

## How the Director Shapes the Core Artistic Appeal of Film

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### Abstract

Cinema's essence lies in images, a visual medium that precedes language and sets it apart from other arts. According to Mackendrick (2005), "Film can also tell stories purely in movement, in action and reaction" (p. 3). The director can convey the story directly to the audience's senses through the construction of the film's visual language. However, the progression of film technology has increasingly directed audiences' attention toward cinema's textual dimension—that is, its non-visual elements such as social meaning, dialogue, and thematic structure. There is less and less discussion about film visual design. These aspects are undoubtedly important, but when we become overly immersed in the "literary" qualities of cinema, we often overlook the painstaking effort that creators invest in its purely visual language—the very elements that fundamentally distinguish film from other art forms. This paper primarily uses Park Chan-wook's *Decision to Leave* and Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* as case studies to explore the aspects of visual design through which directors can shape a film's unique artistic appeal. This study adopts a case analysis approach, providing close readings and comparisons of key scenes from the two films to examine the directors' creative strategies in the use of visual framing and mise-en-scène, lighting and color tone, and props. The findings suggest that the director, as the core of film creation, not only constructs a unique artistic style through visuals but also evokes emotional and social resonance through them.

**Key Words:** Visual language, Artistic appeal, Directorial style, Korean cinema, Mise-en-scène

### Introduction

As an integrated art form that combines cinematography, visual art, music, and more, film is distinguished from other arts by its inherently collaborative nature (Liu, 2025). The completion of its works often involves the joint efforts of many people. Yet among the many members of a film crew, the director's role in the creative process is difficult to define precisely, due to the wide scope of their responsibilities. From major aspects such as actor performance to minor details like a single blade of grass in the background, nearly everything requires the director's guidance and decision-making.

So, with so many staff members involved and under so much work pressure, how does a director influence the overall visual effect of a film through his creative means? And through what specific means is the director's unique artistic charm conveyed to the audience?

In recent years, Korean directors such as Park Chan-wook and Bong Joon-ho have become the focus of the international film industry with their strong personal style and profound social insight. Park Chan-wook's *Decision to Leave*, with its visually stunning

imagery, explores the complex relationship between human emotions and moral order as a visual poem (Spikima Movies, 2023, 10:04). Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* shows the inequality and class conflict in modern society with its vivid spatial metaphors and social criticism. Both films have not only received high artistic acclaim but also demonstrate the irreplaceable role of the director in cinematic creation through the cohesion of visual design.

The study aims to analyze specific aspects of the visual language in *Decision to Leave* and *Parasite* to reveal how the directors influence the overall artistic effect of the films through their creative techniques, and to explore how they use visual expression to convey their artistic charm to the audience.

### Literature review

A substantial body of research has already been conducted on the films of Bong Joon-ho and Park Chan-wook. Researchers such as Jia (2024), Ji (2025), Naidu (2022) have focused on the representation of female characters in Park Chan-wook's films. Scholars such as Octavia (2021), Cheng (2022) and Dewi et al. (2021) have examined the social significance of Bong Joon-ho's films. Gümil (2020) and Shim (2017) have reviewed the careers and works of both directors in their research. Wu (2023) and Zhao & Kim (2024) examine Bong Joon-ho's films from a semiotic perspective, emphasizing his use of visual symbolism and surrealism to reflect social issues and realities. Similarly, Jiang and Chun analyze Bong Joon-ho's genre narrative strategies and social metaphors, emphasizing his ability to intertwine aesthetic style with thematic depth (Jiang & Budan, 2022). In the context of global cinema, Kim (2023) discusses the internationalization of Korean cinema, noting how directors like Park Chan-wook and Bong Joon-ho have navigated transnational contexts while maintaining distinct visual and narrative styles. Although these studies provide valuable insights into different aspects of film, most either focus on thematic interpretation or isolate the analysis of directorial styles. There remains a noticeable gap in comparative analyses focusing specifically on the visual design strategies of Park Chan-wook and Bong Joon-ho.

### Methodology

This study adopts a combination of scene analysis and comparative research, using Park Chan-wook's *Decision to Leave* and Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* as case studies to explore in depth how directors influence the overall artistic effect of a film through visual design, and how they convey their distinctive artistic charm to the audience. To explore this issue, the study conducts close textual analysis of several carefully crafted visual designs in the two films, identifying the specific directorial techniques used in cinematic creation and their impact on audience perception. In addition, through comparative analysis, the study examines the similarities and differences in the two directors' use of visual language, revealing how their personalized creative styles leave a distinctive imprint on their films. The study also combined audience feedback and film review analysis to explore how the director's creative techniques can trigger the audience's emotional resonance and ideological reflection. Through this methodology, this article aims to reveal the formation mechanism of the charm of film art from the perspective of director creation, and provide some perspectives for the audience to

understand the core role of the director in the film.

At the same time, this study adopts a director-centered visual analysis theoretical framework. It treats the film image as an intentional construct, where no detail is arbitrary (Bordwell & Thompson, 2004). These visual components do not merely illustrate the story; they actively shape how the story is told, and in many cases, they generate new layers of meaning that extend beyond the plot itself (McVey, 2010). Therefore, to truly understand a film and the director's intentions, it is essential to examine not only what is being told but how it is being shown—such as the use of camera work, lighting, color, and props.

This approach follows a simple yet rigorous interpretive principle: examining each visual element of the film in relation to its narrative, and asking "Why does this appear here, in this way?" While this method is primarily intuitive and interpretive, it is also informed by traditions in formalist film theory and mise-en-scène analysis, both of which emphasize the expressive power of visual form in cinema (Bordwell, 2005; Deldjoo et al., 2016).

## Research Results and Discussion

### 1.The Camera Work and the Design of the Scene Convey the Emotion

The camera work and spatial expression carry as much narrative weight and meaning as the words spoken by the characters, and it also has the ability to convey information about events that cannot be expressed through dialogue (Ghosh, 2022). Scene construction is also the soul of cinematic art, as set design provides the film with its basic appearance, historical, cultural context, and relevant material details. Beyond these qualities, set design also helps to define characters and gives form and depth to their psychological states (Bergfelder et al., 2007).

#### 1.1 Park Chan-wook: The Dual Construction of Cinematic Aesthetics and Emotional Symbolism in *Decision to Leave*

Camera work and scene design are important parts of a director's visual language, and through the careful arrangement of the framing, they can intuitively convey narrative information and emotional connotations and ultimately serve the director's theme expression (Iyer, 2024). Some of Park Chan-wook's earlier works also demonstrate that he is precisely such a director—one with solid basic skills in visual language and image portrayal (See Table 1 for analysis of earlier works).

Table 1

Film Title	Visual Technique	Narrative/Emotional Function
<i>Stoker</i> (2013)	Dutch-angle shots	Evoke a sense of unease
<i>Stoker</i> (2013)	Contrasting interior designs of the daughter's and mother's rooms	Reveal the emotional and psychological differences between the two characters
<i>Oldboy</i> (2003)	Non-linear time montage in long take	Breaks linear time while maintaining emotional continuity
<i>Oldboy</i> (2003)	Geometric wallpaper	Conveys a strong sense of artificial design

**Note.** The description of the geometric wallpaper is based on the visual analysis by the Bilibili creator *Zhongduizhangtongzhi* (2020).

The visual construction in these films reflects Park Chan-wook's long-standing visual tendencies, which reach new maturity in *Decision to Leave*, where the shot compositions are rich in symbolism and emotional tension. For example, in the first interrogation scene between the male and female protagonists, a mirror is used to create a symmetrical composition. At the same time, the reflected images subtly hint at their inner states, forming a middle ground, while the tape recorder in the background establishes perspective. The changing focuses of the camera during the interrogation dialogue present the disguise or sincerity of the male and female protagonists when they speak, showing the subtle emotional relationship between the male and female protagonists and emphasizing the psychological distance between them.

Similarly, the film's repeated use of split composition, a technique frequently seen in Park's earlier works such as *Sympathy for Lady Vengeance* and *The Handmaiden*, physically isolates characters within the frame, serving as a visual metaphor for emotional distance and unbridgeable divides. For example, in the bathroom scene where Hae-jun and his wife talk to each other after meeting Seo-rae in Ipo, director Park deliberately uses a door frame to separate him and his wife when Hae-jun mentions "we," which shows the absolute importance of the police in Hae-jun's heart and strengthens his image of "mountain" (Zhongduizhangtongzhi, 2022, 11:30). In addition, Park Chan-wook focuses on layering in his scene design, often showing multiple layers of foreground, midground, and background at the same time. This multi-layered composition allows the audience to obtain an extensive amount of visual information in a single frame while also depicting the subtle relationships of the characters. For example, in the scene where Hae-jun and Seo-rae meet for the first time and have a conversation in the morgue, the director sets up Seo-rae's side face, Hae Jun's front face, and his assistant in the front, center, and back view, respectively, to make the scene more layered.

In addition to rich compositions, Park Chan-wook also puts a lot of effort into the wallpaper, tiles, and even the roof of the space. The clear lines are drawn by the gaps between the wall tiles in the shooting range at the beginning of the film, the shutters and frosted paper on glass in the police station during the second interrogation scene after dinner, and the earthy-colored wall tiles and the green wall panels with metal edges in the toilets when Seo-rae is brushing her teeth. All depict the routine style of the group of police officers that Hae-jun represents.

The above-mentioned individual shots and designs are not enough to see the director's performance in the movie, but in *Decision to Leave*, almost every frame is huge in terms of visual design information and has its implications and references. The vast amount of each other's lens composition and scene design subconsciously influence the audience and create different content, but all serve the same theme to express—The relationship between human emotion and moral order.

## 1.2 Bong Joon-ho: Visual Representation of Spatial Layout and Class Metaphors in *Parasite*

Compared to Park Chan-wook, Bong Joon-ho's use of camera movement and spatial design is often more understated, yet still effectively serves the film's expressive goals (See Table 2 for analysis of earlier works).

Table 2

Film Title	Visual Technique	Narrative/Emotional Function
<i>Memories of Murder</i> (2003)	The long take at the crime scene in the opening	Maintains on- and off-screen continuity, offering a documentary-style view of the crime scene
<i>Snowpiercer</i> (2013)	Progressively arranged train cars	Metaphorically represent social class

In *Parasite*, spatial design and camera movement create powerful social metaphors, intensifying the audience's reflection on the film's central theme of class. He skillfully uses "up and down" as the core element of the space, which is used as a metaphor for the division and mobility of social classes. For example, the scene switch between the semi-basement and the mansion not only demonstrates the class gap through the contrast of physical space but also deepens the theme through camera movement. A vertical motion shot at the beginning of the movie sets the tone of "up and down." In addition to this, camera movement also plays a central role in creating a tense atmosphere for *Parasite*. For example, in the scene where Park's family cancels their camping trip and goes home, Bong Joon-ho lets the camera quickly tilt and pan to show the various panic activities of the Kim family and shows the authenticity through a coherent long shot, creating an illusion that everything is happening in real time, increasing the sense of panic (Ivarsdottir & Alamari, 2025).

Bong Joon-ho also contrasts the design of the two families' living spaces, with the streets outside the Kim family's home sloping upward, conveying the impression that the upper class is above them, while the streets near the Park family's home either slope upward toward their mansion or descend from it. Meanwhile, Bong Joon-ho never uses the camera to illustrate to the audience the actual distance from the semi-basement into the mansion when the Ki-woo family enters the mansion, but when escaping from the mansion during the rainstorm, the camera follows them on a steady descent, revealing the tragedy step by step as they pass through ramps, tunnels, and staircases—until they finally return to the flooded semi-basement (Thomas Flight, 2020, 5:09). The contrast in formal between the ambiguous ascent and the clear descent reveals that their position within the upper class is merely an illusion.

Moreover, Bong Joon-ho repeatedly uses sharp lines such as glass seam lines, vertical handles of refrigerators, and vertical straight lines of walls in indoor scenes to separate the poor from the rich, and even in scenes without obvious lines, he also puts a lot of sundries in the middle of the screen to push the characters to the two sides of the screen, creating a sense of distance between the two classes at all times. In one of the most intuitive scenes of class conflict in the film, when Park's family suddenly returns, Kim's family can only hide under a

table. In the scene where the two families are in the same space, Bong Joon-ho also relentlessly designs the upper and lower structures, with one group on the sofa and the other group under a table, which all depicts the visual split between the classes in a straightforward way.

It is also worth mentioning the design of the lines here. It is that the Parks notice something strange in the living room through a clue that runs through the whole film—the smell, the poor smell. Here, bad smells distinguish the lower classes from the upper classes. Poor people always smell, no matter how hard they try to hide it with nice clothes (Farahbakhsh & Ebrahimi, 2021). Movies are audiovisual arts and often lack descriptions of smells. However, Bong Joon-ho introduced the description of smells in *Parasite* and used it to promote the development of the plot, making smell an important class metaphor in the film. The smell in *Parasite* is no longer just a sense of smell but a metaphor for the brand of the lower class, implying strong class discrimination. The director uses smell to visualize class conflict, which contains a strong critical power (Wang, 2023).

Park Chan-wook and Bong Joon-ho combine visual language and narrative themes in very different ways through camera work and set design. Park Chan-wook explores the inner worlds and emotional conflicts of his characters through delicate framing and multi-layered composition, while Bong Joon-ho reveals the antagonisms and dilemmas of social classes through spatial metaphors and vertical camera movements. These two styles not only enrich their respective cinematic languages but also reflect the unique value of the director's design of shots and scenes in the movie narrative, strengthening the director's role in the movie.

## **2. Lighting tones and color schemes shape the character's image.**

The construction of film space is inseparable from light and shadow. Gilles Deleuze mentioned the relationship between shadow and image many times in his research on film space. "These two forces constantly intersect, like two wrestlers, and give space a solid depth, a perspective both clear and distorted, which becomes populated with shadows" (Xiong, 2020). At the same time, with the continuous advancement of technology, the advent of the color imaging era has made color an indispensable part of film language. Color plays a unique expressive role in modern film art concepts and narratives. It can convey artistic effects that go beyond the color itself and deliver information and connotations that the plot cannot directly express (Tang, 2018).

### **2.1 Park Chan-wook: The Emotional Tension and Psychological Suggestion of Color in *Decision to Leave***

Lighting and color are important parts of the visual language of film, which not only create a specific emotional atmosphere but also enhance the narrative and the depth of the theme expression. This stimulation to the audience is the most sensory and physiological. Park Chan-wook's use of lighting and color in earlier works is bold yet precise (See Table 3 for analysis of earlier works).



Table 3

Film Title	Visual Technique	Narrative/Emotional Function
<i>Oldboy</i> (2003)	The use of green lighting, a type of "forbidden light" in film aesthetics.	Underscores the story of a "forbidden love" within the film
<i>The Handmaiden</i> (2016)	Uses different front lighting for different characters	Constructs contrast: Hideko as pale and delicate, Sook-hee as rough and unrefined
<i>Stoker</i> (2013)	Varying saturations of green in the house's communal spaces	Create an atmosphere of surface-level contrast that still feels harmonious.

In *Decision to Leave*, the use of light and color is particularly delicate, serving the expression of emotion and giving the picture a poetic aesthetic. The film externalizes the psychological changes of the characters through the alternation of cold and warm tones, suggesting the emotional situation between the characters. For example, when Hae-jun and Seo-rae meet for the first time in the police station, the main color of the scene is cool blue-green, which highlights the rationality between the characters. In the subsequent private conversation, the scene gradually switches to warm tones. When the two eat dinner together, they even directly use a candle-like soft light to bring the emotional distance closer. Hae-jun and Seo-rae's acting of cleaning the table like a couple after a meal, which makes the audience feel the warmth of their relationship.

Furthermore, Park Chan-wook is also particularly good at using the metaphorical function of color in the design of scene tones. For example, in the scene where Hae-jun cooks for Seo-rae for the first time, the film changes the previous cold blue-green tones and turns to ambiguous and neutral warm tones. But from the moment Hae-jun identified Seo-rae as a criminal, film directly from the warm color suddenly turned into a cold tone. The director uses the overall color changes in these images to reveal the emotional state between the characters from mutual affection to suspicion.

In the character clothing color selection, Hae-jun often wears plain black, white and grey. The only changing element in the costume is the tie, which symbolizes his identity as a "modern man." It gradually shifts from a solid color at the beginning to a complex striped pattern in the end, revealing his increasingly conflicted inner state. The influence of various rules in modern society has made Hae-jun unable and dared not to follow his heart to love Seo-rae (Zhongduizhangtongzhi, 2022, 11:29). In contrast, the color design of the clothing of "wise man" Seo-rae is bold and jumping, which is very consistent with Seo-rae's casual and brave character. It always forms contrasting or complementary colors with the colors of the surrounding environment, indicating that she is out of tune with the surrounding things. The only time in the film, when the two are not involved in the identity of the police and the suspect, is during the dating scene at Songgwang Temple. They wear clothes of similar colors to show their closeness at the moment. The contrasting and complementary color scheme of the costumes, on the one hand, gives the audience a strong visual stimulus when they are together, but on the other hand, it shows the difference in the nature of their personalities. Just like, even though the color of the mountains sometimes resembles that of the sea, their

essence is ultimately different (Festival de Cannes, 2022, 17:28).

This is particularly evident in the director's design of the two characters' living spaces. Hae-jun's home mostly reflects hard right angles. The police station is mostly built with cold metal building materials and uses sharp orange partitions to emphasize the functionality of the space and the clear class distinction within the police station (Zhongduizhangtongzhi, 2022, 1:45). Therefore, Hae-jun, who is accustomed to following the rules and regulations, naturally can't accept abstraction or ambiguity in his logic. The order has become the foundation of modern civilized people's life, especially for people like Hae-jun, it is more priority than the existence of life. On the contrary, Seo-rae's living space often embodies the soft curves, most of the home is a warm and primitive building material such as wood, and a small amount of metal to set off the texture of the wood to emphasize the beauty and romance of the space. Although it is a different spatial concept, it presents a mixture of everyone is benevolent and wise, there is no absolute (Zhongduizhangtongzhi, 2022, 10:12). The lighting tone and clothing color work together under the director's influence and ingenuity to successfully portray a full and three-dimensional character, allowing the audience to empathize with the character's experience and psychology and thus appreciate the director's work.

## 2.2 Bong Joon-ho: Class Conflict and Emotional Resonance in the Light and Shadow Contrasts of *Parasite*

Bong Joon-ho adopts a more naturalistic and realistic approach to lighting, yet still uses it effectively to enrich the viewer's emotion and film's narrative (See Table 4 for analysis of earlier works).

Table 4

Film Title	Visual Technique	Narrative/Emotional Function
<i>Mother</i> (2009)	Daylight is deliberately muted until the final scene, when sunlight finally breaks through.	When the protagonist chooses to forget the past, the audience's emotions are released like suppressed sunlight.
<i>Okja</i> (2017)	Cold tones in the lab; warm, natural tones in the protagonist's environment.	Visualizes contrast between the lab and the protagonist's natural environment.

Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* pays more attention to the combination of realism and social metaphor in the treatment of lighting and color. In the film, the intensity of lighting and the contrast of colors are often used to imply the social status and fate of the characters. For example, the scenes in the mansion of the rich family use a lot of soft natural light and even artificial light to create a luxurious and orderly atmosphere. The sunlight's preference for the rich people symbolizes the superior status and control of the rich class. On the other hand, the semi-basement is always in a dark environment, with only a small amount of light coming in from the windows, and the shadows occupy the main part of the screen, symbolizing the depressing and inescapable predicament of the poor family.

There is also a scene in the film where the Kim family plots to frame the former



housekeeper, and the use of lighting is very brilliant. Though the scene revolves around a scheme that should have remained in the shadows, the film instead illuminates it with bright lighting and elegant, soaring strings (Muyushuixin, 2020, 38:39). The solemn and bright soundtrack and lighting form a strong contrast with the plot of the frame-up, creating an absurd comedy effect. Moreover, the scene uses crisp, efficient cross-cutting to stitch together the preparation and the actual act of framing, linking two distinct timeframes into a cohesive flow. The crossover between preparation and execution shows that everything is within Kim family's plan, reflecting their cleverness and the rich family's stupidity. The use of colors is equally metaphorical, for example, the white and green in the mansion represent cleanliness and hope. In stark contrast, the dull grey and dark yellow tones in the semi-basement directly reflect the despair and chaos of the poor families.

Park Chan-wook and Bong Joon-ho display very different but equally skillful artistic techniques in their use of light and color. Park Chan-wook tends to express the subtle ups and downs of emotions through the changes of warm and cold tones, while Bong Joon-ho intuitively shows the social reality of class division through the contrast of light and color. The works of both parties prove that for directors, lighting and color are not only important components of the beauty of the film but also important means to enhance narrative tension and theme expression.

### 3. The Visual Cues in Prop Design Enhance the Symbolic Metaphors

Metaphor is widely acknowledged as a cornerstone of both language and cognition. Metaphor serves not merely as an ornamental language but as a crucial tool for interpreting texts. It functions as a key organizational principle in narratives, efficiently conveying meaning by linking signs or engaging various cognitive structures, whether basic or conventional (Melinte, 2022).

#### 3.1 Park Chan-wook: Prop Metaphors and the Potential Ties of Character Relationships in *Decision to Leave*

The use of props as metaphor is a recurring motif throughout Park Chan-wook's body of work (See Table 5 for analysis of earlier works).

Table 5

Film Title	Visual Technique	Narrative/Emotional Function
<i>Sympathy for Lady Vengeance</i> (2005)	Red flame-patterned wallpaper	Serves as a metaphor for revenge
<i>Stoker</i> (2013)	Leather shoes and high heels	Distinguish between minors and adults

Many of the modern technological products and props that appear in *Decision to Leave* have symbolic meanings. For example, the mobile phone in the film is a dual symbol of connection and isolation. Hae-jun communicated with Seo-rae through mobile phone translation, and Seo-rae indirectly confessed her feelings to Hae-jun through mobile phone

recording. But in the end, Hae-jun could not find Seo-rae through mobile phone positioning. The mobile phone becomes a prop that connects and blocks the emotions of two people, creating a contradictory emotion that is both intimate and distant. As a ubiquitous tool in modern society, the mobile phone is both a bridge for emotional transmission and a barrier to intimate relationships in the film. It symbolizes the contradictions in modern relationships: the convenience of technology has shortened the distance between people, but it is ultimately just a screen that cannot replace the real interaction between people's hearts. Through this prop, Park Chan-wook not only expresses the emotional complexity between the characters but also conveys the hidden worries about modern human relationships.

Similar plots include Hae-jun's dependence on massage guns and smart watches. The most obvious images in the film are the mountains and the sea, which are symbols of truth and mystery, respectively (Spikima Movies, 2023). In the film, Hae-jun is often drawn to higher ground during his investigations, such as the scene where he uncovers the truth of Ki Do-soo's case, which is filmed at the mountaintop. The physical ascent he makes while climbing the mountain mirrors the logical progression of his investigation—both follow a similar sense of order, moving step by step from nothing to clarity. Therefore, the mountain is the embodiment of truth for Hae-jun. On the contrary, when he is caught up in the mystery, he is in the sea. At the end of the film, a pile of sand and rocks on the beach is washed down by the waves, and Seo-rae disappears in the sea, and the camera pulls away to show her becoming one with the vast ocean. Because Hae-jun is such a "mountain" person, the mountain symbolizes loneliness and distance, suggesting that the two of them cannot really cross the emotional barrier. The sea, on the other hand, symbolizes unfathomable emotions and fate. In the final scene, it becomes the ultimate refuge for Seo-rae as she escapes from reality. This use of a natural symbol not only adds a layer of mystery to the film but also elevates its theme of fate to a poetic dimension.

### 3.2 Bong Joon-ho: Class Symbolism and Narrative Promotion of Symbolic Objects in *Parasite*

Prop metaphors also play a significant narrative role in many of Bong Joon-ho's films (See Table 6 for analysis of earlier works).

Table 6

Film Title	Visual Technique	Narrative/Emotional Function
<i>Mother</i> (2009)	Silver acupuncture needles	Initially serve as healing instruments but later become tools the mother uses in an attempt to control her son.
<i>Okja</i> (2017)	Factory rescue's sole clue: the necklace	Amid capitalist indifference, the emotional bond symbolized by the necklace is the only redemption.

In *Parasite*, Bong Joon-ho gives multiple metaphors and expressions to a "landscape stone." The stone was given to Kim's family by Min-hyuk, saying that it would bring them

good luck, but then Ki-woo was injured by the stone, turning it into a destructive tool. The stone symbolizes the plans or dreams of Kim's family, it even has a surreal feel to it in the movie. When Ki-woo took a stone and wanted to kill the housekeeper's family in the basement, it seemed that he used a lot of strength to lift the heavy stone, but then the stone was easily lifted by the housekeeper's husband, and it did not cause fatal harm to Ki-woo. When the rain floods the semi-basement and Ki-woo's dreams of a better life are dashed, it magically floats on the surface of the water. At the end of the movie, when Ki-woo has given up on the impractical idea of one step to the top of the world, it is able to sink back down into the creek, and it looks like a real stone again. The stone is uncertain, and it changes from time to time, which makes the audience wonder whether the dream of the poor to turn over a new leaf and live a happy life is real or not, and whether it can be realized (Muyushuixin, 2020). This uncertainty highlights the difficulty of class transition and the harsh reality of dashed dreams. The stone is also a typical clue designed by Bong Joon-ho in the film. Its properties are unchanged, but every time it appears, the environment around the protagonist changes dramatically. Therefore, the audience will have a new feeling and interpretation of the same stone because of the changes in their mood caused by the appearance of the stone in different sections while watching the film.

As for the basement of the mansion, this underground space is not only a turning point in the plot but also the core scene of the movie's class metaphor. When the Kim family accidentally discovers the secret of the basement, it also symbolizes the silent existence of the oppressed, the lowest, neglected group of people in society, revealing the "invisible side" of class society. The internal struggles, fights and even sacrifices among them reflect the reality that the lower classes have to trample on each other in order to survive. Bong Joon-ho cleverly connects two impoverished families, both impacted by the bankruptcy of a traditional Taiwanese cake shop. As they manipulate and compete against each other, the story unfolds with a clear sense of irony and dark humor. But Bong Joon-ho reveals the internal conflicts among the lower classes of society through the funny plot of the Kim family and the original housekeeper couple. They show the audience that the lower class, the more selfish they will be, and the more complicated the way of survival will be because of the need to compete for limited resources (Zhongduizhangtongzhi, 2020). At the end of the movie, the episode in which Ki-taek hides in the basement further reinforces the tragedy of this underclass cycle.

Through the analysis of these specific semiotic props, Park Chan-wook and Bong Joon-ho have embedded the props and symbols into the narrative and visual system of the film in an extremely creative way, giving them deep symbolic meanings. The two directors not only enriched the expression of the movie visually but also deepened the theme of the movie through these details so that the audience could feel the narrative tension and emotional depth at multiple levels during the viewing process. This kind of symbolic treatment not only reflects the artistic pursuit of the directors but also demonstrates the unique charm of film as a comprehensive art.

## Conclusion

This study set out to investigate how film directors shape the artistic appeal of cinema through visual language. Using *Decision to Leave* and *Parasite* as primary cases, it examined how carefully constructed images contribute not only to aesthetic experience but also to emotional depth and thematic resonance. While previous sections detailed specific visual strategies, this conclusion focuses on how these strategies interact to shape the director's distinctive artistic appeal.

These visual elements do not operate in isolation. Rather, they interact to form a unified directorial grammar. In Park Chan-wook's work, framing and color design carry emotional nuance, while in Bong Joon-ho's films, spatial structure and object metaphor are deployed to critique class relations. Despite their stylistic divergence, both directors orchestrate visual cues to serve not only narrative progression but also philosophical commentary. This suggests that the visual system in their films functions as an integrated semiotic structure—a design language that operates with the same complexity as verbal storytelling.

By foregrounding the visual language of cinema, this study highlights the importance of seeing images not merely as illustrations of plot but as narrative agents in their own right. The visual elements—carefully chosen by the director—are meaningful precisely because they are intentional. This perspective not only deepens our understanding of cinematic authorship but also encourages a more attentive mode of spectatorship, one that constantly asks: Why is this image constructed this way? Future research may benefit from incorporating more films and directors into such analysis, expanding this visual-literary conversation to a broader cultural and stylistic spectrum.

This study also has the following limitations: To begin with, in terms of the scope of the study, only Park Chan-wook's *Decision to Leave* and Bong Joon-ho's *Parasite* were selected as the primary analysis samples, which failed to conduct an in-depth analysis of all the works of the two directors. This selective sampling fails to fully reflect the overall evolution and diversity of the two directors' artistic styles. Subsequently, regarding technical analysis, this study primarily focuses on visual language and does not fully cover the entirety of the directors' creative techniques. Ultimately, in relation to the theoretical framework, although a visual analysis model has been established, this framework may have limitations when explaining certain unique directorial styles. For example, the applicability of this analytical framework requires further validation when applied to the works of directors with a more experimental approach.

These limitations provide improvement directions and suggestions for subsequent research: the sample range can be expanded to include more works by more directors; the analysis dimension can be expanded to include other directing techniques such as narrative and performance; richer research methods can be adopted, and the theoretical framework can be improved to make it more inclusive and explanatory.

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