

LOW-CARBON AESTHETIC PERFORMANCES IN CHINESE KUNG FU FILMS: A RE-EXAMINATION OF CINEMATIC ACTING CONCEPTS

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Abstract: It is widely recognized that there are three major systems of film and television performance: the psychological-experiential approach rooted in Stanislavsky's method, the Hollywood "star" system, and the European symbolic tradition. Each system reflects different cultural and aesthetic priorities, yet they also face limitations in the context of contemporary audience expectations and well-being. This study investigates the concept of "low-carbon performance aesthetics" as a new approach to cinematic expression, particularly within Chinese Kungfu films. It addresses the need for more emotionally sustainable, realistic, and ethically grounded acting styles in action cinema. The research adopts a mixed-methods approach, combining textual analysis of selected martial arts films with expert interviews and audience surveys. The study closely examines representative works featuring Jackie Chan and Jet Li, including *Police Story* and *Fearless*, alongside a comparative case study of *Infernal Affairs* and *The Departed*. These films illustrate contrasting performance styles that align with or deviate from low-carbon aesthetics. Findings suggest that "low-carbon performances" are characterized by emotionally restrained yet deeply expressive acting, which minimizes psychological overstimulation while enhancing viewer empathy and character credibility. Rather than relying on exaggerated emotions or star charisma, these performances emphasize authenticity, moral integrity, and subtle embodiment of character. The study contributes to the theoretical development of film performance studies and offers a framework for rethinking martial arts cinema through the lens of ecological aesthetics and cultural psychology. It also encourages a shift in audience expectations—from spectacle-driven entertainment toward more meaningful and introspective cinematic experiences.

Key words: Chinese kung fu film, film performance, low carbon performance, sustainable aesthetics, performance aesthetics, audience perception

Introduction

Performance, along with narrative, is a pivotal aesthetic element in the realm of film and television art. However, the academic development of performing arts has significantly lagged behind that of narrative

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arts. As a result, when exploring performance in film and television, we encounter a noticeable lack of proprietary concepts or specific terminology dedicated to the performing arts. This imbalance stands in stark contrast to the critical importance of performance in film and television and the audience's deep familiarity with its stars. Despite over a century of practice in the film and television industry providing us with a wealth of material for examining performance, it remains essential to base our investigation on existing performance conventions and aesthetic frameworks. These established structures provide a foundation for further study and allow us to better understand the role of performance in creating the emotional and intellectual impact that characterizes successful film and television productions (Butler,1991; Pavis,2003).

Case study of Stanislavskiy's performance system

Within the realm of film and television performing arts, approximately three styles are recognized by the academic community. The first is a performance style based on psychological experience, rooted in the Stanislavsky system (Carnicke, 2020); the second is the predominant acting style taught in Hollywood star schools; and the third emphasizes symbolic performance, which is widely practiced in Europe (Ayakoroma, 2009). Strictly speaking, the psychological-experiential performance derived from the Stanislavsky system is primarily suited for the dramatic stage. As Zhang (2024) aptly notes in his preface to *The Actor's Self-Cultivation*, a collection of ideas on experiential performance, Stanislavsky's name has become synonymous with an entire era of Russian stage life. The actor training system he devised has influenced both the present and future of Soviet theatre. This approach deeply explores the materialist theoretical foundations of stage realism, ensuring its continued evolution within the dramatic arts.

This "performance creation system" places great emphasis on fostering a deep psychological connection between actors and their roles, requiring actors to achieve a harmonious unity with their characters' psyche. As the saying goes, "the best outcome occurs when actors become fully immersed in their scripts." At such moments, actors naturally embody their roles without consciously focusing on their personal emotions or actions; everything flows instinctively and subconsciously (Ji et al., 2017, p.55). The Stanislavsky system is more than just a performance method—it is a comprehensive guide for actors. Stanislavsky's *Self-Cultivation of Actors* encapsulates his own stage practices and experiences, providing a valuable reference for performers. From a practical perspective, this system has had a profound influence not only on the dramatic arts in the Soviet Union but also on the performing arts of drama, film, and kung fu in both China and the United States. Given the ideological relationship between China and the Soviet Union in the first half of the 20th century, it was natural for Stanislavsky's acting theory to dominate Chinese drama and film in the decade following the founding of New China.

It may come as a surprise that this system made its way into Hollywood actor training as early as the 1930s. It profoundly influenced iconic actors like Marlon Brando and James Dean, becoming an essential element in Hollywood filmmaking (Maltby et al, 2011). With the adoption of this educational

acting system, an intriguing phenomenon has emerged: while the system has not significantly impacted Chinese film performance art, it has had a notable influence on the evolution of Hollywood's performing arts. From the 1950s to the 1980s, Chinese film performances adhered to traditional aesthetic formulas rooted in Chinese drama. However, since the 1990s, Chinese films have increasingly adopted and emulated commercial aesthetic formulas from Hollywood. We will explore these two performance approaches in greater detail later.

For now, let us begin by analyzing several key aspects of Stanislavsky's performance system. The first question is whether theatrical techniques are equally applicable to film performances. By examining the work of renowned actors like Marlon Brando in their cinematic roles, any doubts on this matter quickly fade. "Marlon Brando's performances exhibit a distinct, consistent rhythm, marked by deliberate pauses and hesitations, which invite reflective contemplation on life." In *A Streetcar Named Desire*, "Brando's portrayal of Stanley adopted an experiential approach deeply rooted in tradition, while simultaneously rejecting the prevalent naturalistic methods of the time" (Maltby et al., 2011). From the very beginning, Brando's portrayal was carefully crafted to highlight the intricate complexities and inherent contradictions within the character of Stanley.

The contrast between his overt masculinity and underlying ambition, coupled with his naivete, as well as the paradoxical blend of stubbornness and vulnerability, was masterfully portrayed. A meticulously crafted tapestry of symbols conveyed an aura of spontaneity and authenticity through the deliberate subversion of traditional performance conventions. His speech was unpolished, marked by a thick accent and frequent incoherent mumbling. He constantly chewed gum, and his facial expressions shifted stiffly, occasionally breaking into a grin or a quizzical stare. His posture alternated between relaxed nonchalance and tense timidity, punctuated by seemingly involuntary twitches. His imposing physique symbolized the threat he posed to Vicky. He adeptly navigated between these states before suddenly erupting with an explosive gesture or impulsively hurling a radio at the window" (Maltby et al., 2011).

However, if we carefully analyze the footage rather than solely relying on critics' opinions, many might perceive Marlon Brando's performance as exaggerated, contrived, and lacking authenticity. In fact, this is a common experience in theater performances. Despite the experiential system's emphasis on actors embodying emotions that mirror their characters', achieving this seamless integration is challenging in actual stage productions. Theatrical performances often require moderately exaggerated physical movements and stylized dialogue; otherwise, the audience, especially those farther from the stage, may lose interest due to a lack of vibrancy in the performance. In contrast, film art, with its unique focus on close-ups and the ability to capture subtle facial expressions and body language, allows attentive viewers to quickly recognize theatrical performances as artificial. This stark contrast between watching a play and a movie arises from the distinct aesthetic mechanisms inherent to each medium. Consequently, Marlon Brando's acting approach does not entirely prove that the experiential system,

when applied indiscriminately, seamlessly translates to film performance art.

Second, the Stanislavsky system demands that an actor's genuine emotional investment in a performance is integral to the experiential approach. But is it possible for an actor, while portraying a character, to refrain from evoking emotions and instead rely solely on reason to execute each action? Theoretically, such a possibility might exist; however, in artistic practice, this kind of dichotomy—relying entirely on reason to guide performance—is both exhausting and arduous. The actor would be forced to constantly think about what to say and do next, resembling a mechanical recitation of lines. How could anyone focus on acting under such conditions? This suggests that any successful performance requires substantial identification with the character and the stimulation of authentic emotions throughout the process.

In other words, the psychological experience emphasized by the Stanislavsky system is not only indispensable for various types of performances but also crucial for defining the essence of performance itself, rather than being an exclusive technique of experiential acting. While characters in a script can be understood through the imaginative and rational analysis of actors and directors—encompassing their virtues, flaws, authenticity, deceit, beauty, and ugliness—their inner psychology cannot be directly experienced. No one has the ability to fully experience another person's mental state; they can only perceive their own thoughts and emotions. This reality is affirmed by every individual. Therefore, an actor is not incapable of experiencing emotions, but rather limited to their own life experiences. They then use this personal psychological understanding to grasp the character's psyche through analogy and imitation. Essentially, what experiential actors achieve is not merely emotional immersion but a deep understanding and embodiment of the character, shaping their performance through the lens of their own life experiences. From the researcher's perspective, this reliance on personal experience represents a fundamental limitation of the Stanislavsky system or experiential performance.

A case analysis on the Star School Performance System in the context of Hollywood's mainstream performance style.

The mainstream acting style pioneered by Hollywood to distinguish itself in the art of film is known as star acting. "The star performance most directly emphasizes the actor's identity" (Maltby et al., 2011). Stars possess two qualities that set them apart from average actors: charisma and box office appeal. For instance, Eddie Murphy was able to attract a significant global audience for a film that wasn't particularly strong, solely due to his star status (Monaco, 1979, p. 79). This highlights the critical role stars play in the production of film as part of a larger cultural industry. Essentially, stars directly influence the commercial value of films. Therefore, any film endeavor aiming for high box office success and audience acclaim often relies heavily, if not entirely, on stellar performances. Star performances clearly guarantee ticket sales and enhance the commercial value of a film by adhering to

market principles.

In this context, within the Hollywood system dominated by stardom, star performances are consistently emphasized and seen as central to shaping a film's image. Other components, such as narrative, are often designed and developed around the unique personality traits of the stars. In other words, all visual texts within this star system must conform to and serve the purpose of maximizing the celebrity's unique allure. It's no surprise, then, that some have referred to celebrity performances as "fictional extensions of an actor's true character" (Maltby et al., 2011, p. 354). The star remains true to themselves, only portraying a fraction of the character (Maltby et al., 2011, p. 354). One film critic remarked about Hollywood star Lillian in *True SUSIE*: "The character is an extension of the actress." She embodies, in a profound and authentic manner, the epitome of acting prowess.

In other words, she doesn't merely 'act'—she becomes the character (Maltby et al., 2011, p. 354). Compared to experiential performance, star performance indeed represents "a more comprehensive approach" to achieving role-actor identity and psychological authenticity. However, while star performances may enable an actor to avoid the emotional strain of dual personality transformation during their performance and freely showcase their physical attributes, the moral value of such performances remains less apparent. Whether viewed as an entire cinematic or television text, or simply as a performance component, its moral worth should manifest through an altruistic impact.

To a certain extent, the box office success and audience ratings of films and television serve as key indicators of their market value. However, it is crucial to recognize that market value does not necessarily equate to altruistic value. The popularity of counterfeit and substandard products in the market poses a significant threat to consumers' physical and mental well-being, with higher box office success or audience ratings only exacerbating this harm. From the perspective of low-carbon aesthetic principles and artistic virtues, what star performances truly offer audiences is often no more than a superficial surge of emotions, triggered by external factors such as the stars' physical appearance and captivating body language.

In some instances, these performances are further tainted by pornographic or semi-pornographic elements introduced by certain stars, resulting in an immersive experience that falls under the category of high-carbon performance. Many viewers' infatuation with particular stars is driven by their addictive effect on them. Consequently, what audiences gain from star performances no longer constitutes pure spiritual enjoyment but gradually transforms into a kind of "spiritual opium." This, we believe, represents a serious moral flaw within star performances, one that has not yet received sufficient academic scrutiny.

Case analysis of the performance system of European symbolic school

European films have long placed great emphasis on symbolic performance, a tradition that dates back to Denis Diderot's plays. Diderot was known for setting the highest standards for dramatic actors, famously stating, "No emotion" (Diderot, 2008, p. 281). He asserted that, "The mediocre actor is highly emotional; many bad actors are less emotional; only a complete lack of emotion can make a great actor" (Diderot, 2008, p. 287). The term "transient emotion" refers to whether an actor forgets their own existence and fully immerses themselves in the role. Diderot questioned, "If an actor is emotional, how can they genuinely portray the same role twice with equal passion and achieve consistent success?" He argued that if an actor is too enthusiastic and impulsive in their first performance, they will be exhausted and emotionally depleted by the second. Instead, Diderot believed that an actor should study nature carefully and draw from their observations to maintain consistency and intensity across performances.

Diderot's philosophy suggests that, by observing emotions and drawing from thoughtful reflection, actors could strengthen their performances, adjusting their intensity based on the character's needs. He asserted that if an actor remains true to themselves while performing, they will fail to fully embody the character. His approach offers a logical rebuttal to Plato's accusation of an artist's "irrationality" and "divine obsession." However, a critical question remains: is it truly feasible to demand an actor to avoid all emotional comprehension from start to finish? Nonetheless, Diderot's viewpoint paved the way for a more structured performance approach, where the significance of posture was conveyed with verbal-like precision, and emotion could be objectified as a public gesture, rather than a private feeling.

One of the most influential theories aligned with this approach is Delsarte's semiotic theory, which he described as "the science of signs and gestures." Delsarte believed that by analyzing the organic form of a pose, one could deduce the emotions that give rise to it. "Semiotic theories like Delsarte's remind us that audiences do not intuitively perceive actors' emotions, but rather recognize them through ideation processes. As with any signifier process, both actors and audiences rely on widely accepted conventions regarding the relationship between emotions and the signs actors use to express them." In this regard, symbolic performance systems have their merits. Interestingly, the fundamental performance style of traditional Chinese operas, including Peking Opera, is essentially symbolic as well. The distinction, however, lies in the fact that Chinese drama emphasizes both symbolic form and emotional identification, which may be attributed to the influence of experiential performance systems.

After all, the experiential school system has long been acknowledged by Chinese theater circles. However, symbolic performances exhibit a notable weakness: an excessive focus on exaggeration, affectation, and the symbolic function of actions. While this approach may be suitable for public emotional expression through symbols in stage-based dramatic art forms, it becomes incongruous in the context of film and television, where the reproduction of reality through the lens serves as the

foundational mechanism. In other words, symbolized performances are often perceived as artificial by audiences due to the magnification effect of the camera lens. This artificiality diminishes viewers' engagement with the film, making it more difficult to evoke genuine emotions and inspire a deeper connection or enlightenment.

Research Objectives

This study aims to:

1. Investigate the core characteristics of low-carbon performance aesthetics in Chinese Kungfu films.
2. Analyze how different acting systems and representative actors (e.g., Jackie Chan, Jet Li) embody or challenge low-carbon aesthetic principles.
3. Evaluate audience and expert perspectives on low-carbon performance to inform the development of sustainable cinematic acting practices.

Research Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative mixed-methods approach, integrating textual analysis, expert interviews, and audience surveys to examine the application of low-carbon performance aesthetics in Chinese Kungfu films.

Textual Analysis

The researcher selected representative martial arts films, including *Police Story* (Jackie Chan), *Fearless* (Jet Li), *Infernal Affairs*, and *The Departed*, for comparative analysis. These films were chosen based on their cultural impact, contrasting performance styles, and relevance to low-carbon aesthetic principles. Key scenes were analyzed focusing on action design, emotional depth, and performance realism.

Expert Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five professionals from the fields of film directing, acting, and media studies. The interviews explored experts' interpretations of "low-carbon performance," perceptions of acting methods in Chinese martial arts cinema, and views on sustainable performance aesthetics.

Audience Surveys

A qualitative survey involving 20 university students and regular film audiences familiar with Kungfu

films was conducted. Participants provided feedback on the emotional authenticity, realism, and viewer engagement of selected film scenes. These responses were used to triangulate the findings and support the textual and expert analysis.

This multi-method research design allows for a well-rounded and credible examination of how low-carbon aesthetics are conceptualized, represented, and received in contemporary Chinese Kungfu cinema.

Results and Discussion

Comparison between Hong Kong's first edition of *Infernal Affairs* and Hollywood's imitation of *The Departed*

The concept of low-carbon performance involves the creation of a form of performing art that aligns with the principles of low-carbon aesthetics and theories in film and television (Ma, 2015). Low-carbon aesthetics refers to an enlightening or purifying emotional experience elicited by the realistic content of aesthetic objects in relation to the aesthetic subject. Only films and television productions that adhere to this aesthetic framework can be considered low-carbon film and television art, characterized primarily by their artistic realism. But what exactly defines artistic realism in performances? To explore this, we can compare two films with identical titles and subjects: the original Hong Kong version of *Infernal Affairs* (2002) and the Hollywood adaptation *The Departed* (2006). Despite sharing the same storyline, renowned directors, and notable cast members, both films achieved significant box office success and are regarded as classics in martial arts cinema. However, upon closer inspection, there are notable differences between the two.

According to the researcher, the main discrepancy lies in the degree of intuitive authenticity each film conveys, which can be understood through two key aspects. First, there is a distinction in action design. The Hong Kong version features elaborate and intricate fight sequences that require specialized filming techniques. These scenes captivate audiences with their flamboyance and aesthetic appeal, characteristic of Chinese kung fu films. However, the fighting sequences are noticeably slower, with visible traces of artificial choreography and performance. In contrast, the Hollywood adaptation of *The Departed* employs a different style in action design—fast, ruthless, and smooth. While the action may not be as extravagant as in the Hong Kong version, it effectively creates a stronger sense of realism for the audience. Even simple actions, such as shooting at the ground, are executed with precision. This approach prioritizes authenticity over the grandeur and spectacle typically found in Hong Kong cinema, resulting in a more immersive and engaging experience for viewers. This marks the first major difference in how the films convey intuitive realism.



Figure 1: As a Hong Kong film, Infernal Affairs has a strong Oriental cultural flavor, emphasizing emotional delicacy and philosophical thinking, and promoting the development of the story through dialogue and emotional expression . The unique style of the film breaks the binary opposition of traditional police films, and shows the complexity and multi-dimensional heart of the characters .

The second key distinction lies in the performance style. The Hong Kong version features a prominent cast, including renowned actors like Andy Lau, Tony Leung Chiu-wai, and Tsang Chi-wai in leading roles. These performances are defined by a dramatic intensity typical of Hong Kong cinema, where the actors often emphasize heightened emotions and expressive gestures. In contrast, the performances in *The Departed* adopt a more restrained and subtle approach, with a focus on conveying internal conflict through minimalistic gestures and nuanced facial expressions. This difference in acting styles further contributes to the variance in how the films are perceived in terms of artistic realism and emotional engagement.



Figure 2: The Departed, on the other hand, embodies the large-scale production and complex narrative of American films, integrates a large number of social and historical backgrounds, and reveals the multicultural and moral dilemmas of American society through grand scenes and profound thematic discussions . Scorsese's emphasis on avoiding the influence of the original film made it significantly different from Infernal Affairs in its spiritual core .

However, their performances often carry a certain degree of theatricality or artificiality. In particular, there is a superficial sense of amusement in Tsang Chi-wai's portrayal, which introduces a comedic element that somewhat detracts from the audience's ability to fully immerse themselves in the story and emotionally connect with the characters. As a result, it becomes challenging for viewers to maintain focus on the plot developments. In contrast, Leonardo DiCaprio's performance, alongside other powerhouse actors like Jack Nicholson and Mark Wahlberg in the Hollywood adaptation, feels remarkably natural and authentic in every movement, spoken line, or unspoken gesture. Their performances exude a sense of genuine realism, drawing audiences deeper into the narrative. When considering both aspects—intuitive reality and objective realism—it becomes evident that, overall, Hollywood's rendition surpasses its Chinese counterpart in delivering a more immersive and convincing portrayal.

Case study of Jackie Chan and Jet Li's movie content

To enhance readers' understanding of the distinctive characteristics of action-based "low-carbon" performance, let us examine Jackie Chan's exceptional performance in *Police Story 1* (1985) and *Police Story 2* (1988) as a prime example. Despite the film's intense action sequences and physical stunts, it stood out not just for its spectacle but for the unique realism Chan brought to his role. According to researchers, the key to the film's success lies in its blend of intuitive and objective portrayals of action and character (Gallagher, 2006). Jackie Chan's mastery of low-carbon performance captivated audiences and critics alike. Unlike other martial arts films that rely heavily on exaggerated stunts or superhero-like abilities, Chan's performances in *Police Story* strike a balance between his humorous physicality and the grounded realism of his character's personal struggles. As a result, his character becomes the focal point amid all the chaotic action.



Figure 3: The key to the success of Police Story 1 is the unique realism Chan brings to his characters. Chan combines intuitive and objective action and characterization, and unlike other kung fu films that rely heavily on exaggerated stunts or superhero abilities, Chan's performances strike a balance between humorous physical representation and realism of the characters' personal struggles.

Stars have always been an extraordinary phenomenon in the martial arts genre. Much like Hollywood, where physical characteristics often influence casting choices, Jackie Chan's performances are known for blending comedy, vulnerability, and physical skill. This signature style is a form of "natural" performance, crafted to suit his abilities and familiar to audiences worldwide (Wu and Chan, 2007). Chan's characters often exude a "relatable everyman" quality, even as they perform death-defying stunts. This creates a sense of repetition, yet audiences are continually mesmerized by his energy and comedic

timing. In this sense, Chan's "natural" style easily triggers emotional responses from viewers without requiring deep intellectual engagement. While some might argue that his style leans into the "fast food" territory of cinema, it also demonstrates an impressive mastery of physical storytelling (Szeto,2008).

However, Jet Li's approach in films like *Fearless* diverges significantly from this formula. In *Fearless* (2006), Jet Li portrays Huo Yuanjia, a martial arts master who undergoes a journey of personal and philosophical growth. This role presents its own set of challenges, as the character not only demands complex martial arts choreography but also embodies profound emotional and psychological depth (Hunt, 2003). Unlike Chan's more lighthearted characters, Li's Huo Yuanjia must convey a transformation from arrogance to humility. Through subtle expressions and controlled movements, Li masterfully communicates Huo Yuanjia's internal struggles. His portrayal showcases a deep understanding of martial arts as not only a physical discipline but also a spiritual journey, which is a key element of low-carbon performance in this genre.



Figure 4: Huo Yuanjia, played by Jet Li in the film Fearless, had to show a transition from arrogance to humility. His image shows a deep understanding of martial arts, which is not only a physical training but also a spiritual journey, a key factor in the low-carbon performances of such films.

One of the most challenging aspects of Li's performance is in scenes that involve intense emotional confrontations, such as when Huo Yuanjia confronts the consequences of his own arrogance. In these moments, Li's facial expressions and body language are meticulously calibrated, allowing the audience to witness the gradual evolution of the character's psyche (Song, 2023). His ability to express the

complex inner world of a martial artist grappling with questions of honor, shame, and redemption is what sets this performance apart. There is no trace of exaggeration or artificiality in Li's portrayal of Huo Yuanjia, making it an excellent example of how a martial arts star can deliver a performance that resonates on both a physical and emotional level.

Another noteworthy aspect of Jet Li's performance is his ability to seamlessly transition between intense martial arts sequences and quieter, more introspective scenes. In *Fearless* (2006), the final duel between Huo Yuanjia and his foreign opponent is not just about physical prowess; it is imbued with a sense of philosophical reflection, a duel of principles as much as fists (Teo, 2015). Through minimalistic movements and deep, introspective gazes, Li conveys the gravity of the moment. Despite the action-packed nature of the film, Li's performance is understated yet deeply authentic, and it effectively bridges the gap between physical action and emotional depth. This approach, much like Colin Firth's in *The King's Speech*, provides the audience with an intuitive sense of reality and highlights the profound human instincts of the character.

Jackie Chan and Jet Li have both cemented their legacies in the martial arts genre, but their approaches to performance diverge significantly. Chan's performances are known for their physical comedy and relatable everyman qualities, whereas Li's portrayals often focus on spiritual growth and emotional complexity. In *Police Story I* (1985), Chan showcases his signature blend of humor and daring stunts, creating a sense of grounded realism that keeps audiences engaged. In contrast, *Fearless* allows Jet Li to delve into a more profound exploration of human nature, using martial arts as a metaphor for personal redemption. Both actors exemplify different facets of low-carbon performance, with Chan leaning into physicality and Li emphasizing emotional depth. These performances, which balance intuitive and objective realities, represent the epitome of low-carbon artistry in martial arts cinema.

Conclusion

This study highlights the importance of performance authenticity in Chinese Kung Fu films through the lens of low-carbon aesthetics. It argues that linguistic individualism, emotional restraint, and embodied realism contribute to a more sustainable and emotionally resonant cinematic experience. By examining the acting styles of iconic figures such as Jackie Chan and Jet Li, the study reveals contrasting yet complementary approaches: Jackie Chan's comedic timing and physical improvisation reflect low-carbon spontaneity, while Jet Li's disciplined movements and philosophical aura evoke the introspective calm rooted in traditional Chinese thought.

The research also explores how Chinese martial arts cinema is positioned at the intersection of ecological values and cultural expression. It suggests that "low-carbon performance"—defined as emotionally sustainable, ethically conscious, and physically grounded acting—can serve as an

alternative to overstimulated spectacle. Such performances promote a more nuanced and responsible form of screen expression, one that balances energy, empathy, and identity.

However, this study is not without limitations. It primarily draws from selected textual and aesthetic analyses, and while it includes observations from expert commentaries, it does not incorporate large-scale empirical audience studies. Future research should explore quantitative and cross-cultural audience responses to low-carbon aesthetics, as well as expand comparative studies across different cinematic traditions.

Ultimately, the research advocates for a paradigm shift in performance theory—moving toward a low-carbon aesthetic model that emphasizes restraint, authenticity, and cultural rootedness. This shift offers meaningful insights not only for the evolution of Chinese Kung Fu cinema but also for the broader development of sustainable performance practices in global screen cultures.

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