

The Contemporary Expression of Nationalized Comedy: Observing the Innovative Practices of the Chinese Animation School through Nobody

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Abstract: Taking the latest production of the Shanghai Animation Film Studio (hereafter referred to as SAFS), *Nobody*, as a case study, this paper explores the innovative practice of nationalized comedy within the contemporary Chinese animation school. Building upon the creative experience of Yao-Chinese Folktales, the film employs a combination of two-dimensional ink wash hand-drawing and digital craftsmanship. Narratively, it deconstructs the classic Journey to the West motif from the perspective of “small demons,” transforming the grand narrative into a humorous expression of grassroots experience through the structural device of “pretending to join the pilgrimage—repeatedly being exposed.” The film’s comedic mechanisms emerge from a fusion of identity dislocation, trick deconstruction, and self-ridicule, where the humor relies not only on semantics but also on the interplay of audiovisual rhythm and the audience’s shared knowledge. On the aesthetic level, the integration of ink-wash blank space, rich color schemes, and operatic music turns nationalized style into an intrinsic emotional resource for narration. From a vertical comparative perspective, the film shifts the “hero-centered” focus toward the “ordinary condition,” thereby moving from “deification” to “humanization.” From a horizontal comparative perspective, it demonstrates how the SAFS comedy tradition is inherited while simultaneously infused with modern terms and social metaphors to enhance audience resonance. Furthermore, by paying tribute to SAFS’s own classics, the film links stylistic memory with contemporary sentiment. This study argues that *Nobody* continues the creative ethos of “neither repeating oneself nor imitating others,” and illustrates that the integration of national aesthetics with contemporary terms and comedic strategies represents a feasible pathway for the Chinese animation school to move toward a “new classic.”

Keywords: Nationalized Comedy; Chinese Animation School; Two-Dimensional Ink-and-Wash; Journey to the West Motif

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1. Introduction

In the summer of 2025, the Shanghai Animation Film Studio (SAFS) released its feature-length animated film *Nobody* in cinemas. The film continues the creative spirit of the web animation Yao-Chinese Folktales, rewriting the Journey to the West motif from the perspective of “small demons” and transforming the grand “pilgrimage” narrative into an absurd adventure of grassroots characters. Upon its release, the film sparked heated discussion, not only because its humor and ink-and-wash

style evoked memories of SAFS classics, but also because its metaphors of real-life conditions resonated across different generations. Chang Guangxi, an expert from the SAFS Art Committee, noted that the film demonstrates the enduring spirit of “neither imitating others nor repeating oneself” that SAFS has long upheld, now extended into a new era. He pointed out that while the film carries traditional Chinese styles, it also addresses contemporary social sentiments through a mode of comedy “tinged with sadness, and sadness suffused with hope,” embodying the creative power of the Chinese animation school in a new context. Zhou Keqin stressed that SAFS has consistently adhered to the production principle of being “suitable for both the old and the young.” Nobody achieves a balance between entertainment and thought, making it appropriate for family audiences while also provoking deeper reflection among younger viewers. Ling Shu went even further in praise, observing that the film “connects Journey to the West with ordinary people’s lives,” bringing the nationalized motif closer to everyday experience.

The starting point of this study lies precisely in such a contemporary context: as Chinese animation reaffirms the path of nationalization amid the multiple challenges of globalization and digitalization, Nobody raises a question—how can it achieve a verifiable innovative practice through humor, hand-drawn style, and national aesthetics without replicating the classics or blindly following trends? This paper will address three central issues: first, how does the film inherit and renew the tradition of nationalized comedy in its narrative, art, music, and comedic strategies? Second, in what ways does it contrast with the “Journey to the West lineage” of SAFS and other nationalized comedies? Third, what insights does this creative trajectory offer for the future development of the Chinese animation school? Through close textual analysis of the film itself, vertical comparison with classical works, horizontal comparison with other SAFS productions, as well as reference to interviews with the creators and opinions of Art Committee experts, this paper seeks to demonstrate the continuity and transformation from “national style” to “contemporary expression,” thereby illustrating how the Chinese animation school can establish a “new classic” within the context of the new era.ⁱⁱ

Figure 1. Poster of the animated film *Nobody* (Yu Shui, 2025)



2. Research Status

The concept of the Chinese animation school originated from the artistic consciousness of the mid-20th century. It is both a creative tradition and a cultural stance. At its core lies not the repetition of established forms but the continual exploration of new modes of expression grounded in national aesthetics, emphasizing a creative spirit of “taking ourselves as the principal subject.” This spirit has run through the entire course of Chinese animation’s development, maintaining its independent posture even amid the shock of globalization and marketization, and serving as a crucial marker that distinguishes Chinese

animation from other systems. ^[1] Nationalization is not merely the reproduction of visual symbols; rather, it is closely tied to a consciousness of cultural subjectivity, responding to social life through images and narratives. Such an orientation toward reality and audiences has endowed the Chinese animation school with sustained vitality in the international context. 6 ^[2] Theoretical retrospectives since the 20th century indicate that nationalization has been regarded as a key path to resisting cultural homogenization and safeguarding artistic independence. It is under this shared consensus that many animators have embraced the creative belief of “neither imitating others nor repeating oneself” ^[3].

In studies focusing on the integration of nationalization and comedy, existing research has revealed their profound compatibility. The national aesthetic emphasis on “depicting the spirit through form” is reflected not only in the expressive treatment of design and color, but also in its transformation on the narrative level into techniques such as exaggerated movement, role dislocation, and ironic emotion, thereby endowing comedy with a distinctive rhythm and tension. ^[4] The value of nationalization lies not in the piling up of decorative symbols, but in fostering genuine connections between animation, social emotions, and audience experiences. Comedy happens to be the genre best suited to touch upon such experiences: it dissolves tension through humor while simultaneously conveying a universal sense of emotional identification. In this process, opera conventions provide unique resources. Their stylized rhythms and Banqiang structures naturally align with comedic pacing, enabling nationalized comedy to demonstrate a strong sense of rhythm and cultural identity through the integration of sound and image.

As we entered the 21st century, with the rise of digital media and network platforms, the exploration of nationalization by the Chinese animation school has entered a new stage of transformation. The Shanghai Animation Film Studio has shown a distinct attitude of “upholding fundamental principles and breaking new ground” in new creative practices, seeking contemporary expression with the audience through digital craftsmanship and new media environments. In the discussion of cultural subjectivity, the significance of nationalization lies not only in preserving traditions but also in innovating to transform them into emotions and values that audiences can share, thereby establishing cultural confidence in the context of globalization. ^[5] The perspective of cultural ecology further indicates that the Chinese animation school can continue to play a role in different historical stages precisely because it constantly seeks new balance points between tradition and the present. ^[6] In recent years, the success of Yao-Chinese Folktales and the launch of Nobody have exemplified this path: directors and creators have transformed the exploratory experience of experimental short films into an artistic mosaic for online dissemination and continued and expanded this in theatrical feature films, integrating national aesthetics, contemporary terms, and digital craftsmanship to create new audience experiences.

Figure 2. Poster of the animation Yao-Chinese Folktales (Chen Liaoyu, 2023)



In summary, the work *Nobody* not only continues the aesthetic experiments of Yao-Chinese Folktales but also demonstrates and inherits the core spirit of “neither imitating others nor repeating oneself” in its two-dimensional ink-wash style and comedic expression. Therefore, it provides a highly representative case for exploring the innovative practices of the Chinese animation school in the new era.

3. Historical Context of the Shanghai Animation Film Studio

The formation of the Chinese animation school is not only related to the exploration of nationalized aesthetics but also closely connected to its internal creative mechanisms and atmosphere. Since its establishment in the 1950s, the Shanghai Animation Film Studio has established a relatively relaxed creative system. In an interview, Teacher Chang Guangxi recalled that the Art Committee of the studio was not a rigid administrative body but a “tolerant artistic mechanism.” It had value judgments while maintaining a loose and free characteristic. Once a script was put forward, the Art Committee would convene screenwriters, directors, and even experts from different fields such as puppetry and special effects for joint discussions, often in the form of a “free-talk gathering.” This so-called “free-talk gathering,” proposed by Te Wei after 1964, means that “everyone is a deity and can speak freely.” In such a creative atmosphere, artists of different generations and specialties can collectively brainstorm and generate unique ideas. This tradition has continued to this day, and even the factory director does not make decisions unilaterally but invites senior experts and young directors to discuss the creative direction together. This mechanism not only avoids the single-mindedness of formalism but also ensures that the spirit of “not imitating others and not repeating oneself” is truly implemented.^[7]

At the same time, the Shanghai Animation Film Studio carried out a series of experimental explorations from the 1960s to the 1980s, the most representative of which was ink-wash animation. *Baby Tadpoles Look for Their Mother* (1961) first introduced the expressive brushstrokes in the style of Qi Baishi into animation, emphasizing the expressiveness of “capturing the spirit through form”; *Mu Di* (1963) showcased the harmonious relationship between humans and nature through ethereal brushwork and lyrical music; *Feelings from Mountain and Water* (1988) went even further, integrating the blank spaces of ink-wash landscapes with storytelling, and completed a dialogue between Chinese and Western art through the sound of the zither and the artistic conception of the painting. These works were not only innovative in form but also demonstrated the depth of national exploration—they transformed the philosophical spirit of Chinese painting into the narrative language of animation, establishing a unique aesthetic path for the Chinese animation school that is distinct from that of Europe, America, and Japan.

Figure 3. Still from the animation Feelings from Mountains and Waters (Te Wei / Yan Shanchun / Ma Kexuan, 1988)



It is important to emphasize that these works are not solely aimed at children, but rather embody a dual orientation toward both “children and the general public.” Since the Yan’an Forum on Literature and Art, Chinese animation has consistently positioned its audience as “serving the working masses.” Children and adolescents have been regarded as the primary group, while animation has also borne the function of social and cultural communication.^[8] Therefore, the studio’s nationalized comedies were not merely children’s entertainment consumption, but cultural allegories directed at society as a whole. *Three Monks*, for example, appears to tell a simple story of monks carrying water, yet it conveys a social metaphor about cooperation and division of labor; *Twelve Mosquitoes and Five People* uses absurd satire to reflect contradictions within collectivism. This tradition of being “enjoyable for both young and old” has made nationalized comedy an important path that distinguishes Chinese animation from others: it offers intuitive humor accessible to children while also carrying cultural metaphors that adults can appreciate, thereby achieving multi-layered resonance across different audience groups^[9].

Therefore, from the creative atmosphere of the “Artistic Committee,” to the formal exploration of ink-wash experimental films, and further to the cultural context of the “dual orientation toward children and the general public,” the Chinese animation school gradually developed a nationalized path that combined both institutional support and aesthetic depth^[10]. This path not only established the creative credo of “neither imitating others nor repeating oneself,” but also laid a solid foundation for the later epic explorations of *Journey to the West*-themed works and their transformation toward comedy^[11].

With the transformation of the social context, classic nationalized comedies gradually entered a new stage of reinterpretation. In the 1990s, Chinese animation faced difficulties under the impact of the market. Entering the 21st century, however, digital media and online dissemination opened up new spaces for nationalized comedies. Yao-Chinese Folktales successfully broke through boundaries by adopting a short film format, introducing the perspective of “small demons” into mainstream narratives and demonstrating the possibility of deconstructing classics from marginal viewpoints. As Teacher Chang Guangxi has noted, such creations “do not preach grand principles, but evoke resonance after viewing; they carry a touch of sorrow within comedy, a sense of hope within sorrow, and maintain positivity in reality.” In this sense, they seem to allow audiences to once again glimpse the traditions of the Studio, ensuring the continuation of its cultural lineage. Building on this foundation, *Nobody* extended short-film characters such as the “little pig demon,” experimenting with feature-length production by combining two-dimensional ink painting with digital craftsmanship, while creating new viewing experiences across cinema and online platforms. On the one hand, the film pays tribute to the visual traditions of classics such as *Havoc in Heaven*, *Monkey King Conquers the Demon*, *Piggy Eats Watermelon*, and *Monkeys Fish the Moon*; on the other hand, it responds to contemporary realities with a renewed vocabulary, continuing the spirit of the Chinese animation school’s nationalized comedy. This indicates that, from the concept of nationalization to comedic tradition and finally to contemporary reinterpretation, the Chinese animation school has established a clear historical trajectory, with its core consistently centered on creative nationalized expression rather than mechanical reproduction of tradition.

4. The Contemporary Expression of Nationalized Comedy in *Nobody*

As one of the Shanghai Animation Film Studio’s recent flagship feature films, *Nobody* serves as a developmental extension of the series of online shorts Yao-Chinese Folktales, while also representing a systematic exploration of nationalized comedy. In its creation, the film continues the studio’s tradition by reinterpreting the classic *Journey to the West* motif into the grassroots experiences of the little demons, thereby revitalizing national style and comedic expression within a contemporary context. On the surface, it appears to parody and playfully mock the classic; in reality, however, it delivers a contemporary expression of identity, courage, and community, navigating between laughter and tears, absurdity and warmth.

4.1 Grassroots Narrative and Humor Mechanisms: Displacement, Deconstruction of Classics, and Self-Mockery

The most distinctive feature of the film’s narrative is its transformation of the sacred pilgrimage of the “scripture-seeking troupe” into a farcical story of “little demons impersonating the master and his disciples.” The traditional model of the “Monkey King subduing demons and saving all beings” is downplayed, replaced instead by the petty struggles of the little demons. They imitate the gestures and manners of the classic characters, yet risk being exposed at any moment. For instance, Monkey King’s golden cudgel is reduced to a crude wooden stick, Piggy’s nine-tooth iron rake becomes a clumsy farm tool,

and Sand Monk's treasured staff degenerates into an ordinary iron shovel. These "mismatched props" render their disguises absurd and comical, setting up a narrative tone of displacement.

The film's humor mechanism operates on three levels. First is the absurd situation created by identity displacement: the little demons must perform the roles of the "master and disciples," yet constantly reveal flaws in their act. Second is the "deconstruction of classic set phrases," such as in the almsgiving scene where the little demons recite lines as if reading from a script, only to be instantly exposed by a child's blunt remark: "You're fake." Third is the meta-narrative self-mockery, exemplified by the film's repeated jokes that "Sand Monk only has two lines." This not only satirizes the marginalization of the character in the original text but also enables the audience to experience a sense of intellectual complicity with the creators amid their laughter.

This humor is not merely a "stacking of gags," but is generated through the interplay of "old allusions" and "new language." Lines such as "Tang Monk is an investor" or "high standards and strict requirements for clients" directly translate religious rituals into modern workplace metaphors, allowing audiences to recognize the Journey to the West context while simultaneously smiling at its projection onto contemporary society. This dual orientation makes the comic moments both a deconstruction of the classic and a satire of present-day reality.

It is worth noting that the film's comic texture does not shy away from tragedy; rather, it highlights social meaning through a "laughter mixed with tears" approach. The helplessness of the little demons when pursued and humiliated reflects the predicament of marginalized individuals caught in the cracks of the social order. Their cynical wisdom of "siding with whoever is stronger" reveals their passivity and powerlessness, yet the film ultimately transforms this into a tender gesture of "continuing together even in failure." This shift from absurdity to warmth allows the film to transcend mere entertainment and convey a value of "courage in character."

4.2 Reusing and Subverting the Classics: True-False Mirroring and Traditional Irony

Nobody is not merely a grassroots reinterpretation of the Journey to the West motif; it also continuously establishes a "resonance-subversion" relationship with the classic at the level of detail. The most typical example is its reworking of the "True and False Monkey King" image. In the original classic and in the Studio's traditional works, the "True and False Monkey King" concerns the recognition of mythical identities, embodying the logic of good-evil confrontation and the restoration of order. In Nobody, however, the theme of "true and false" is transformed into outright satire: the little demons impersonating the scripture-seeking troupe are "false" from the outset; their disguises repeatedly fall apart, yet no true hero arrives to correct them. Instead, the narrative is carried forward through their failures, humiliations, and persistence. Here, the logic of "true and false" is subverted into the contrast between "false performances" and "real predicaments," reflecting the "identity anxiety" familiar to contemporary audiences.

Figure 4. Still from the animated film Nobody (Yu Shui, 2025)



A similar contrast can be drawn with the Studio's paper-cut animation *Pigsy Eats Watermelon*. That work, through Pigsy's comically gluttonous image and the simplicity of paper-cut aesthetics, created humor in the style of a traditional fable. In *Nobody*, however, the treatment of Pigsy is more satirical: his weapon, the nine-tooth iron rake, is downgraded into a clumsy farm tool, and his image is rendered more as that of a "ridiculous yet pitiable little figure." This difference reveals a shift from allegorical satire to grassroots sympathy, reflecting the evolving social concerns embodied in nationalized comedy across different historical stages.

The film continuously engages in a dialogue with classics through a method of "tribute and displacement." The imagery of the setting sun echoes the visual tradition of *Monkeys Fish the Moon*, yet it is re-envisioned through digital light and shadow. The "object parody" inherits the humorous logic of *Three Monks*, but further intensifies the satirical implication. These details enable the film to evoke the audience's memory of the classics while generating new meanings within a new context.

4.3 Art, Sound, and Thematic Implications: The Warm Reincarnation of Digital Ink Painting

On the artistic front, the film continues and renews the ink-wash experimental tradition of Shanghai Animation Film Studio. The exploration of "ink-wash animation," which began with films like *Baby Tadpoles Look for Their Mother*, *Mu Di*, and *Feelings from Mountain and Water*, emphasized the national pursuit of "capturing the spirit through form." *Nobody* extends this experimental spirit into the contemporary era by combining two-dimensional hand-drawing with digital craftsmanship: the use of negative space, the permeation of ink, the fluidity of lines, and the rich coloring of Dunhuang murals are layered together, achieving both an expressive quality and a modern texture.

The integration of sound and music also reflects inheritance and transformation. The film employs a polyphonic strategy that combines traditional Banqing in opera with modern orchestration. In conflict scenes, the use of gongs and drums propels the tension, while in lyrical segments, traditional Chinese musical melodies are laid out to evoke emotion. Electronic timbres and pop music elements are incorporated to give the film a contemporary feel. Particularly in comedic scenes, sudden breaks between sound and image or rhythmic contrasts directly create laughter, subtly connecting with the rhythmic comedy tradition of *Three Monks*.

Ultimately, the film's thematic implications transcend mere imitation or tribute. Through the absurdity and perseverance of the "little demons," it transforms the divine status of the Monkey King into a symbolic representation of "ordinary people having the courage to set out." "Connecting Journey to the West with the lives of ordinary people" is a precise summary of this idea. The film conveys to the audience that even amidst failure and absurdity, everyone carries within them a "Monkey King who dares to be themselves." This transformation from mythological epic to grassroots fable is not only an update in narrative strategy but also a renewed growth of the spirit of the Chinese animation school in the new era.

5. Vertical Comparison: Classic Journey to the West and Contemporary Rewriting

As a motif in Chinese classical literature, *Journey to the West* has been continuously adapted into animations, TV series, and films since the 20th century. Shanghai Animation Film Studio, in particular, has accumulated a wealth of experience in exploring this subject matter. From the 1960s works such as *Havoc in Heaven*, *Monkey King Conquers the Demon*, and *Pigsy Eats a Watermelon*, to the 21st-century *Yao-Chinese Folktales* and *Nobody*, a "Journey to the West lineage" spanning several decades has been formed. If the early works responded to the national spirit with an epic demeanor, then contemporary rewritings focus more on real-life experiences and grassroots narratives. The transformation trajectory can be clearly revealed through three aspects: vertical context, horizontal comparison, and lineage positioning.

5.1 Vertical Context: The Shift from Epic to Fable

Havoc in Heaven stands as a milestone in the history of Chinese animation. Through the use of Peking Opera conventions and meticulous visual design, the film shaped the image of Monkey King as a rebel against authority, merging nationalized arts with the heroic epic. Its logic is expansive: punishing evil and promoting good, restoring order, and symbolizing the national spirit. Later, *Monkey King Conquers the Demon* continued this model, emphasizing Monkey King's power to vanquish demons and highlighting the sense of justice embodied by the mythical hero. These works envelop the character with a divine aura, transforming tales of gods and spirits into national epics.

In contrast, *Nobody* deliberately departs from this epic logic. The film has a group of little demons impersonate the

pilgrimage disciples, establishing an identity misplacement from the very beginning. The hero is no longer the “Monkey King,” but rather a fumbling “little demon.” They possess no overwhelming divine powers to subdue demons, yet in the face of repeated exposure and failure, they continue to journey together. This narrative strategy signals a shift from “deification” to “humanization”: instead of witnessing a transcendent savior, the audience finds, amid laughter, the persistence and courage of ordinary people confronting adversity.

Yao-Chinese Folktales has already laid the groundwork for this grassroots perspective, telling stories of small characters closely tied to reality. Nobody turns the allegory of “little demons” into a feature-length narrative, enabling viewers to perceive contemporary social undertones within familiar classical motifs.

5.2 Horizontal Comparison: From Rhythmic Action to Pragmatic Self-Mockery

The comedy tradition of the Shanghai Animation Film Studio is equally evident. Shorts such as *Three Monks* generate laughter through rhythmic contrasts and character mismatches; *Twelve Mosquitoes* and *Five People* relies on repetition and exaggeration to create absurdity; while *Super Soap* turns everyday objects into comical props, imbuing them with a strong allegorical quality. The humor of these early comedies was largely rooted in kinesics and rhythm, depending on visual beats and exaggerated movements.

By contrast, *Nobody* shifts toward “pragmatics” and “self-mockery.” Its humor often stems from linguistic dislocation and procedural failure, for instance, the phrase “high standards and strict requirements for clients” reframes the pilgrimage as a metaphor for modern workplace. Another example is the running gag that “Sand Monk only has two lines,” which turns a marginal detail from the classic text into a reflexive joke. This humor relies not simply on physical action, but on the audience’s familiarity with the classics and their recognition of contemporary contexts to spark knowing.

This shift in humor signifies the evolution of nationalized comedy from “action—rhythm” to “pragmatics—self-mockery.” Laughter is no longer triggered merely by the characters’ comical gestures, but by the audience’s recognition of themselves in the language and situations. This also aligns with a more segmented viewing structure: while children may be drawn to slapstick actions, young adult audiences can find resonance in the semantic metaphor.

5.3 Lineage Positioning: A New Node Bridging Past and Future

Placing *Nobody* within the “Journey to the West lineage” reveals a clear trajectory of development. *Havoc in Heaven* represents the pinnacle of nationalized aesthetics, emphasizing epic grandeur and heroic spirit; *The Monkey King Conquers the Demon* continues the model of opposition between the supernatural and justice; *Yao-Chinese Folktales* introduces the “little demon perspective” through an anthology of shorts, bringing grassroots experiences into mainstream narratives; and *Nobody*, building on this foundation, advances the experiment of feature-length storytelling, placing small characters at the center of the narrative and establishing an expressive mode that both inherits tradition and resonates with contemporary reality.

Figure 5. Still from the animated film *Nobody* (Yu Shui, 2025)



This intermediary position makes *Nobody* not an isolated work, but a new node within the lineage. It neither imitates the epic model of earlier films nor repeats the experimental playfulness of shorts. Instead, through the digital reincarnation of ink painting and murals, and through the tension between humor and pathos, it realizes a contemporary expression of the Chinese animation school's spirit of "neither imitating others nor repeating itself."

6. Conclusion and Insights

Looking back at the development of Chinese animation, the Shanghai Animation Film Studio has consistently played a vital role in both pioneering and carrying forward the tradition. From former studio director Te Wei's proposal to "explore the path of national forms and knock on the door of comic style," to the theatrical release of *Nobody* today, this trajectory makes it clear: nationalized comedy is not merely a stylistic experiment, but also a cultural stance. It calls on creators to uphold the spirit of national art while responding to the shifting contexts of contemporary society with humor and wisdom.

It is worth noting that this spirit did not emerge out of thin air, but was closely tied to the unique creative atmosphere and institutional arrangements of the Studio. One such tradition was the "Art Committee" and the so-called "Free-talk gathering." The Art Committee, a loose yet authoritative platform for creative discussion, brought together artists of different generations and specialties to debate and review links such as scripts and character design, with real decisions relying on collective deliberation. This system ensured that "diversity" became a fundamental safeguard of creation. Te Wei's idea of the "Free-talk gathering" was an even more informal mechanism of open exchange: creators could, like "immortals," speak freely and share perspectives on a given topic. Such an open atmosphere enabled young directors to learn from the critiques and demonstrations of masters, while also ensuring that the creative process continually sustained a tension toward "innovation."

The value of this mechanism lies in its ability to ensure the creative credo of "neither imitating others nor repeating oneself" was truly put into practice. Every new work had to undergo the rigorous scrutiny of the Art Committee, where creators were required to present genuinely groundbreaking ideas in order to gain collective recognition. As a result, the classic works of the Shanghai Animation Film Studio not only carried forward the consistency of national aesthetics but also continually sought variation in style and technique, from the epic grandeur of *Havoc in Heaven*, to the allegorical comedy of *Three Monks*, and to the experimental ink-wash films *Baby Tadpoles Look for Their Mother*, *Mu Di*, and *Feelings from Mountain and Water*, thus sustaining an enduring drive for innovation.

In today's digital era, such mechanisms of collective discussion and diverse critique still carry practical significance. Although the organizational structures of creative teams have changed, the spirit of "open debate and collective gatekeeping" can be connected to contemporary project-based models and cross-disciplinary collaboration, serving as an institutional resource that safeguards innovation while upholding tradition. *Nobody* was born against this institutional backdrop and in continuation of the cultural lineage. Its success not only signifies a breakthrough in a single work but also demonstrates that contemporary Chinese animation can still sustain its creative vitality in a national style through the combination of institutions and spirit.

In summary, from Te Wei's original proposal to today's practice, "exploring the path of national forms and knocking on the door of comic style" has evolved beyond a mere creative slogan to become a continuous and evolving cultural lineage of the Shanghai Animation Film Studio. Its connotations have been enriched over different stages, from epics to fables, from family entertainment to segmented audiences, and from handcrafted ink painting to digital reincarnation, always maintaining a creative tension. Whether the Chinese animation school can continue to hold a unique voice in the future largely depends on its ability, guided by this spirit, to find new balances between tradition and contemporary reality, and to create works at the intersection of nationalization and globalization that are both authentically Chinese and capable of engaging in dialogue with the world. *Nobody* is the latest testament to this exploration. Its success demonstrates that nationalized comedy carries not only the depth of history, but also the warmth of reality, and, even more, the possibilities of the future.

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