marked the beginning of the "blockbuster era" for Chinese cinema, attempting to rival Hollywood through large investments, star-studded casts, and Chinese-style visual spectacles. The collision between the old paradigm and new forces resulted in academic circles responding to this industry phenomenon with delayed reactions compared to practical developments. During this stage, aesthetic theories laid the groundwork for subsequent research on Chinese film aesthetics.

**The Growth Period:** From 2007 to 2016 marked a golden decade for China's film industry, characterized by profound transformation and explosive growth. During this period, the aesthetic landscape of Chinese cinema underwent significant and complex shifts under the interplay of multiple forces—including surging industrial investment, evolving social and cultural dynamics, and systematic guidance from national policies. The core trajectory shifted gradually from the blockbuster aesthetic centered on visual spectacle and cultural symbols to one featuring diverse genres coexisting and converging into a "new mainstream cinematic aesthetics" that integrates mainstream values with high technical standards. This aesthetic evolution was closely intertwined with the policy shift at the national level during the same period—moving from macro-level guidance to targeted support, and from market cultivation to industrial legislation—collectively outlining the pivotal decade in which China's film industry transitioned from scale to strength [3]. The

spectacle-oriented aesthetics exemplified by films such as 《英雄》 and 《赤壁》, along with their accompanying ritualized performances, initially gained market traction but gradually showed signs of fatigue. Subsequently, driven by the influx of internet capital and IP management strategies, the film ecosystem shifted toward diversified exploration between 2012 and 2015, witnessing not only a wave of youth-oriented films led by 《致青春》, but also a resurgence of documentary-style performance aesthetics represented by 《白日焰火》 and 《归来》, focusing on individual authenticity and profound human themes. Ultimately, with 《湄公河行动》 (2016) serving as a turning point, the "new mainstream blockbuster" aesthetic paradigm—successfully integrating mainstream values, high technical specifications, and genre narratives—was established. Concurrently, industrial policies completed a systematic evolution, progressing from basic economic support to systematic legislative safeguards, and finally to strategic directional guidance. In 2015, the "Film Industry Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China (Draft)" was reviewed and approved by the State Council and officially implemented in 2017; its core spirit of balancing regulation with deregulation has laid a legal foundation for the film industry. Meanwhile, the "Going Global" strategy drives aesthetic enhancement and international recognition through cultural exports. The two approaches are deeply interconnected: the market and institutional space created by policy measures serve as the prerequisite for aesthetic experimentation, while the aesthetic success of films such as 《湄公河行动》 further validates and reinforces the policy orientation of achieving a balance between social and economic benefits, jointly propelling Chinese cinema toward a path supported by a modern industrial system and seeking its core identity.

A new phase marked by broad recognition of liquidity value.

**Development Period:** As shown in the figure, the number of publications experienced rapid growth from 2017 to

2019, saw a slight decline in 2020, reached its peak in 2023, and remained significantly above the previous average level overall. This reflects the high activity level within the academic community, which aligns with the major transformations in China's film industry and the key process of theoretical construction. In 2017, under the macro-level favorable conditions created by the implementation of the "Film Industry Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China," China's film industry achieved landmark accomplishments. At the China Film Forum held at the Golden Rooster and Hundred Flowers Film Festival, Chen Xuguang first proposed the "Film Industrial Aesthetics" principle [4], aiming to enhance the industrialization level of domestic films, promote the building of a strong film nation, and construct a film aesthetic system that conforms to the social operational mechanisms in the new era. In December of the same year, at the high-level forum titled "Welcoming the New Era of Chinese Cinema—Industrial Upgrading and Construction of Industrial Aesthetics" organized by Peking University, Rao Shuguang argued that China's film industry has entered a new era, where industrial upgrading and its comprehensive transformation, along with the establishment of industrial aesthetic norms and systems, represent an inevitable trend [5]. In 2018, film industry experts introduced the concept of "Community Aesthetics," whose core lies in the long-term interaction, communication, and negotiation between films and audiences, forming a "contractual" relationship that attracts audiences to join such a "community." After 2020, China's film industry gradually recovered; in November 2021, the National Film Administration released the "14th Five-Year Plan for China's Film Development" [6], which aims to promote the high-quality development of Chinese cinema and build a strong film nation. The discussion emphasized the upgrading of the film industry, technological innovation, and the development of an aes-

thetic framework, thereby stimulating academic interest in film aesthetics, industrial aesthetics, and related cutting-edge topics, and promoting an increase in the volume of published literature. With advancements in digital technology, film aesthetics has evolved from a "realistic aesthetic" toward virtual reality, strange visuals, multimodal perception, and immersive experiences, forging new interactive and aesthetic relationships among reality, imagery, and the audience.[7] The General Office of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of China and the General Office of the State Council have issued the "Opinions on Promoting the Implementation of the National Cultural Digitalization Strategy" [8], which outlines the direction for digital transformation and upgrading.

## (2) Subject Distribution

Based on the literature retrieval results concerning Chinese film aesthetics from the CNKI database, we conducted a visual analysis of their disciplinary distribution (Figure 2). This analysis focuses solely on the top 10 disciplines, which primarily include: Drama, Film and Television Arts; Cultural Economics; Modern and Contemporary Chinese History; Aesthetics Publishing; Computer Software and Applications; Biographies; Chinese Literature, Journalism and Media; and Music and Dance—totaling ten disciplines. Among these, the discipline of Drama, Film and Television Arts accounts for the highest proportion at 89.98%; Cultural Economics ranks second with a share of 4.66%; and Modern and Contemporary Chinese History ranks third with a share of 1.40%. The other prominent disciplines are Aesthetics Publishing, Computer Software and Applications, Biographies, Chinese Literature, Journalism and Media, and Music and Dance. Overall, relevant research efforts are clearly concentrated in the field of film and television arts.

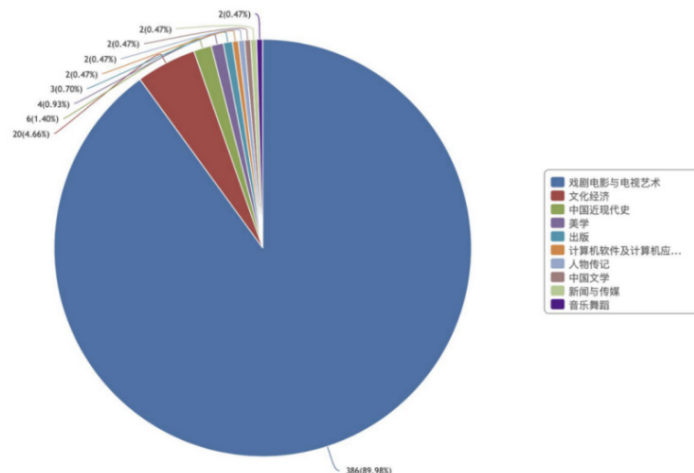


Figure 2. Subject Distribution Map

## (3) Analysis of Core Authors and Institutions

### 1. Core Author

The core author serves as a key indicator for measuring research strength and continuity within a disciplinary



field. A co-authorship network map was generated (Figure 3). According to Price's Law (Equation 1) [9], the number of published papers must be at least  $M_p$ , where  $M_p$  represents the core author; here,  $N_{pmax}$  denotes the maximum number of publications among all authors in the sample data. In this study, the highest-productivity author published 18 papers, yielding  $M_p = 3.176$ ; therefore, authors with 4 or more publications can be identified as core authors. Authors with a publication count  $\geq 4$  were statistically analyzed (see Figure 4), revealing that there are 20 core authors across this field. Analysis of the co-authorship network map shows that the network contains 319 author nodes and 214 edges, with a network density of only 0.0042 and a clustering coefficient of 0.7727. Generally, the Q-value falls within the interval  $[0, 1]$ ; a Q-value  $> 0.3$  indicates that the resulting community structure

is statistically significant [10]. Examination of the node sizes and connection density in the co-authorship network reflects the publication volume of authors within this field and their collaborative relationships; overall, the network appears relatively dispersed, with no tightly knit scientific collaboration network yet established among the authors. Collaborations primarily occur between pairs or within small-scale groups, while cross-institutional and cross-team collaborative research requires further strengthening. The largest subnetwork in the co-authorship network centers around Chen Xuguang, with associated authors including Wang Haizhou (8 papers), Fan Zhizhong (7 papers), Nie Wei (5 papers), Li Li (5 papers), Zhang Wei (3 papers), Li Yang (2 papers), Wu Ershan (1 paper), Yang Yu (1 paper), and Liu Yiyi (1 paper), among others.

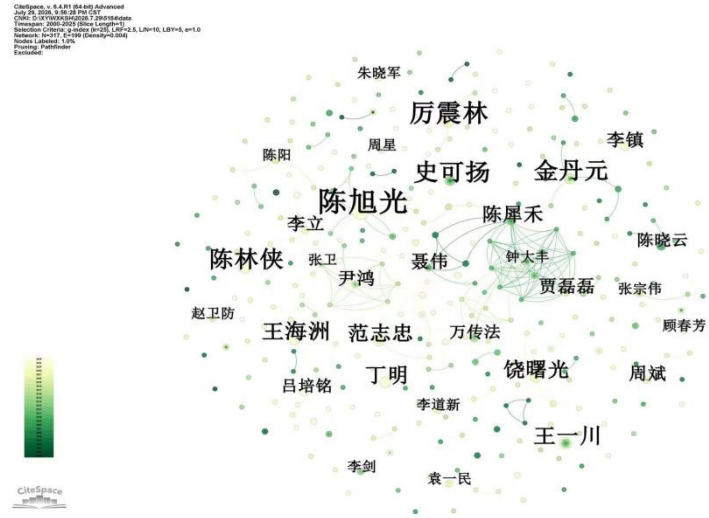


Figure 3. Collaboration Network of Literature Authors

$$M_p \approx 0.749(\sqrt{N_{pmax}})$$

(1)

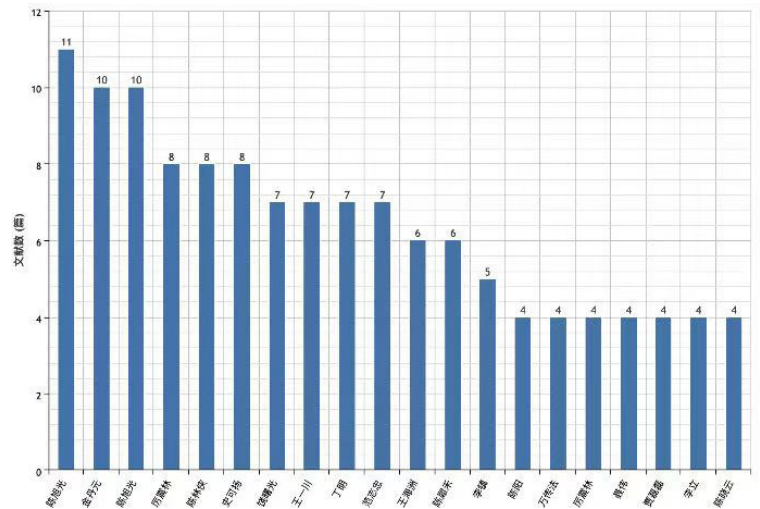


Figure 4. List of core authors

## 2. Issuing Authority

By using CiteSpace software to analyze the publishing institutions, we can obtain a collaborative co-occurrence network map of these institutions (see Figure 5), as well as identify research institutions with an occurrence frequency greater than or equal to 4 (see Figure 6). The network in this map contains 258 nodes and 187 edges, with a network density of 0.0056; the number of nodes represents the total number of research institutions in this field. Analysis of 394 literature samples reveals that studies on Chinese film aesthetics involve 258 research institutions; the number of edges indicates the frequency of collaborations between these institutions—there are 187 edges connecting the nodes, demonstrating that certain cooperative relationships have already been established among these institutions; the network density of 0.0056 suggests that the overall level of collaboration among these institutions is relatively low. Based on the ranking

of publication volume, the top 10 research institutions are: School of Art, Peking University; Shanghai Film Academy, Shanghai University; China Film Culture Research Institute, Beijing Film Academy; School of Film and Television Art Technology, Shanghai University; Shanghai Theatre Academy; Beijing Film Academy; School of Arts and Media, Beijing Normal University; Chinese Film Critics Association; Chinese Academy of Arts; and School of Drama and Film, Communication University of China. From the perspective of distribution characteristics of research entities, higher education institutions constitute the primary research base in this field. Among the top 10 institutions by publication volume, 8 are universities, and their cumulative publication output is also quite substantial. The institutions with the highest publication volumes are highly concentrated in Beijing and Shanghai, whereas those from other regions have relatively fewer publications.

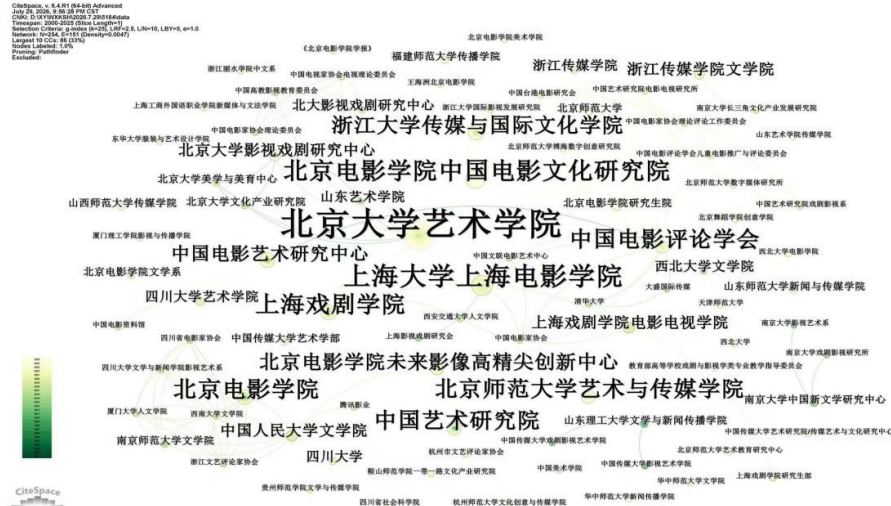


Figure 5. Research Institution Collaboration Network

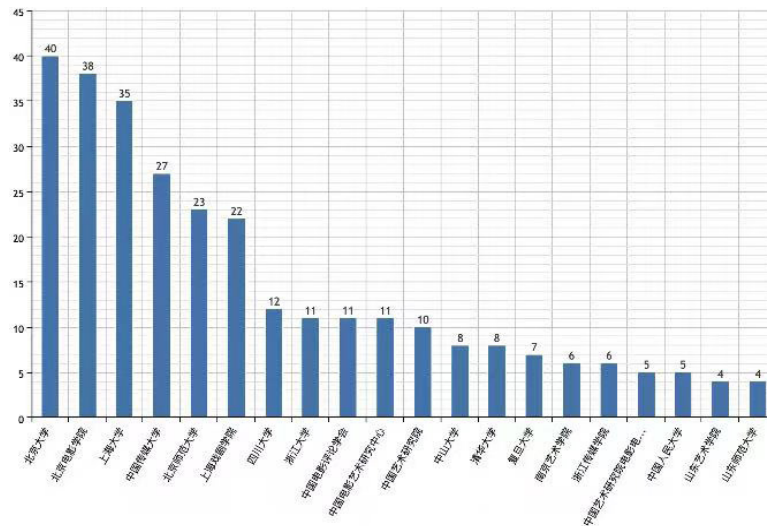


Figure 6. Research Institutions

## IV. Analysis of Research Hotspots and Trends

### (1) Analysis of Research Hotspots

#### 1. High-frequency keyword analysis

Keyword co-occurrence analysis can reflect the core issues and knowledge structure within a specific research field. Based on CiteSpace, a keyword co-occurrence analysis was conducted on 394 sample literature articles, resulting

in a keyword co-occurrence network map of Chinese film aesthetics research. The map (see Figure 7) shows that the number of network nodes  $N = 415$ , the number of connections  $E = 748$ , and the network density  $Density = 0.0087$ , indicating that certain associations have already formed among keywords in this field, but the overall network structure remains relatively loose, with research themes exhibiting a diversified development pattern.



Figure 7. High-frequency word display

From the perspective of keyword frequency, terms such as “中国电影”、“电影美学”、“美学”、“电影艺术”、“电影”、“中国美学”、“意境”、“现实主义”、“电影表演” and “民族化” appear with relatively high frequencies. Among these, “中国电影” and “电影美学” not only exhibit high occurrence rates but also demonstrate significant mediating centrality, indicating that they play a crucial bridging role within the overall knowledge network and represent long-standing and stable core research themes in this field. As a central keyword, “中国电影” reflects the subjective nature of the research subject, with related studies primarily focusing on the development trajectory of Chinese cinema, its aesthetic characteristics, cultural identity, and international dissemination; whereas “电影美学” embodies the theoretical foundation of this field, addressing issues such as the principles of film art, aesthetic expression, and the construction of an aesthetic system. The emergence of keywords like “中国美学”、“意境”、 and “民族化” indicates that research on Chinese cinematic aesthetics has consistently emphasized the modern transformation of traditional cultural resources and highlighted the integration of China's traditional aesthetic spirit with film artistic expression. Meanwhile, in recent years, terms such as “电影工业”、“工业美学”、“共同体美学” and “数字电影” have gradually become

new research hotspots. This suggests that research on Chinese cinematic aesthetics is moving beyond the traditional artistic analysis paradigm, shifting from a focus solely on visual texts and artistic styles to increasingly comprehensive issues such as the film production system, industrial structure, technological transformations, and audience relations.

Overall, the research focus on Chinese film aesthetics has evolved from "art ontology studies" to "industrial system studies," and further to "digital technology and cultural integration studies," reflecting the continuous expansion of both the subject matter and theoretical boundaries of film aesthetics research in the new era.

#### 2. Analysis of Highly Cited Literature

High-cited papers can reflect the important theoretical achievements and knowledge foundation in a specific research field. Analysis of the citation frequencies of sample papers reveals that high-cited papers in the field of film aesthetics research in China are primarily concentrated in areas such as film aesthetics theory, the development path of Chinese cinema, film industrialization, and the construction of film theory in the new era.

From the perspective of research themes, high-impact literature primarily covers the following areas:

First, research on the construction of China's film aesthet-



ics theoretical system. Such studies focus on the theoretical origins, developmental logic, and national characteristics of Chinese film aesthetics, emphasizing that Chinese film aesthetics is not merely a localized application of Western film theory, but rather a distinctive theoretical system formed on the basis of traditional Chinese culture, aesthetic thought, and film practice.

Second, research on film industry aesthetics. With the rapid development of China's film industry, film industrialization has become a significant research focus in recent years. Relevant studies argue that the film industry not only entails the refinement of production processes and technical systems but also involves the coordination and integration of cinematic artistic principles, commercial logic, and aesthetic value. The introduction of the concept of "film industry aesthetics" has propelled Chinese film aesthetics research from the level of artistic expression to broader dimensions encompassing production mechanisms and industrial frameworks.

Third, research on community aesthetics. In recent years, "community aesthetics" has become an important concept in Chinese film theory research. This theory emphasizes the interactive relationship among film creation, industry development, and audience reception, positing that film is not merely an artistic expression form but also a cultural community that connects creators, the market, and audiences.

Analysis of highly cited literature reveals that the development of film aesthetics research in China has not followed a single theoretical path, but has evolved continuously under the combined influence of traditional aesthetics, the film industry, and the socio-cultural environment.

## (2) Research Trend Analysis

### 1. Keyword Time-based Clustering Analysis

Keyword time-based clustering analysis can reveal the dynamic evolution of research themes over time. By combining keyword co-occurrence networks with timeline analysis, it becomes evident that research on Chinese film aesthetics has roughly undergone three distinct stages from 2000 to 2025.

Phase One: 2000–2007 – The stage of traditional film aesthetics and nationalization exploration. In the early 21st century, research on Chinese film aesthetics primarily focused on the ontology of film art, the nationalized expression of Chinese cinema, and traditional cultural resources. The key terms during this period included “中国电影”、“电影美学”、“民族化”、“意境”and“现实主义”with the research emphasis on exploring how Chinese cinema could maintain its cultural identity within the context of global cinematic cultural exchange. Major Chinese films such as 《英雄》 began to attract attention, while the visual style of these films, their expressions of Eastern aesthetics, and their use of ethnic cultural symbols became central topics in academic studies.

Second Stage: 2008–2016 – The Era of Industrial Transformation and Genre Film Aesthetics. With the rapid development of China's film market and the continuous expansion of the film industry scale, research focus gradually shifted from the ontology of film art to the industrial system and genre-based expression. Key terms during this stage include “类型电影”、“电影产业”、“商业电影”、“视觉奇观”and“文化产业”, researchers began paying closer attention to the relationship between commercial logic, market mechanisms, and artistic expression. Research on Chinese film aesthetics exhibited a clear trend toward industrialization—films ceased to be mere artistic texts but evolved into comprehensive cultural products that integrate culture, capital, technology, and markets.

Phase III: 2017–2025 – The Industrial Aesthetics and Digital Intelligent Aesthetics Phase. Since 2017, Chinese cinema has entered an industrialization phase, with a marked increase in related research. Key terms include: “工业美学”、“共同体美学”、“数字电影”、“虚拟现实”and“人工智能”. During this phase, the focus of research has shifted from "how cinema expresses beauty" to "how cinema creates new aesthetic experiences within the industrial system and digital technologies". With the advancement of AI-generated content (AIGC), virtual production, and digital humans, film aesthetics is entering a new stage of theoretical exploration.

### 2. Highlighted Term Analysis

Keyword emergence analysis can reflect rapidly growing emerging research topics during a specific period. Based on the emergence patterns of keywords, the research hotspots in Chinese film aesthetics have exhibited distinct phased changes.

The early emergent terms mainly include: “民族化”、“中国电影”and“现实主义”, reflecting that the research focus during this period was concentrated on the identity construction of Chinese cinema and the expression of national culture.

The mid-term emerging keywords primarily include “电影产业”、“类型电影”and“视觉文化” indicating that research has begun to focus on the development and commercialization trends of the film industry.

In recent years, emerging key terms include “工业美学”、“共同体美学”、“数字电影”and“人工智能”, indicating that research on Chinese film aesthetics is evolving toward technology-driven and interdisciplinary integration. In particular, advancements in artificial intelligence technology have transformed film production methods, creative entities, and aesthetic evaluation systems; consequently, "AI-driven film aesthetics" may emerge as a new frontier for research.

### (3) Summary of Research Trends

By integrating keyword co-occurrence analysis, cluster analysis, temporal evolution analysis, and emergent word



analysis, it can be observed that research on Chinese film aesthetics exhibits the following development trends:

First, the research focus has shifted from film texts to the film system. Early studies primarily concentrated on the artistic expression and aesthetic characteristics of film works, whereas in recent years, increasing attention has been paid to film production mechanisms, the industry system, and the technological environment.

Second, research theories are evolving from a singular aesthetic analysis toward an interdisciplinary integration. Film aesthetics is forging increasingly closer connections with fields such as communication studies, cultural studies, digital humanities, and artificial intelligence.

Third, the research paradigm is transitioning from traditional cinematic aesthetics to digital intelligent aesthetics. With the advancement of artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and generative technologies, film aesthetics is confronted with new theoretical challenges, including: "the question of the AI creative subject," "the issue of algorithmic aesthetics," "the question of human-machine collaborative creation," and "the issue of authenticity in digital imagery."

Therefore, future research on Chinese film aesthetics should further focus on the new forms of cinematic art under the context of digital technology, and promote the deep integration of traditional aesthetic resources with modern technological systems.

## V. Conclusion and Outlook

### (1) Research Findings

This paper draws upon core literature on Chinese film aesthetics from the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database spanning the period 2000–2025, employing the CiteSpace knowledge graph analysis method to systematically review the current state and future trends of Chinese film aesthetics research across multiple dimensions, including publication trends, disciplinary distribution, author collaboration networks, institutional partnerships, keyword co-occurrence, and the evolution of research hotspots. The analysis reveals that after more than two decades of development, Chinese film aesthetics research has established a relatively stable research framework and exhibits a clear trend shifting from traditional theoretical research toward industrial practice, digital technology integration, and interdisciplinary convergence. First, from the perspective of its developmental trajectory, research on Chinese film aesthetics has generally exhibited a sustained growth trend, maintaining a strong interactive relationship with the development process of China's film industry. From 2000 to 2007, relevant research was in its initial exploratory stage, with focus primarily centered on China's film aesthetic tradition, nationalized expression, and the ontology of cinematic art; from 2007 to 2016, as China's film industry rapidly expanded and genre

films developed, research gradually shifted toward areas such as the film industry, visual spectacle, genre-based expression, and commercial film aesthetics; since 2017, alongside the implementation of the "Film Industry Promotion Law of the People's Republic of China" and the advancement of film industrialization, industrial aesthetics, community aesthetics, and digital film aesthetics have emerged as new research hotspots, marking the entry of Chinese film aesthetics research into a phase of theoretical deepening and diversified expansion.

Secondly, from the perspective of research entities, Chinese film aesthetics research has already established a group of core authors and research institutions with considerable influence, yet the overall collaborative network still has room for further optimization. Analysis of both author collaboration networks and institutional collaboration networks reveals that universities and research institutions such as Peking University, Beijing Film Academy, Shanghai University, and Communication University of China constitute key research forces in this field, forming an academic community centered on film theory research, film industry research, and film culture research. However, the collaboration density among authors and between institutions remains relatively low, and cross-regional and interdisciplinary collaborations have not yet been fully developed. This indicates that future Chinese film aesthetics research needs to break through traditional disciplinary boundaries and strengthen interdisciplinary integration across fields such as film studies, aesthetics, communication studies, computer science, and digital humanities.

Furthermore, from the perspective of the evolution of research trends, the themes of Chinese film aesthetics studies have exhibited distinct phased changes. Co-occurrence analysis of keywords reveals that foundational concepts such as "中国电影" ("Chinese Film"), "电影美学" ("Film Aesthetics"), "美学" ("Aesthetics"), and "电影艺术" ("Film Art") have consistently held a central position, while keywords like "民族化" ("Nationalization"), "现实主义" ("Realism"), and "意境" ("Artistic Conception") reflect the sustained focus of Chinese film aesthetics on traditional cultural resources and national aesthetic experiences. In recent years, keywords such as "film industry," "industrial aesthetics," "communal aesthetics," and "digital cinema" have emerged rapidly, indicating that the research focus has gradually shifted from solely concentrating on cinematic artistic expression to more comprehensive aesthetic issues involving the film production system, technological transformations, and audience relations. Particularly against the backdrop of rapid advancements in artificial intelligence, virtual reality, and generative technologies, film aesthetics is facing new demands for theoretical reconstruction.

Finally, from the perspective of overall evolutionary trends, research on Chinese film aesthetics is undergoing a transformation from "traditional art aesthetics" to "digital intelligent aesthetics." The development of Chinese film aesthetics is influenced not only by traditional Chinese

culture, aesthetic thought, and film creation practices, but also propelled by the global film industry system and advancements in digital technology. In the future, research on Chinese film aesthetics should build upon the inheritance of its national cultural traditions while further exploring new forms, expressions, and aesthetic mechanisms of film art in the digital era.

## (2) Research Significance

This paper employs bibliometric and knowledge graph methods to conduct a systematic analysis of research on Chinese film aesthetics from 2000 to 2025, offering significant theoretical implications and practical value.

At the theoretical level, this paper breaks away from the traditional research approach in Chinese film aesthetics studies, which primarily relied on textual analysis and theoretical interpretation, by introducing the knowledge graph method to provide a macro-level overview of the research structure, evolving hotspots, and development trends in this field. Through an analysis of keyword evolution and shifts in research themes, this study offers a clearer understanding of the developmental logic behind the theory of Chinese film aesthetics and provides a new research perspective for constructing a film aesthetics theoretical system with Chinese characteristics, style, and spirit.

At the practical level, the findings of this study can provide valuable references for the development of China's film industry in the new era. Currently, China's film industry is undergoing a transition from rapid growth to high-quality development, with the establishment of a comprehensive film industry system, the application of digital technologies, and the enhancement of cultural dissemination capabilities becoming key directions. By analyzing shifts in research trends within film aesthetics, this study can assist film creators and theoretical researchers in more accurately grasping industry development trends and promoting the synergistic advancement of film art innovation and industrial upgrading.

Furthermore, against the backdrop of digitalization and intelligent transformation, this study also holds certain forward-looking significance. Emerging technologies such as AI-generated content (AIGC), virtual production, and digital human technology are transforming film production methods and aesthetic paradigms, posing new challenges to traditional film aesthetics theory. In the future, it is essential to establish new theoretical connections among technological logic, artistic expression, and cultural value, thereby further expanding the boundaries of Chinese film aesthetics research.

## (3) Research Gaps and Future Directions

Although this paper conducts a relatively systematic analysis of Chinese film aesthetics research based on the CiteSpace method, it still has certain limitations.

First, the data sources for this paper primarily come from

the China National Knowledge Infrastructure (CNKI) database; while it effectively reflects the state of academic research in China, it falls short in covering international research outcomes on Chinese film aesthetics. Future studies could further integrate international databases such as Web of Science and Scopus to conduct a comparative analysis of Chinese film aesthetics research both domestically and internationally, thereby obtaining a more comprehensive knowledge framework.

Secondly, this paper primarily employs bibliometric methods for its macro-level analysis; however, the discussion regarding the relationships between specific theoretical perspectives, film texts, and creative practice remains insufficiently in-depth. Future research could integrate methods such as textual analysis, case studies, and expert interviews to conduct more thorough investigations into key theoretical schools, representative film works, and aesthetic thought.

Finally, with the rapid development of artificial intelligence technology, Chinese film aesthetics is entering a new stage of development. Future research can focus on the following directions:

First, the theoretical construction of film aesthetics in the era of artificial intelligence: generative AI is transforming the film creation process; hence, future research should focus on issues pertaining to authorship, artistic quality, and aesthetic evaluation when algorithms participate in the creative process.

Second, research on digital technologies and cinematic aesthetic experience: advancements in technologies such as virtual reality, augmented reality, and digital humans have enabled cinema to transition from traditional two-dimensional imagery to immersive experiences, necessitating the establishment of a new cinematic aesthetics theory tailored to the digital media environment.

Third, research on the modern transformation of traditional Chinese cultural resources. The future development of Chinese cinema requires further exploration of traditional aesthetic concepts—such as "yijing" (ideal realm), "qiyun" (spiritual resonance), and the "xieyi" spirit—and investigation of their innovative expressions in digital cinema and international dissemination.

Overall, research on Chinese film aesthetics has established a relatively mature theoretical foundation and is evolving toward digitalization, intelligence, and diversification. In the future, it is essential to further strengthen interdisciplinary collaboration, promote the deep integration of traditional aesthetic resources, the modern film industry system, and artificial intelligence technologies, and build a new theoretical framework for film aesthetics with Chinese characteristics in the contemporary era.

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