

"A Feast for the Five Senses" and "The Hollowing Out of Meaning": Aesthetic Alienation and Paths to Redemption in AI Micro-Short Dramas

Zongye Gu^{1,2,*}

Received 28 April 2026

Revised 2 June 2026

Accepted 17 June 2026

Published 30 June 2026



ISSN 2759-8764 (Online)
ISSN 2760-330X (Print)

© 2026 The Author(s)
Published by Jandoo Press Co., Ltd.

This article is licensed under the terms and
conditions of the Creative Commons
Attribution (CC BY) license:
<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>

Abstract: Iterative innovations in generative artificial intelligence have propelled AI micro-short dramas into a new form of online art, completely rewriting the production models, aesthetic forms, and reception mechanisms of traditional audiovisual content. Distinct from the traditional film and television aesthetic paradigm of “narrative-driven, emotion-empowered” storytelling, AI micro-shorts rely on algorithmic parameter tuning to construct a comprehensive, immersive “sensory carnival” aesthetic experience. By leveraging a new aesthetic reception contract based on the premise of “accepting the fake as fake,” they cater to the demands of audiences in the age of fragmentation for imaginative consumption and emotional compensation. However, behind the dividends of technological empowerment, the industry is gradually revealing significant issues of aesthetic alienation. Sensory revelry obscures narrative depth, and algorithmic production erodes humanistic substance, ultimately creating a developmental dilemma characterized by “excessive atmosphere and hollowed-out meaning.” Based on existing research on AI micro-short dramas and integrating the logic of human-machine collaborative production, the aesthetics of atmosphere, and reception contract theory, systematically analyzes the generative logic of the five-sense carnival in AI micro-short dramas, elucidates the diverse manifestations and underlying mechanisms of their aesthetic alienation, and explores pathways for the value redemption of a virtuous symbiosis between technology and art from four dimensions: technological correction, content enrichment, audience cultivation, and industry regulation. This study provides theoretical references and practical guidance for the high-quality and sustainable development of AI micro-short dramas.

Keywords: AI micro-short dramas; Sensory extravaganza; Atmospheric production; Aesthetic alienation; Hollowing out of meaning; Value redemption

With the widespread adoption of multimodal generative models such as Sora, Keling AI, and Midjourney, artificial intelligence has fully entered the field of audiovisual content production, giving rise to a new form of online cultural content: AI-generated micro-short dramas. In recent years, China's micro-short drama industry has experienced rapid growth. By 2024, the market size exceeded 50.5 billion yuan, with a user base of 576 million—accounting for more than half of all internet users in the country. Among these, 58 works were planned with AI involvement, and 16 were released throughout the year, demonstrating that AI technol-

ogy has become the core driving force behind the industry's evolution and upgrading. From CCTV's fully AI-produced series *Chinese Myths* and *AI Reads Classical Texts*, to the phenomenon-level independent creation *Huo Qubing*, and on to commercial hits like *The Nine-Tailed Fox Demon Falls for Me* and *Mysteries of the Xing'an Mountains*, AI micro-short dramas have achieved comprehensive implementation across technological experimentation, cultural dissemination, and commercial monetization, forming a diverse and symbiotic industry ecosystem involving government agencies, platforms, and individual creators.

¹ School of Journalism and Communication, Tianjin Normal University, Tianjin 300387, China.

* Corresponding author. Email: zongyegu@stu.tjnu.edu.cn.

Existing academic research has explored AI micro-short dramas from multiple dimensions: some studies focus on the logic of human-machine collaborative production, elucidating the industrialized, assembly-line-style content generation model of AI micro-short dramas; others examine industrial aesthetics and narrative innovation, analyzing their fragmented narratives and the visual spectacle-dominated narrative characteristics; while other studies, starting from atmosphere production and aesthetic contracts, reveal the new aesthetic paradigm of AI micro-short dramas characterized by “sensory-heavy, narrative-light” content. At the same time, some research addresses compliance risks, cultural translation challenges, and developmental shortcomings in the AI micro-short drama industry. Overall, existing research fully acknowledges the empowering value of AI technology for the micro-short drama industry, yet it rarely systematically analyzes the aesthetic alienation issues underlying the technological frenzy. There is a lack of comprehensive, systematic academic examination of the binary opposition between “sensory revelry” and “hollowing out of meaning,” as well as their generative mechanisms and paths to redemption.

Unlike the aesthetic system of traditional film and television, which centers on narrative and humanistic values, AI micro-short dramas rely on algorithmic parametric modulation of visual, auditory, and spatial elements to create a comprehensive, immersive experience engaging all five senses, thereby reconstructing the audience’s mode of aesthetic reception. At the same time, the industrial logic of algorithmic mass production, the traffic-driven market orientation, and the “assumed-to-be-false” aesthetic reception contract have led to widespread issues within the industry, including superficial narratives, the reduction of culture to symbols, the instrumentalization of emotions, and the hollowing out of values. This has created an aesthetic alienation dilemma characterized by extreme sensory abundance and extreme spiritual poverty. Based on this, this paper draws upon existing research and, supported by theories of aesthetic alienation, atmospheric aesthetics, and reception aesthetics, elucidates the generative logic behind the sensory extravaganza of AI micro-shorts. It analyzes the specific manifestations and underlying causes of their aesthetic alienation, ultimately constructing a value-redemption system tailored to the industry’s development to help AI micro-shorts achieve a healthy balance between technological empowerment and humanistic integrity.

Atmosphere Creation: The Aesthetic Logic Behind the “Carnival of the Five Senses” in AI-Generated Micro-Dramas

Traditional film and television aesthetics center on linear storytelling, evoking emotional resonance in audiences through complete plot structures, nuanced character development, and profound expressions of values. The resulting aesthetic experience is characterized by gradual progression

and deep immersion. AI micro-shorts, however, have completely overturned this traditional paradigm. Leveraging the parametric modulation capabilities of AI algorithms, they construct a comprehensive atmosphere encompassing visual, auditory, and spatial dimensions. By dismantling the centrality of narrative, they have formed an aesthetic form centered on sensory stimulation—a “Carnival of the Five Senses”—and established a brand-new system of atmospheric aesthetics for the intelligent era.

Multimodal parameter modulation: The technological foundation of the “Carnival of The Five Senses”

According to existing literature, the atmosphere production in AI micro-shorts is not a random visual assemblage, but rather a standardized, parameterized algorithmic process. By quantifying and encoding aesthetic elements such as color, lighting, composition, sound effects, speech rate, and spatial rhythm, AI models precisely stimulate the audience’s senses to construct an immersive emotional field. On the visual level, AI can achieve style adaptation based on the type of subject matter: for traditional culture themes, it uses classical color schemes such as dark gold and dark blue, combined with an overhead composition and a telephoto lens to create an atmosphere of solemnity and grandeur in the Eastern aesthetic style; for comedy and fantasy themes, it employs highly saturated candy colors and shallow depth-of-field close-ups to create a light-hearted and absurd visual effect; The suspense genre creates a sense of tension through tilted compositions and simulated camera shake. This formulaic design of visual parameters allows AI micro-shorts to rapidly adapt to different aesthetic contexts, ensuring the precise realization of visual atmospheres.

On the auditory level, AI enables comprehensive algorithmic orchestration of background music, sound effects, and voice acting. Leveraging intelligent music generation models like MusicGen, AI can match orchestral or electronic music styles in real-time based on the script. It also innovatively employs a dual sound effect mechanism of “super-sound” and “silence,” using unnatural special effects and strategic audio pauses at key moments to amplify emotional tension. Furthermore, AI voice technology simulates human breathing rhythms and intonation pauses to shape distinct character personalities, adding depth to the auditory experience. Empowered by dual visual and auditory algorithms, this approach breaks away from the single-sensory stimulation model of traditional short videos, delivering a multi-sensory, synergistic aesthetic experience.

On the spatial level, AI micro-dramas have achieved an aesthetic shift toward “space transcending narrative.” While traditional film and television center on plot progression, with space serving merely as a narrative backdrop, AI micro-dramas de-emphasize linear narrative logic. Instead, they regulate spatial rhythm through the frequency of camera cuts and the density of visual symbols, using spatial atmosphere to dominate the overall aesthetic experience. Simulta-

neously, AI enables the “visualization of thought,” directly transforming abstract human psychological processes and absurd imaginings into visual imagery. This breaks through the expressive boundaries of traditional film and television, further enriching the dimensions of the sensory experience.

Infinite supply and re-tribalization: The aesthetic effects of a sensory extravaganza

The generative nature of AI technology enables an infinite supply of atmospheric aesthetics—a core advantage that traditional film and television cannot match. Traditional productions rely on fixed libraries of scenes, sound effects, and visual elements, imposing inherent creative limitations. In contrast, the “element factory” constructed by AI can draw upon a vast array of aesthetic elements vertically and dynamically assemble and combine them horizontally. This allows for the continuous output of homogeneous, high-density sensory atmospheres, satisfying audiences’ unceasing demand for entertainment.

Building on this, AI micro-shorts have fostered a collective aesthetic effect of a “sensory carnival,” facilitating the “re-tribalization” of audiences. In the fragmented media landscape, audiences exist in an atomized state; yet, through high-intensity, immersive multisensory stimulation, AI micro-shorts create a shared emotional space, uniting scattered individual viewers into a temporary aesthetic community. By experiencing a unified atmosphere, audiences find emotional resonance and achieve a “brief escape” from the pressures of reality. This immediate, high-intensity sensory pleasure has become the core advantage that enables AI micro-shorts to rapidly captivate the masses.

“Assuming it is false”: The prerequisite for an aesthetic experience that delights The Five Senses

In contrast to the traditional aesthetic contract of “assuming it is true” in literature and art, AI micro-shorts have established a new logic of reception based on “assuming it is false,” thereby providing the necessary foundation for an aesthetic paradigm that delights the five senses. Traditional film and television require plot logic to be internally consistent and emotions to be authentic and believable; audiences suspend their real-world skepticism to enter the fictional world of the work and achieve a profound aesthetic experience. In contrast, audiences of AI micro-shorts can clearly identify technical flaws in AI-generated content—including stiff facial expressions, audio-visual misalignment, illogical plots, and distorted cultural symbols—yet they actively set aside rational scrutiny and tolerate these technical imperfections. With a mindset of “suspending thought to focus on the senses,” they exchange critical thinking for immediate emotional gratification. This new aesthetic contract completely dissolves the constraints of real-world logic on creation, allowing AI to pile up sensory elements to the extreme, ultimately forming an aesthetic form of a “five-sense carnival” that prioritizes atmosphere over meaning.

Aesthetic Alienation: The Hollowing Out of Meaning Behind the “Carnival of the Five Senses” in AI Micro-Series

Aesthetic alienation is the inevitable result of the excessive expansion of technological rationality. The Frankfurt School’s theory of the culture industry argues that industrialized, standardized cultural production erodes art’s originality, humanism, and criticality, leading to the loss of the essence of aesthetics. While AI micro-shorts leverage algorithms to achieve the ultimate in sensory aesthetics, they have also fallen into the alienation trap of the culture industry: the superficial aesthetic experience of the “five-sense carnival” continues to expand, while narrative depth, cultural connotations, humanistic emotions, and value-based reflection remain consistently absent. This ultimately results in a comprehensive hollowing out of meaning, manifested specifically across four dimensions: perceptual alienation, narrative alienation, reception alienation, and cultural alienation.

Aesthetic perceptual alienation: Sensory overload and an abnormally elevated aesthetic threshold

The sensory extravaganza of AI micro-shorts is essentially high-intensity, high-density algorithmic sensory stimulation; prolonged immersive exposure directly leads to the alienation of the audience’s aesthetic perception. To compete for fragmented attention, AI micro-shorts commonly employ a creative model characterized by rapid camera cuts, highly saturated visual impacts, and intense rhythmic sound effects, continuously subjecting the audience’s senses to high-intensity stimulation. This extreme sensory overload constantly raises the audience’s aesthetic threshold, fostering a habit of aesthetic tolerance.

Today’s audiences are increasingly unable to adapt to the aesthetic forms of traditional film and television—characterized by slow pacing, ample negative space, and deep narratives. They have lost patience for subtle, nuanced, and profound artistic works, seeking only immediate, explicit, and high-intensity sensory gratification. At the same time, the aesthetic fatigue resulting from sensory overload has progressively dulled the audience’s ability to perceive beauty, leaving them unable to grasp the subtle aesthetic details, emotional depth, and humanistic significance within artistic works. Aesthetics have thus been reduced from “spiritual nourishment” to mere “sensory entertainment.” This alienation of perception has directly led to the superficialization and utilitarianization of the public’s aesthetic tastes, undermining a diverse and healthy public aesthetic ecosystem.

Narrative aesthetic alienation: The retreat of narrative and the dissolution of artistic depth

According to the industrial aesthetics narrative theory of AI micro-short dramas, the AI-generated point-based production model has completely overturned the linear narrative structure of traditional film and television, creating a

narrative divide where “visual interpretation replaces plot-driven storytelling.” Under the aesthetic orientation of a sensory extravaganza, AI micro-short dramas generally suffer from a complete retreat of narrative; plot logic, character development, and dramatic conflict are no longer the core of creation, while visual spectacles and atmospheric rendering have become the main focus of content.

Examining existing examples, whether it be the nonsensical and absurd plot of *«The Nine-Tailed Fox Demon Falls for Me»* or the spectacle-driven presentation of certain AI short dramas in the *«Classic of Mountains and Seas»* series, all suffer from fragmented plots, logical disconnects, and formulaic storytelling. AI relies on algorithmic templates to mass-produce content, resulting in highly homogenized plots that often depend on “plot twists for thrills” and “fantastical spectacles” to create highlights, while lacking a complete story structure and character development arcs. At the same time, to compensate for these narrative gaps, most AI micro-shorts over-rely on voice-over narration to tie the plot together, further weakening the artistry and emotional impact of the storytelling.

This narrative alienation has caused AI micro-shorts to completely lose the profound artistic core of film and television. Traditional film and television use narrative to reflect social reality, explore the essence of human nature, and convey values, whereas AI micro-shorts remain confined to superficial atmospheric displays. The plot becomes a mere appendage to a sensory orgy, and the works lose their artistic depth and substance, resulting in a hollow dilemma characterized by “visually stunning yet substantively empty” content.

Aesthetic reception alienation: Absence of critical thinking and the loss of aesthetic subjectivity

The aesthetic contract of “suspending disbelief,” while liberating the audience’s freedom to be entertained, has caused a profound alienation in their aesthetic reception. This is primarily manifested in the atrophy of rational critical thinking and the loss of aesthetic agency. Traditional artistic appreciation is an active process of meaning-making; audiences engage in aesthetic reflection and spiritual elevation by interpreting plots, analyzing characters, and comprehending deeper meanings, demonstrating strong initiative and critical thinking. In contrast, audiences of AI-generated micro-shorts voluntarily abandon rational thinking during the aesthetic process, passively accepting the works’ logical flaws and technical imperfections while pursuing solely emotional compensation and sensory pleasure.

Prolonged “mindless” aesthetic consumption fosters mental inertia among audiences, causing critical thinking and logical reasoning abilities to steadily deteriorate, and gradually eroding their capacity for in-depth interpretation of literary and artistic works. At the same time, algorithmic recommendation systems precisely feed audiences homogenized content based on their preferences, constructing a closed “aesthetic echo chamber.” By remaining immersed in

the sensory comfort zone of their own preferences for extended periods, audiences lose opportunities to engage with diverse aesthetics and values, leading to narrowed cognition and a rigid worldview.

More importantly, the audience’s aesthetic judgment is increasingly dominated by algorithms. Rather than forming independent judgments based on personal aesthetic experience and artistic understanding, they passively accept “high-quality content” as defined by algorithms, becoming mere tools for algorithmic emotional consumption and completely forfeiting their aesthetic agency. This alienation of reception confines the aesthetic value of AI micro-shorts to the superficial sensory level, failing to provide spiritual nourishment or elevation.

Cultural and aesthetic alienation: Symbolic collage and the dissolution of traditional cultural spirit

AI micro-shorts created based on traditional cultural IPs serve as important vehicles for cultural “innovation and creation.” However, under an aesthetic orientation focused on sensory stimulation, most works have fallen into the alienating dilemma of cultural symbolization and superficial collage, leading to the dissolution of the spiritual core of traditional culture. According to existing literature, AI’s interpretation of traditional culture relies on algorithmic element extraction and template matching, which can only replicate the external visual symbols of cultural relics, mythical beasts, and classical scenes, without comprehending the historical context, humanistic spirit, or aesthetic significance of traditional culture.

Currently, a large number of AI-generated micro-dramas on traditional culture blindly pursue Eastern aesthetic spectacles and visual atmospheres, simply splicing together cultural symbols such as mythical beasts from the *Classic of Mountains and Seas*, classical architecture, and traditional attire, while neglecting the spiritual essence behind the myths, legends, and classical texts. To cater to entertainment-oriented aesthetics, some works arbitrarily deconstruct traditional culture and distort historical allusions, transforming solemn cultural traditions into vulgar and absurd entertainment material. For example, certain AI-generated *«Classic of Mountains and Seas»* short dramas excessively pursue sensational visual effects, thereby diluting the core spirit of traditional culture—which includes patriotism, reverence for nature, and the pursuit of self-improvement—ultimately reducing the dissemination of traditional culture to a mere “traffic gimmick.”

This cultural and aesthetic alienation not only fails to achieve the creative transformation and innovative development of traditional culture but also leads to a distorted public perception of it. It reduces traditional culture to a mere appendage of algorithmic entertainment, trapping it in a vicious cycle where “the more it is disseminated, the more superficial it becomes.”

The Underlying Mechanisms Behind the Aesthetic Alienation in AI-Generated Micro-Series

The aesthetic alienation in AI-generated micro-series—characterized by a “sensory frenzy” and “hollowed-out meaning”—is not a random phenomenon caused by a single factor. Rather, it is the inevitable result of the interplay between three mechanisms: technological logic, market logic, and reception logic. It represents an industry paradox in which technological rationality excessively overrides artistic rationality.

Technological logic: Algorithmic industrial production eroding artistic originality

The human-machine collaborative production model of AI micro-shorts is, at its core, a standardized, assembly-line industrial production logic—the technological root cause of aesthetic alienation. Traditional film and television production involves the personalized emotional expression and artistic creation of artists, possessing unique originality and human warmth. In contrast, AI creation relies on training with massive amounts of data; by using algorithms to fit existing aesthetic templates and plot patterns, it generates standardized content in bulk, inherently suffering from homogenization and formulaic flaws.

At the same time, current AI technology has inherent limitations; it cannot simulate complex human emotional experiences, life insights, or humanistic reflections. It can only handle technical, superficial creative tasks such as visual and auditory elements, making it difficult to support deep narratives and meaningful expression. To mask its narrative and emotional shortcomings, AI creation can only play to its strengths and downplay its weaknesses, exaggerating visual atmosphere and sensory appeal to the extreme, thereby fostering a creative inertia that prioritizes form over content. Furthermore, AI’s piecemeal production model disrupts the linear logic and cohesive structure of film and television narratives, naturally aligning with a fragmented, superficial aesthetic. This fundamentally determines the hollow nature of AI-generated micro-shorts from a technical standpoint.

Market logic: The “Traffic-First” approach fuels a superficial entertainment ecosystem

A market orientation prioritizing traffic and monetization is the core driver of this aesthetic distortion. AI micro-shorts possess commercial advantages of low cost, rapid production, and high virality; their total production costs are only one-sixteenth of those of traditional film and television, enabling rapid mass production and monetization of traffic. Driven by capital and traffic, most creators have abandoned the pursuit of high-quality production, prioritizing short-term profits and opting for superficial content that is easy for audiences to consume, highly stimulating, and has a high traffic-to-revenue conversion rate.

The algorithmic distribution mechanisms of short-video platforms have further exacerbated this chaos. With view counts, completion rates, and engagement rates as core metrics, platforms are forcing creators to abandon deep narratives and humanistic expression, compelling them to focus on creating highly stimulating, fast-paced, and accessible sensory content. High-quality, in-depth content struggles to gain algorithmic support due to its slow pace and high interpretive barriers, while formulaic, spectacle-driven superficial content continues to dominate the screen. This ultimately creates an industry ecosystem where “bad money drives out good,” causing the problem of aesthetic alienation to intensify.

The logic of acceptance: Compensatory emotional consumption weakens the demand for deep aesthetics

The transformation of audience aesthetic needs in the era of fragmented media forms the foundation for aesthetic alienation. Today’s Gen Z audience faces immense pressure in both life and work, shifting the core demand of media consumption from “spiritual elevation and aesthetic nourishment” to “emotional catharsis and stress relief,” thereby establishing imagination-driven consumption and compensatory emotional consumption as central needs. The multi-sensory extravaganza created by AI-generated micro-shorts can rapidly provide audiences with an immediate emotional high, filling the emotional void in their real lives.

At the same time, the aesthetic contract of “accepting the fake as fake” further amplifies superficial aesthetic demands. Audiences actively forgo deep critical thinking, trading tolerance for technical flaws and relaxed logical standards in exchange for fleeting entertainment. This passive aesthetic choice, in turn, forces creators to continuously intensify sensory stimulation while diluting content depth, creating a vicious cycle of “audience demand—creator production—platform distribution.” Ultimately, this solidifies the alienated aesthetic paradigm of AI micro-shorts: a sensory orgy devoid of meaning.

The Symbiosis of Technology and Art: A Path to Redemption for AI-Generated Micro-Series

The aesthetic alienation of AI-generated micro-series is not, at its core, an inherent flaw of the technology itself, but rather a developmental deviation caused by the combined effects of technological abuse, market disorder, and aesthetic imbalance. The value that AI technology brings to the film and television industry—including cost reduction, efficiency gains, creative equality, and cultural empowerment—is irreplaceable. The core of industry development does not lie in rejecting technology, but rather in regulating technological rationality and returning to the essence of art. Through multidimensional approaches, we must correct aesthetic deviations and achieve value redemption, thereby building a vir-

tuous development ecosystem that is technology-empowered and humanistic at its core.

Correcting technological deviations: Building a human-centered human-machine collaborative creation system

The primary path to resolving aesthetic alienation is to reshape the boundaries of human-machine collaborative creation, ensuring that technology serves art rather than dominating it. The industry must establish a clear division of labor where humans lead creativity and AI handles execution, thereby fundamentally transforming the distorted model of algorithm-driven creation. Creators must exercise their initiative to delve deeply into scriptwriting, character development, narrative structure, and value expression, while maintaining control over the humanistic core and artistic depth of their works; AI should only undertake repetitive, technical tasks such as scene generation, post-rendering, editing and voice-over, and multilingual adaptation, thereby addressing the efficiency shortcomings of traditional creation.

At the same time, AI algorithm models must be continuously optimized by embedding humanistic aesthetics and cultural norms to correct the algorithmic flaws of homogenization and formulaic production. By building knowledge graphs of traditional culture and databases of artistic aesthetics, AI can accurately replicate the spiritual essence of traditional culture and the connotations of Eastern aesthetics, avoiding superficial collages and arbitrary deconstructions of cultural symbols. Furthermore, an AI content generation evaluation system can be established, incorporating narrative integrity, cultural authenticity, and positive values into assessment criteria to prevent aesthetic alienation at the technical source.

Deepening content: Balancing atmospheric aesthetics with narrative depth and humanistic value

To address the core challenge of hollowed-out meaning, creators must abandon a “sensory-only, traffic-only” mindset, uphold the principle that “content is king,” and achieve an organic balance between atmospheric aesthetics, narrative depth, and humanistic value. On one hand, retain the aesthetic strengths of AI-generated atmospheres by leveraging multimodal technologies to create high-quality audiovisual experiences that align with contemporary audiences’ aesthetic preferences; on the other hand, they must reconstruct linear narrative logic, refine plot structures, character arcs, and conflicts, and break free from the narrative pitfalls of fragmentation and formulaic storytelling.

In terms of cultural expression, AI-generated micro-shorts based on traditional culture must uphold cultural autonomy, delve deeply into the spiritual essence of myths, allusions, and classical texts, and achieve a modern and innovative reinterpretation of traditional culture, avoiding its reduction to mere symbols or its deconstruction for entertain-

ment’s sake. Science fiction and fantasy works must move beyond mere spectacle and incorporate humanistic reflection, social issues, and contemporary values, ensuring that visual spectacle serves the expression of the plot and the transmission of values. At the same time, the industry must vigorously support the creation of works based on real-life themes, mainstream themes, and literary and artistic themes to enrich the content ecosystem, break the deadlock of thematic homogenization, and drive the transformation of AI micro-shorts from “sensory entertainment” to “spiritual empowerment.”

Audience cultivation: Reshaping the public’s rational aesthetic sense and critical thinking

The return of audience aesthetic agency is key to overcoming aesthetic alienation and achieving value redemption. Platforms and the industry must assume responsibility for aesthetic guidance, break out of algorithmic echo chambers, optimize content distribution mechanisms, and balance the traffic allocation between entertainment-oriented and in-depth content. This will ensure high-quality, in-depth works receive greater exposure and guide audiences toward engaging with diverse aesthetic forms.

At the same time, leveraging new media dissemination networks, we should conduct public aesthetic education to guide audiences in discarding the superficial aesthetic habit of “assuming the fake is real,” and reshape rational, profound, and diverse aesthetic concepts. We must help audiences develop a dialectical understanding of aesthetics—one that embraces the new audiovisual aesthetics brought by AI technology while actively avoiding the trap of sensory excess. This involves reclaiming the ability to critically analyze art, learning to interpret the humanistic implications, cultural value, and historical significance of works. By comprehensively enhancing the aesthetic capabilities of the audience, we can in turn drive the industry to elevate its creative standards, fostering a virtuous cycle where “creators delve deeply into content and audiences respect art.”

Conclusion

The iterative innovation of AI technology has brought unprecedented development opportunities to the micro-short drama industry. The human-machine collaborative production model has reshaped the film and television industrial system, while the aesthetic paradigm of atmosphere-driven production has expanded the boundaries of audiovisual artistic expression, providing new pathways for the dissemination of traditional culture, the upgrading of mass entertainment, and the global expansion of Chinese culture. However, behind this technological empowerment, the dichotomy between “sensory overload” and “hollowed-out meaning” exposes a profound crisis of aesthetic alienation in AI micro-short dramas. Issues such as sensory overload, narrative dissolution, the absence of critical thinking, and cultural superficiality severely hinder the industry’s high-quality and sustainable development.

Ultimately, AI is merely a tool and medium for film and television creation; the humanistic core, artistic value, and the spirit of the times are the very foundation of literary and artistic works. The future development of AI micro-short dramas must reject the distorted logic of technology-first and traffic-first approaches. Instead, it must use technology as the framework, art as the soul, and humanism as the core, striking a balance between sensory aesthetics and spiritual depth, technological innovation and cultural preservation, and commercial monetization and social value. Through a multidimensional path of redemption—involving technological correction, deepening content, audience cultivation, and industry regulation—we can overcome the dilemma of aesthetic alienation, achieve a healthy symbiosis between technology and art, and enable AI micro-short dramas to truly become a new form of online literary and artistic medium that conveys the values of our era, passes on Chinese culture, and nourishes the public spirit.

References

1. Chen Haiyan. A Feast for the Senses and the Assumption of Falsity: "Atmospheric Production" and the Reception Con-
- tract in AI Micro-Series [J]. Ningxia Social Sciences, 2026, (01): 193–201.
2. Man Shengchong, Xu Xinle. Human-Machine Collaboration, Narrative Divergence, and Latent Interaction: "Industrial Aesthetics"-Style Narrative Strategies in Chinese AI-Animated Micro-Series [J]. Future Communication, 2025, 32(04): 122–129. DOI: 10.13628/j.cnki.zjcmxb.2025.04.003.
3. Tian Hao. On the Logic of Innovative Development in AI Micro-Series Featuring Traditional Culture [J]. Youth Journalist, 2025, (11): 78–83. DOI:10.15997/j.cnki.qnjz.2025.11.003.
4. Chen Qi, Bai Yinggang, Liu Yanming. Intelligent Reconstruction: The Presentation and Inheritance of China's Excellent Traditional Culture through AI Micro-Short Dramas [J]. Journal of North Minzu University, 2026, (01): 141–148. DOI: 10.20076/j.cnki.64-1065/G4.2026.01.015.
5. Zhao Wei. Legal Challenges and Rule Reconstruction of AI Face Swapping: A Study on the Boundaries of Fair Use of Portrait Rights in Micro-Short Dramas [J/OL]. New Media and Society, 1–13 [2026-05-18]. <https://link.cnki.net/urlid/C-N.20251121.1236.002>.