East Goes West - Chinese Filmmakers in the United States

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"Entering the Cinema of Attractions' Matrix: Yuen Woo-Ping's Merging of New Hollywood Spectacle with Kung-Fu Choreography"

On its ascension to its current status as Hollywood's chief competitor and collaborator, Chinese cinema has benefited from a select group of filmmakers who contributed to blockbuster films overseas. Many of these filmmakers, including Yuen Woo-Ping, returned home and fused the awe-inducing special effects (e.g. "the bullet time effect") of the new wave of Hollywood's cinema of attractions with the acrobatics of Chinese *wuxia* and Kung Fu films. This amalgamation alters some fundamental stylistic aspects of shooting and editing traditional *wuxia* and Kung Fu scenes. However, my paper will argue that these stylistic changes do not distract our attention from what, phenomenologically, was always at the heart of these scenes: the precise physicality of the martial artist's performance. Rather these transformations still align with our desire to be dazzled by the moving image and have our comprehension of what is real or possible expanded.

Yuen Woo-Ping's oeuvre fits the parameters of this study perfectly. As Sasha Vojkovic writes in her study of Yuen's *Wing Chun* (1994), his "...art as a filmmaker is interdependent with his genius as an action choreographer" (Chapter 4)[1]. His work in Hong Kong cinema prior to working in Hollywood will be briefly examined to establish his former style, followed by close readings of the formal aspects of several of the fighting scenes in *The Matrix* trilogy that examine how Yuen adapted his style to function with the groundbreaking special effects of those films. Finally I will demonstrate how Yuen brought these innovations back home, specifically in his work on *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004) and *True Legend* (2010). These readings will be informed by Vivian Sobchack, David Bordwell, Tom Gunning, Stephen Teo, Gina Marchetti, Peter Hitchcock, and others.

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[1] Vojkovic, Sasha. *Yuen Woo Ping's Wing Chun*. Hong Kong University Press, 2009. Kindle file.