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New Media Spectacle: Aesthetic Analysis of the Chinese Film Industry in the Twenty-First Century

Abstract: This paper investigates how the Chinese film industry exhibits itself as a new media spectacle. In 2002, the Chinese state redefined the film sector as a profit-oriented cultural industry, and it has since experienced rapid growth. Drawing on two decades of industry data, this paper proposes a three-dimensional analytical framework centered on “box office myths,” “urban spaces,” and “aesthetic functions.” First, “box office myths” reveal how high-grossing films balance socialist propaganda with commercial interests while navigating state policies and market dynamics. Second, the film industry help shape Chinese cities and redefines urban public spaces, where cinematic representations and audience responses collectively articulate traditional culture. Third, the “aesthetic functions” of film can be categorized into three aspects: artistic function, cultural inheritance function, and aesthetic education function. Together, these three aspects constitute the new media spectacle as a composite cultural phenomenon within China’s contemporary film industry.

Keywords: New media spectacle; Chinese film; urban space; audience action; aesthetic function.

Introduction

China’s film industry in the 21st century presents itself as a new media spectacle driven by capital, media convergence, and urban spatial representation—one that features industrialization, publicness, and emotional mobilization, and gives rise to three structural functions: artistic representation, cultural inheritance, and aesthetic education. In 2002, the Chinese state redefined the film industry as a profit-making cultural industry, and it has grown rapidly since then. Drawing on two decades of industry data and concrete examples, this paper examines the Chinese film industry as an aesthetic phenomenon and explores how it functions.

Reflecting on the development of Chinese film studies, scholars have seen a wealth of diverse monographs over the past decade. Some track the history and historiography,² some reevaluate the form, structure, and institution of Chinese film from

¹ Funding: “Research on the Reproduction of Contemporary Chinese Digital Literature and Art”, The National Social Science Fund of China (24BZW128).

² Song Hwee Lim and Julian Ward, eds., *The Chinese Cinema Book* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011). Zhang Yingjin, ed., *A Companion to Chinese Cinema* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013); Jason McGrath, *Chinese Film: Realism and Convention from the Silent Era to the Digital* (University of Minnesota Press, 2023).

a revolutionary or modern perspective,³ some investigate different aspects of directors and the audience,⁴ independent cinema⁵, metacinema,⁶ martial arts film⁷ and documentary films.⁸ These scholarships contribute to the study of contemporary Chinese film. However, most English-language monographs do not trace the Chinese film industry from 2010 to the present, nor do they present its current situation based on the latest data and realities. In mainland China, many monographs track the development of the film industry, and the research has shifted from industrial analysis toward the integration of diverse theoretical perspectives. Current studies examine industrial development through the lens of capital and film-industrial aesthetics, adopting perspectives on media convergence and urban space. Most research, however, concentrates on production mechanisms and box office economics leaving the public nature, affective turn, and profound aesthetic and educational functions of film as a new media spectacle underexplored. This paper presents an aesthetic analysis of the Chinese film industry in the 21st century.

This paper argues that contemporary Chinese film constitutes a form of new media spectacle. In the context of the 21st-century China, “new media spectacle” refers to an industrially produced and emotionally charged cultural phenomenon that not only dramatizes social values but also actively reshapes urban space and aesthetic experience. It is “new” in its modes of production, spatial mediation, and aesthetic functions. Section 1 outlines the development of Chinese cinema during the first two decades of the 21st century. Section 2 interprets the film industry as a media spectacle by examining its influence on daily life and urban spaces in contemporary China. Finally, Section 3 analyzes three key aesthetic functions of film in China: its artistic function, its cultural-inheritance function, and its aesthetic-education function.

Development of Chinese film industry

How does the Chinese film industry become a media spectacle? A media spectacle is a form of media culture that embodies ideological orientation, social realities, and aesthetic perceptions. Its characteristics lie in its temporality, symptomatic

³ Chen Xiaomei, *Performing the Socialist State: Modern Chinese Theater and Film Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2023); Sheldon Lu, *Contemporary Chinese Cinema and Visual Culture* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2021); Xiao Yang, *The Evolution of Chinese Popular Cinema* (Routledge, 2026); Xiang Fan, *Contemporary Art Cinema Culture in China* (Bloomsbury Academic, 2024).

⁴ Michael Curtin, *Playing to the World's Biggest Audience: The Globalization of Chinese Film and TV* (University of California Press, 2007); Cecilia Mello, *The Cinema of Jia Zhangke: Realism and Memory in Chinese Film* (Bloomsbury Publishing Inc., 2022).

⁵ Wang Qi, *Memory, Subjectivity and Independent Chinese Cinema* (Edinburgh University Press, 2014); Dan Edwards, *Independent Chinese Documentary: Alternative Visions, Alternative Publics* (Edinburgh University Press, 2015).

⁶ G. Andrew Stuckey, *Metacinema in Contemporary Chinese Film* (Hong Kong University Press, 2018).

⁷ Stephen Teo, *Chinese Martial Arts Film and the Philosophy of Action* (Routledge, 2021).

⁸ Ying Qian, *Revolutionary Becomings: Documentary Media in Twentieth-Century China* (Columbia University Press, 2024).

quality, and critical edge—rather than merely presenting new, superficial, or novel appearances. The rise of the Chinese film industry as a new media spectacle aligns, to a considerable extent, with these very characteristics. While the industry has achieved notable market growth, at a deeper level it has advanced modern culture, shaped urban living spaces, and established certain aesthetic paradigms, thereby fulfilling its aesthetic functions.

Since 2002, Chinese films have fully entered the industrial stage. Although institutional reform and marketization began in the 1990s—allowing private capital to produce films alongside state-owned capital—it was not until 2002 that the film system underwent profound reform, followed by China's 2003 redefinition of film as a cultural industry. The government has promoted film consumption and the development of a modern cultural-industrial system, recognizing film's growing role in the economic restructuring and sustainable development. To provide an overview of the Chinese film industry, this paper selects key data from the past two decades. Table 1 presents data on China's film box office revenues, annual film output, and top-grossing films.

The crucial aspects of film production—investment, production, and distribution—all revolve around the movie's narrative. As Colman points out, "Film forms and products—cinema, television, computer games, online media industries that draw on the cinematic, that is, the film industry in its entirety—have reshaped knowledge of the world through various categorizations, genres, fields of enquiry, different methods of representation, intervention, provocation."⁹ Through its diverse assumptions and purposes, film both represents and questions how we think about things in the world, including the very nature of thinking as a perceptual activity that is entirely mediated in some form. What deserves further consideration is how film represents the world and influences the society. After China adopted market economy in the 1990s and began its industrialization in 2002, many films adjusted their presentation and approach to meet the country's market demands, thereby creating a tension between commercial and aesthetic considerations. Although the film industry is shaped by market forces and economic capital, film remains an art form that integrates commerce, culture, and aesthetics. It evokes the audience's sense of beauty in relation to the object, with the fundamental goal of creating cinematic beauty and providing an aesthetic experience. The films in Table 1 embody contemporary China's basic values; they not only reflect numerical shifts in the film industry, but also inherently reflect the changes of the times, collective emotions of audiences, and their evolving aesthetic preferences.

As Kellner argues, spectacle emerges from the interplay of capital, technology, and ideology. To examine the mechanisms of media spectacle in the Chinese film market, one must go beyond a macro-level understanding of the industry and engage in close textual readings of individual films. The changing roster of annual box-office champions over the 24 years shown in Table 1 effectively renders this interplay visible across time. The top 24 box office champions in Table 1 represent works that reflect

⁹ Felicity Colman, *Film, Theory and Philosophy: The Key Thinkers* (McGill-Queens University Press, 2009), 17.

shifts in aesthetic tastes in the Chinese film market over the past 20 years. Between 2002 and 2011, four out of the ten highest-grossing films (*Hero*, *House of Flying Daggers*, *Curse of the Golden Flower*, *The Flowers of War*) were directed by Zhang Yimou, one of China's most renowned filmmakers. *Hero* is considered a milestone film that paved the way for Chinese cinema's industrialization, transforming film production from propaganda into commercial products. Zhang Yimou's films are popular for featuring ancient Chinese stories, distinctive cinematography, and breathtaking visuals. From 2012 to 2025, box office champions have spanned various genres, including fantasy, action, comedy, war, road, and animated films. The first type consists of entertainment and commercial films that cater to market and audience demand, and they constitute the majority. Box office champions from 2012 to 2017 typically fall into this category. The second type includes more serious films that promote national ideologies and offer a sympathetic portrayal of Chinese history. Films such as *Wolf Warriors*, *Operation Red Sea*, *The Eight Hundred*, and *The Battle at Lake Changjin* fall into this category, conveying patriotism through narratives of brutal warfare and grand historical events. Referred to in China as "Main Melody Films" or "Mainstream Blockbusters", these films have particularly flourished since 2017. The top film of each year is not an accidental market choice, but a historically specific, necessary outcome of the spectacle logic at work.

The Chinese film industry has shifted from large-scale production to spectacle-driven industrial construction. These high-box-office films have a wide-ranging impact, reflecting not only the growth in box-office revenue but also changes in aesthetic tastes over the past 20 years. Box office revenue, the number of screens, audience numbers, and industrial production systems have generated together a remarkable industrial spectacle. Meanwhile, Chinese films are increasingly emphasizing visual appeal and emotional impact in their cinematic language. Through their immersive aesthetic experiences and genre evolution, many high-grossing films have become visual spectacles that resonate with audiences in the new media era.

Spectacular film and urban public space

Douglas Kellner argues "that media spectacles are those phenomena of media culture that embody contemporary society's basic values, serve to initiate individuals into its way of life, and dramatize its controversies and struggles, as well as its modes of conflict resolution."¹⁰ The film industry has been a rich domain of media spectacle, showcasing mystery, glamour, and fashion. Contemporary Chinese blockbusters are becoming, in a sense, spectacular films. Integrated into urban public spaces, these spectacular films have transformed Chinese film into a socio-cultural spectacle that stirs social emotions and shapes collective memory.

Technological innovation and media reform usually lead to new living

¹⁰ Douglas Kellner, *Media Spectacle* (Routledge, 2003), 2.

environments and urban spaces. New technology brings about new media. New media creates new thoughts and possibilities. New media change people's lifestyles and extend their experiences of art. The rise of digital media promotes the development of the film industry, while humanity's vision is roughly emphasized in proportion to the increased consumption of the film market. All these changes in feelings and experiences, and the new cognition of art, are fundamental elements in the development of film culture.

Chinese film, as a media spectacle, exhibits itself in the urban public space, for it is in this space that the cinematic spectacle becomes materially tangible and socially consequential. Kellner's notion of spectacle, for all its analytical power, remains incomplete without an account of the spatial conditions that enable and sustain it. This is precisely where Henri Lefebvre's theory of spatial production proves indispensable. For Lefebvre, urban space is seen as produced by social, political, and economic forces rather than as a natural given. Lefebvre claimed that "space is social", "space is a social relation"¹¹. The urban space is always a present space, with flexible changes, a current totality, and connections to people's social action. The urban space inevitably engages place and locality, which calls attention to its multidirectional flows and its historical contingency. Thousands of urban movie theaters were built and renovated in cities over the past forty years, and the box office revenue of Chinese films primarily comes from them. The theaters create new spaces for films to tell stories and present images. Audiences see a movie together in a theatre, engaging in the collective aesthetic agency. The urban public space in China, such as big cities like Shanghai, Beijing, Guangzhou, Shenzhen, and Hangzhou, has a dynamic force that shapes public art experiences and influences aesthetic expression. Big cities account for a large share of the box office, and activities surrounding films, such as premiere screenings and fan events, are very vibrant in these urban areas. The urban space encompasses social, economic, and aesthetic mechanisms that highlight its diversity and complexity.

The film industry as a media spectacle exhibits itself in urban public space; what is significant is how the process of movie practice shapes the Chinese urban public space. In this process, two interconnected mechanisms deserve special attention. First, film, as an aesthetic object, becomes embedded in the city's physical and symbolic fabric through its visual language, narrative structure, and emotional tone. Second, audience response as an aesthetic practice involves how audiences actively participate in, interpret, and re-experience film content within the urban environment, thus generating emotional connections. Together, these two aspects reveal that spectacular films not only reflect but also actively reconstruct the relationships among media, space, and daily life, transforming urban public spaces into sites of cultural spectacle and collective memory.

First, the movies that have the greatest influence in urban public space are those that express Chinese traditional culture and respond to the contemporary cultural atmosphere, thus forming a spectacle that merges the ancient with the modern. Many

¹¹ Henri Lefebvre, *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, edited by Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, trans. Gerald Moore, Neil Brenner, and Stuart Elden (University of Minnesota Press, 2009), 186.

Chinese films are adapted from traditional novels, such as *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child*, which was the box office champion in 2019. Again, *Nezha 2* had great industrial success in 2025. They imitate and learn from the themes, motifs, and imagery of classic literary works to varying degrees in order to enhance the traditional and humanistic quality of their work. After all, what an audience demands of a film is that it presents forms and scenes and narrates a story and a plot, regardless of the profit used to produce it. Successful movies in the Chinese film industry consistently meet audiences' demands by harmonizing aesthetic autonomy with moral value, rather than merely serving as products of commercial management.

Second, audience reactions and viewing behaviors are central to box-office outcomes, and this economic reality firmly embeds cinematic art in the commodity logic of the film industry. In this context, the audience's pursuit of film as an art form is materialized through consumption, rendering aesthetic experience inseparable from the market forces that shape it. Movies provide entertainment and create imagined worlds that let audiences escape from powerlessness in reality, and audiences may identify with reality by watching them. This is precisely one of the aspirations of the diversity-based film production: to provide a more inclusive practice of film engagement, which rejects the parochialism of propaganda. Furthermore, many audiences may also develop an autonomous ideal that maintains a distance from society. Audiences establish numerous fan groups to coordinate various activities, such as supporting audiences, contributing to film organizations, and reviewing films. Audiences are not isolated individuals; rather, they constitute a collective capable of exerting influence and even shaping urban public space. From this communitarian perspective, we might value audiences' engagement with urban public space for providing unique opportunities to realize shared, collaborative aesthetic values in ways no one could achieve alone.

Aesthetic functions of film in China

The theory of media spectacle serves as the overall framework that encompasses three key dimensions of the Chinese film industry. At the industry level, it presents box office performance and representative works in the Chinese film industry; at the spatial level, Lefebvre's space theory is used to explain how film reconstructs the social attributes of urban public space; at the functional level, Ruth Garrett Millikan's functional intention theory provides a cognitive mechanism explanation for the generation of film's aesthetic value. These three aspects are interconnected and correspond, respectively, to the market-based, spatial, and psychological conditions under which the spectacle is generated.

Kellner's media spectacle, by its very nature, operates through daily life and aesthetic intensification; it captivates attention through heightened sensory appeal, spectacular visuals, and emotionally charged narratives. This aesthetic imperative,

however, does not remain at the level of mere sensory stimulation; it simultaneously organizes collective perceptual norms, shaping what audiences come to recognize as cinematically valuable and emotionally resonant.

What makes this process socially operative, however, is not merely the content of movies themselves, but their capacity to be reproduced and sustained across the film industry. Here, Millikan's theory of function proves instructive: it provides an internal mechanism for explaining how cultural products, once synchronized on a mass scale, acquire a functional character that stabilizes industrial operations within the media spectacle. Functional intention, in this sense, does not remain merely at the individual psychological level; once aesthetic judgment is synchronized on a large scale within a specific media, it transforms from a private feeling into a public spectacle.

Millikan pointed out that one thing has its "own" function and "proper" function; its own function is its actual function on various occasions of use, and its proper function is what various users intend it to perform on various occasions.¹² She points out that "all artifacts have proper functions—usually not direct ones but derived ones."¹³ The main point of her theory of proper functions is to use it as a tool for understanding language and other representations, inner and outer. What I want to highlight are the diverse aesthetic functions of film, revealed through the representation and intentional aspects of the language of cinema. The Chinese film industry has its "own" aesthetic functions, such as beauty represented by the movie's text, and its "proper" aesthetic functions, such as a movie's social effect. Both of these correspond to the producing process and the social environment.

The aesthetic functions of the Chinese film industry can be divided into three categories, namely, artistic function, cultural inheritance function, and aesthetic education function. These three functions, respectively, promote the transition of film art from content-driven narrative to a new paradigm of visual-sensory-experiential engagement; promote the modernization, popularization, and mediatization of traditional symbols; and convey dominant values and the contemporary spirit through immersive and emotionally resonant means. The aesthetic functions of Chinese cinema—artistic expression, cultural inheritance, and perceptual formation—are thus not external additions to its spectacular logic but internal entailments of it: they are the specific channels through which the spectacle accomplishes its cultural operation.

First, the artistic function refers to the functions of film as a fine art, which can be understood as the "own" function of film and is common in both China and other countries. The artistic functions are those that reflect the properties of art, such as expressing emotion, exhibiting innovative qualities, creating complex forms, and facilitating technical expression. The artistic function of film is promoted through aesthetic communication. Gary Iseminger posits a paradigm of aesthetic communication that involves a designer and maker, an artifact created for appreciation, and an appreciator: "A paradigm of aesthetic communication consists of someone's designing

¹² Ruth Garrett Millikan, *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories* (The MIT Press, 1984), 2.

¹³ Millikan, *Language, Thought, and Other Biological Categories*, 36.

and making something to be appreciated that is appreciated by someone else.”¹⁴ Film has an aesthetic purpose, aiming to promote artistic feelings. To what extent a film approaches the artistic function within the paradigm of aesthetic communication depends on whether the film includes producers who are making an effort to design and create an artifact to be appreciated, a text that possesses the capacity for appreciation, or an audience that is at least attempting to appreciate it. The key is that the film is aesthetically autonomous, not overly controlled by economic capital or commercial logic, and has its own functions. The artistic function of a movie lies in its connection to appreciation, which involves recognizing the movie’s aesthetic experience as valuable in itself and making it enjoyable for the audience, thereby achieving communicative action and a shared experience.

Secondly, the cultural inheritance function of the Chinese film industry is to transmit traditional culture. This function is becoming increasingly central, serving as a key factor behind the distinctiveness of Chinese cinema. With a history spanning thousands of years, Chinese culture encompasses numerous outstanding artistic works that could be adapted into films as valuable IPs.

To move beyond mere description and examine how the logic of spectacle operates at the empirical level, Table 1 presents the 24 highest-grossing films over the past two decades. Among them, *Red Cliff I*, *Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons*, *Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child* can be classified in the same category according to their contents, whose stories come from the Four Greatest Classic Novels of China (“Romance of the Three Kingdoms”, “Outlaws of the Marsh”, “the Dream of the Red Mansions”, “Journey to the West”). These movies have good content, absorbing excellent traditional literature and art, arousing the audience’s universal resonance. These annual champions are not simply popular products of market forces; rather, they offer a longitudinal record in which different mechanisms of spectacle—technological guarantees, emotional consensus, and cultural familiarity—are activated at different historical junctures.

As another example, *The Wandering Earth*, a science fiction film, earned 678 million dollars, ranking second at the box office in 2019. This film is based on a short story of the same name by Liu Cixin, who received the 2015 Hugo Award. The intention to go to the moon in the film is not new; its roots are in traditional culture. There are many stories and literary works about the moon in ancient China; one of the most famous is the myth of Chang’e Flying to the Moon. There are countless beautiful poems about the moon in the Tang poems and Song lyrics. The poet Su Shi wrote: “The waning moon hangs in a sparse tung tree, the water clock breaks off, people begin to grow still.”¹⁵ The film’s amazing imagination can be traced back to an ancient Chinese philosophical concept of nature, the Unity of Heaven and Humanity. These sentences, stories, and philosophical thinking have become something like cultural genes,

¹⁴ Gary Iseminger, *The Aesthetic Function of Art* (Cornell University Press, 2004), 35.

¹⁵ Stephen Owen, *Just a Song: Chinese Lyrics from the Eleventh and Early Twelfth Centuries* (Harvard University Press, 2019), 224.

seeping into the blood of the Chinese people. *The Wandering Earth* is well received by audiences, not only for the moving visuals produced by advanced technology but also for its close alignment with the inherent spirit of traditional Chinese thought. The cultural inheritance function of the film industry is a distinctive function rooted in Chinese cultural cognition. It operates through the cinematic re-encoding of traditional symbols, with adaptation strategies serving not merely as storytelling vehicles but as systematic mechanisms for re-inscribing cultural signifiers into contemporary audiovisual grammar.

Thirdly, the aesthetic education function of film seeks to evoke emotional resonance and provide moral guidance by encouraging audiences to reflect on and align their emotions and actions with the values presented. This function is particularly important in China, where the government supports it and expects the film industry to fulfill an educational role alongside its economic role. As Yomi Braester observes, film is “often associated in China with social and political agendas”¹⁶—a characterization that suggests commercial cinema cannot be divorced from political awareness and social responsibility.

We can see the films in Table 1, some of which can be classified as works of realism, such as *Wolf Warriors II*, *Operation Red Sea*, *The Eight Hundred*, and *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, which advocate the spirit of patriotism. The educational function of film demands that producers break away from a profit-motivated attitude and look through the lenses of various ways of knowing, seeing, and feeling, in a conscious endeavor to impose social orders and ideological orientations upon the viewing experience. *The Battle at Lake Changjin*, the highest-grossing film of 2021, belongs to a series of patriotic films released during the 100th anniversary of the Chinese Communist Party. It is set against the backdrop of the Battle of Changjin Lake during the second campaign in the War to Resist U.S. Aggression and Aid Korea, and recounts the story of the Chinese People’s Volunteers fighting in the extreme cold and harsh conditions of North Korea in 1950. Produced on a substantial budget and co-directed by three filmmakers, the film celebrates collective effort and sacrifice that secured military victory, and achieves its grand aesthetic impact. Observing the soldiers’ struggle and triumph in the battle evokes sympathy from audiences, and this empathy also serves as a form of education. This movie establishes an emotional connection with its audience in a public space. Moral resonance plays an important role in the story, and many locations and scenes contribute to the war narrative.

These three categories of aesthetic functions each play a distinct role within the Chinese film industry. The first serves its own function, while the latter two are proper functions specific to the Chinese social context, where their priorities may shift over time in response to changing government policies and incentives. Over the past decade, the most influential movies in China have emerged from two primary trajectories: one presents traditional Chinese culture, thereby fulfilling the cultural

¹⁶ Yomi Braester, “Chinese Cinema in the Age of Advertisement: The Filmmaker as a Cultural Broker,” *The China Quarterly* 183 (September 2005): 549.

inheritance function; the other engages with contemporary cultural currents, thereby realizing the aesthetic education function. Together, these aesthetic functions operate within the social organism, remaining responsive to the prevailing social atmosphere.

The aesthetic functions of the film industry are essentially institutional in China. The function that a film performs must be identifiable from an external point of view through social practice. This is the case when a community collectively accepts that a film serves a specific function, contingent upon government policies and the social circumstances of a given period. It is said that “Historically, the most common approach to the task of defining art has been functionalist. Functionalist accounts promise not only to explain what it is for something to be art, but also to explain its value.”¹⁷ It is common to say that art has some special functions, but what I want to highlight is that a function is effective only in social practice, which is the institutional character of a function. The functions of film play a role only in social practice and mean nothing if the film is not seen. We presume a plurality of interpretations and a multiplicity of aesthetic functions. This opens up more than one possibility for film as a fine art. Films that perform any of the categories of aesthetic functions can have a positive impact on the film industry. However, these functions are not equally distributed; some are prioritized under certain circumstances. The cultural inheritance and aesthetic education functions, in particular, have been prioritized by the Chinese film industry in the 21st century.

Conclusion

This paper has systematically demonstrated that the contemporary Chinese film industry operates as a new media spectacle, driven by industrial expansion, visual spectacularization, urban spatial embedding, and large-scale public participation. Empirically, this spectacle manifests itself in three interrelated dimensions: it presents the market through “box office myths”, reshapes film culture through “urban spaces,” and reconfigures audience perception through “aesthetic functions”. The empirical evidence and theoretical reasoning confirm that the Chinese film industry operates as a socially pervasive media spectacle that structures public experience and collective perception.

Drawing on the Chinese film industry over the past two decades, this paper offers philosophical perspectives on the aesthetic value of Chinese film. It is clear that the Chinese film industry continued to expand in the 21st century. It is possible to perceive beauty through high-box-office movies in the Chinese film market; thus, these commercial movies ought to be admitted to the aesthetic domain and discussed theoretically and aesthetically. Films are products carried out by filmmakers that imply beauty-making intentions. Yet these intentions never stand alone: they exist in theaters, star-audience meetings, film festivals, and film academic seminars;

¹⁷ Catharine Abell, “Art: What it Is and Why it Matters,” *Philosophy and Phenomenological Research* 85, no. 3 (November 2012): 671–91.

they accompany other artificial intentions, penetrating media spectacle to make our urban public space more active and diverse. Furthermore, this paper logically derives three interrelated aesthetic functions from the structural characteristics of new media spectacle: artistic innovation, driven by visual and industrial spectacle; cultural inheritance, realized through mediated cultural representation; and aesthetic education, achieved through immersive public engagement. These functions are not isolated classifications but organic to the formation of the new media spectacle of Chinese film. This study presents a structurally integrated and theoretically grounded interpretation of the Chinese film industry as a new form of media spectacle. These findings may serve as a reference point for investigating media-driven cultural industries in today's interconnected, digital world.

Table 1. The data of the Chinese Film Industry since the year 2002

Year	Total Box Office Dollars (million)	Feature Film Production	Annual Film Box Office Champion	Box Office Dollars(million)
2002	134.75	100	英雄	6.03
			Hero	
2003	134.75	140	手機	6.38
			Cell phone	
2004	222.69	212	十面埋伏	21.70
			House of Flying Daggers	
2005	290.77	260	無極	24.11
			The Promise	
2006	371.62	330	滿城盡帶黃金甲	32.62
			Curse of the Golden Flower	
2007	472.33	402	投名狀	27.23
			The Warlords	
2008	615.59	406	赤壁 (上)	45.39
			Red Cliff I	
2009	880.83	456	建國大業	59.57
			The Founding of a Republic	

2010	1432.58	526	唐山大地震	95.50
			Aftershock	
2011	1859.52	558	金陵十三釵	66.26
			The Flowers Of War	
2012	2421.21	745	人再囧途之泰囧	142.49
			Lost In Thailand	
2013	3087.86	638	西遊降魔篇	176.74
			Journey to the West: Conquering the Demons	
2014	4204.14	618	心花路放	165.53
			Breakup Buddies	
2015	6250.89	686	捉妖記	345.94
			Monster Hunt	
2016	6483.50	772	美人魚	481.26
			The Mermaid	
2017	7930.27	798	戰狼 2	805.47
			Wolf Warriors II	
2018	8649.40	902	紅海行動	517.84
			Operation Red Sea	
2019	9115.49	850	哪吒之魔童降世	709.44
			Nezha: Birth of the Demon Child	
2020	2895.95	531	八佰	440.98
			The Eight Hundred	
2021	6703.07	565	長津湖	818.70
			The Battle at Lake Changjin	
2022	4264.70	380	長津湖之水門橋	576.86
			The Battle at Lake Changjin II	
2023	7789.14	792	滿江紅	644.52
			Full River Red	
2024	6028.48	612	熱辣滾燙	484.67
			Yolo	
2025	7256.44	511	哪吒之魔童鬧海	2162.43
			Ne Zha 2	

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Article received: March 31, 2026

Article accepted: July 15, 2026

Original scholarly paper