

NEON

DAWN:

True equality lies in the freedom of choice

UPRISING

Neon Dawn:  
Uprising



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Professional Context 2025  
College of Creativity and Innovation, Xiamen University  
True equality lies in the freedom of choice  
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*Let everyone have the power to choose their future.*



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*Shuoyang S4I 2025*  
Xiamen University

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# Neon Dawn Uprising

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## 02.EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### OVERVIEW OBJECTIVE CORRELATION AUDIENCE GROUP

This thesis project focuses on the gender narrative of superhero movies, exploring the dual impacts of technological intervention on gender equality. It is presented through the screening of the original animated film trailer "Neon Dawn: Uprising". The work integrates Asian cultural elements and neutral visual symbols, challenging traditional gender stereotypes through the narrative structure of "fourfold mirror" with five diverse characters. It reveals that technological intervention may lead to new power imbalances when breaking the binary opposition of gender, and advocates that gender equality should be based on individual choices rather than forced technological discipline. This work provides a revolutionary practical path for superhero narratives. The target audience includes young fans of East Asian cinema, filmmakers, and scholars of gender studies.

OVERVIEW  
OVERVIEW  
OVERVIEW



## 03.INTRODUCTION & PROBLEM CONTEXT

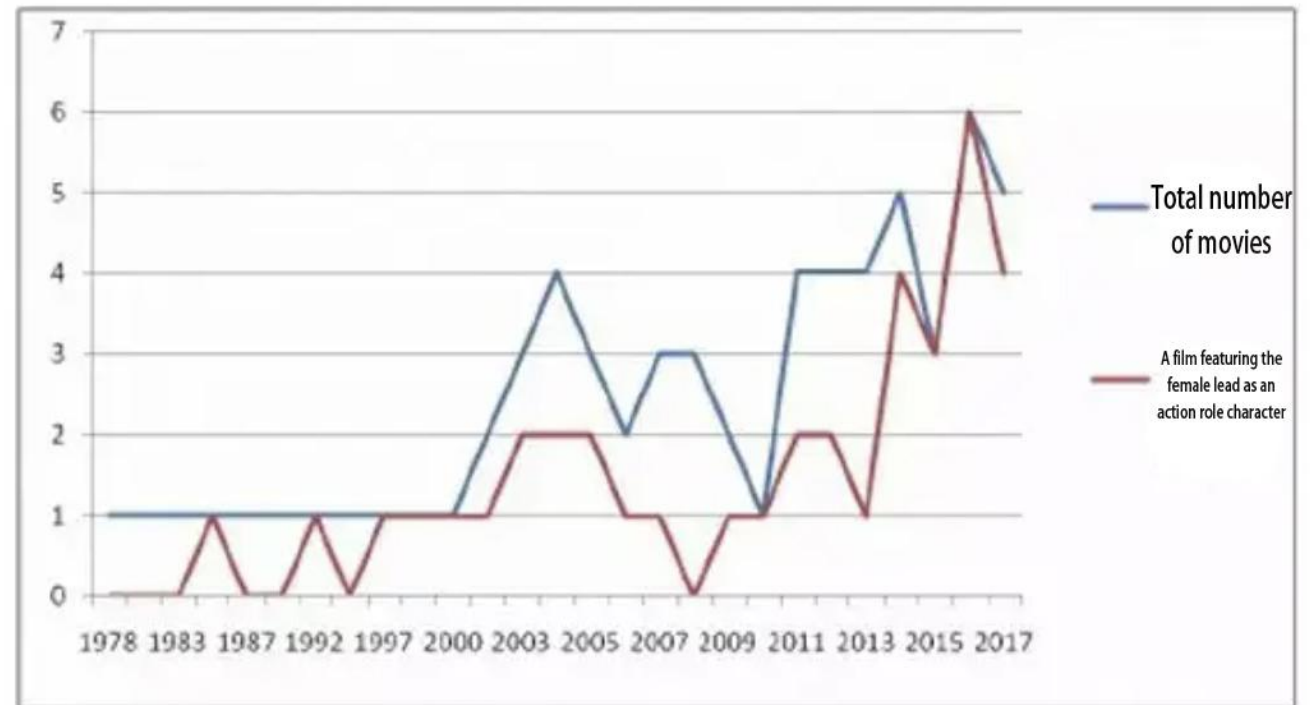
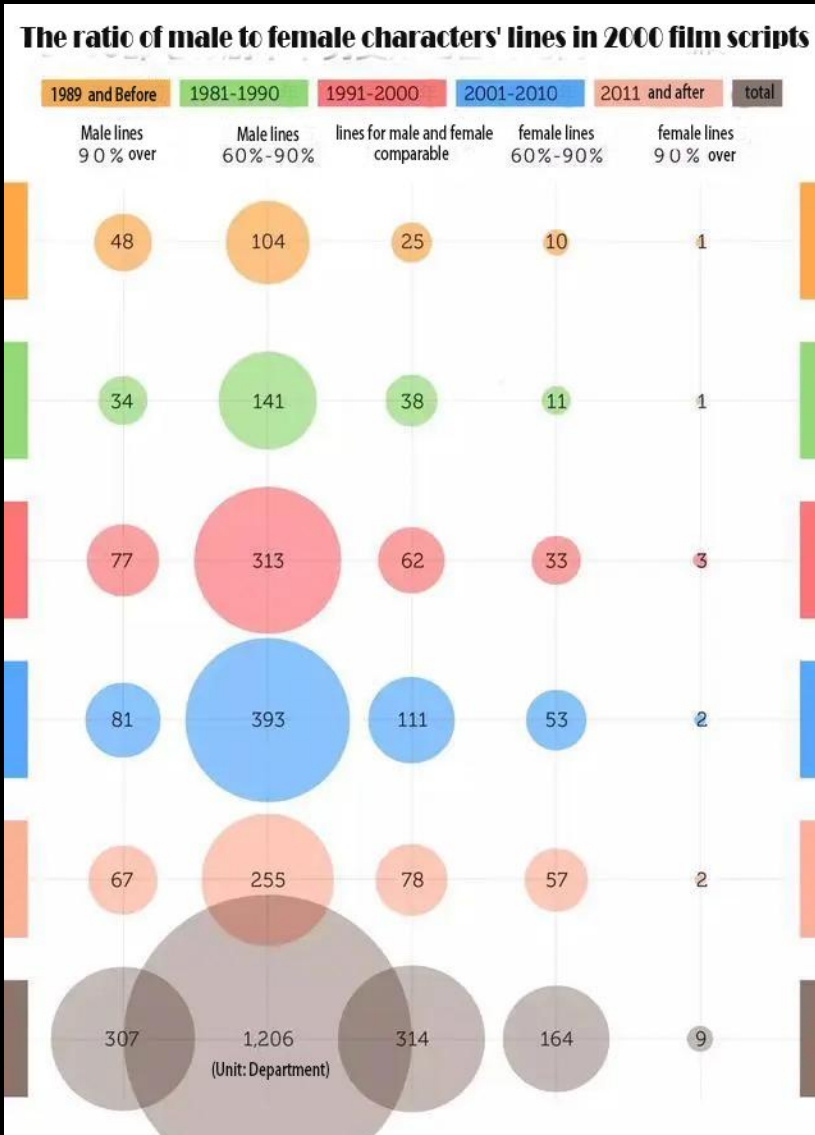
### **(1) INDUSTRY PAIN POINTS: GENDER IMBALANCE IN SUPERHERO FILMS**

As a global cultural dissemination medium, superhero films have long been trapped in the narrative pattern of "men saving the world while women are being gazed upon". In Asian and other male-dominant cultural contexts, the Western narrative template and traditional gender norms are superimposed, further solidifying the stereotype of "male power supremacy", resulting in a structural contradiction that hinders the dissemination of gender equality.

### **(2) INDUSTRY SIGNIFICANCE: NEW CHALLENGES OF GENDER EQUALITY IN THE ERA OF TECHNOLOGY**

The work embeds the issue of gender equality within the framework of technological criticism, revealing the risks that the power elite may take advantage of technology to exert social control under the guise of "equality", and mapping out the threats that technologies such as data monitoring and gene editing pose to individual freedom. It advocates that equality should be based on the freedom of choice, opposes the technological imposition of homogeneity, and opens up new topics for the discussion of social justice in the digital age.

# 03.INTRODUCTION & PROBLEM CONTEXT



A comparison chart of the total number of superhero movies and the number of movies featuring female as important action roles, from the paper "Research on the Image of Female Action Roles in Hollywood Superhero Movies"



## 03.INTRODUCTION & PROBLEM CONTEXT

### (3) INDUSTRY REFERENCE: TREND ANALYSIS AND CASE SUPPORT

In the early mainstream superhero films, female characters were often objectified: Pepper Potts in "Iron Man" was reduced to a homemaker, and Black Widow in "The Avengers" was degraded to a sexy assassin. Although "Captain Marvel" and "Black Panther" in recent years have elevated the status of female and minority characters, they still remain confined to the "single hero's rise" model and fail to dismantle structural gender discrimination. These cases confirm the stubbornness of the industry's systematic bias.

### (4) BASED ON THE RELEVANT ARGUMENTS DERIVED FROM INSIGHTS AND RESEARCH

《Neon Dawn: Uprising》innovatively adopts a "quadripartite mirror" narrative structure: the rational reflection of Technician Chi Shi, the violent resistance of the lower-class woman Hong Xu, the cognitive awakening of the elite woman Feng Cheng, and the philosophical criticism of the transcendent siblings Kondo/ Kondo Ei. This structure builds a three-dimensional critical network across different social strata and cognitive dimensions. The work embeds gender issues within the framework of technological critique, breaking the traditional "one-dimensional salvation" model of superhero narratives and providing an innovative paradigm for digital media art that combines academic depth with mass communication value.



**Gender Performance Theory:** Judith Butler's 《Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Gender Identity》emphasizes that gender is a continuous construction of social behavior. The "rationality" of male heroes and the "passion" of female heroes in superhero movies are both reflections of social gender norms. This work subverts such stereotypical narratives through diverse character behaviors.

**Gender Deconstruction Theory:** Shen Yifei, "The Constructed Feminine: Contemporary Social Gender Theory"

## 04. INDUSTRY & THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

**Critique of Technological Philosophy:** Zhou Zhiqiang, "Media Life Critique and Technological Political Reflection"

**Visual Symbol Innovation:** Based on Laura Mulvey's paper 《Visual Pleasure and Narrative Film》the critique of "visual pleasure" in this context neutralizes the design of combat suits (by weakening the emphasis on body curves and replacing gendered decorations with ability symbols), thereby dispelling the objectification gaze on female bodies, reconstructing female subjectivity, and countering the visual discipline imposed by the subconscious of patriarchal culture.

|  | Traditional superhero movies | Project "Neon Dawn: Uprising"   |
|---|------------------------------|---|
| Character core  | Male power dominance         | Multi-subject collaboration (transgender, class, ability)               |
| Gender expression   | Stereotype reinforcement     | Neutralization symbol deconstruction (De-body gaze, de-ability binding) |

## 04. INDUSTRY & THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

| Narrative logic      | Individual hero rescue | Systematic social Criticism (Technological Alienation, Power Structure) |
|----------------------|------------------------|---|
| Cultural perspective | Western centrism       | Value Reconstruction in Asia (Collectivism, Localization of Culture)    |



# Q5. CREATIVE & TECHNICAL PROCESS

## Problem Inspiration

- Does the identity of a superhero prevent them from living a normal life?
- Does possessing superpowers mean one has to shoulder greater responsibilities?
- Should superheroes be forgiven for their mistakes?
- Why do different roles receive different evaluations when they exhibit the same behavior?

Question

- Can superheroes resort to violent means and even kill criminals when pursuing justice?
- Are the values represented by superheroes necessarily correct and in line with the expectations of the general public?
- Should superheroes strive for the interests of their own group or the interests of the majority of the public?

superheroes and philosophy

## Topic Selection

- Understanding Truth and Justice through Socratic Dialogue
- The difference from traditional heroes
- How do superheroes demonstrate social justice in the context of globalization? This article explores the struggles related to race, gender and class.
- In the context of postmodernism, the quadruplicity of superheroes was discussed to help understand the chaos and complexity in contemporary society.
- The choices of different superheroes and their moral consequences
- The relationship between superpowers and personal identity

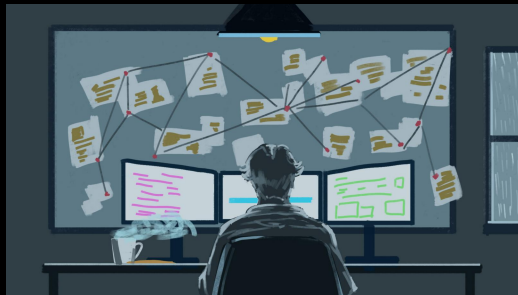
# MANAGEMENT & TECHNICAL





## (1) TARGET AUDIENCE SEGMENTATION

**Core Audience:** Young people aged 18-35 from East Asia (predominantly females), who pursue diverse and inclusive heroic figures in narratives that advocate for equality. This audience encompasses subculture groups such as comic enthusiasts and cyber culture aficionados, and is characterized by both visual appeal and sensitivity to social issues.



未来城市，雨夜

## 06.MARKET



初希穿梭其中



回到暗巷家中



泡上一杯咖啡



开始工作

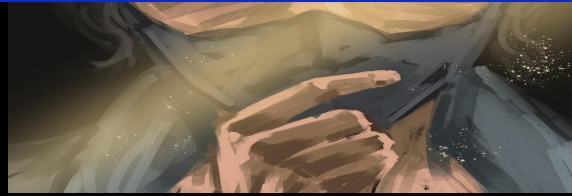
## & AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

**Industry professionals:** Film and television creators (directors, screenwriters, etc.) and gender/mass media researchers, providing narrative innovation cases and theoretical samples for projects, promoting collaborative innovation between the industry and academia.

**Social Advocacy Organization:** Gender Equality and Digital Ethics Institute, through its works, promotes social conceptual innovation, stimulates discussions on cultural policies and practical actions, and strengthens the social intervention function of art.

AUDIENCE

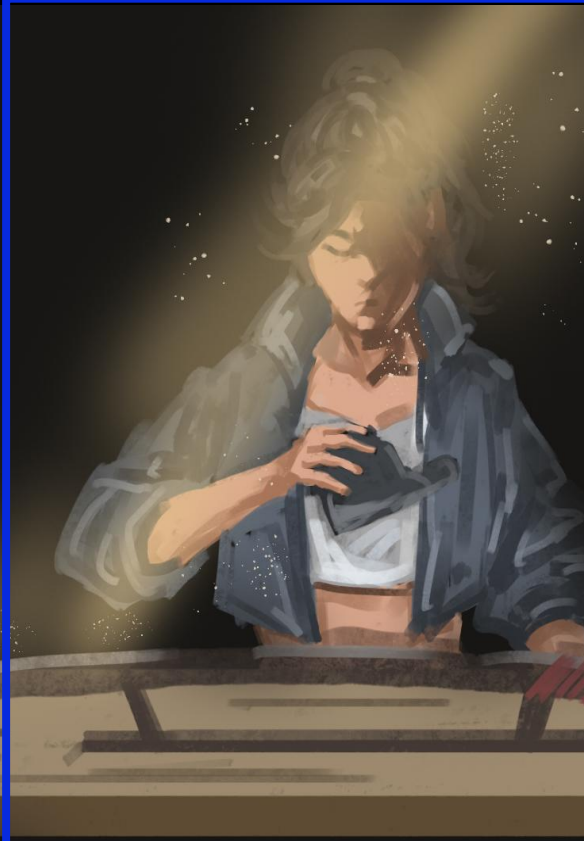
## (2) INDUSTRY TREND MATCHING



## 06.MARKET & AUDIENCE ANALYSIS

### The potential of multicultural markets:

Data from the past five years shows that superhero movies with distinct cultural characteristics have demonstrated significant commercial value (for instance, the African-themed film "Black Panther" achieved a box office of 1.34 billion US dollars, with a 300% growth in the African market; the Asian elements in "Shang-Chi" led to a 42% share of the box office in East Asia). This project focuses on Asian cultural reconstruction as its core competitiveness, transforming cultural differences into market advantages.



### Narrative Deepening of Social Issues:

Compared with the in-depth exploration of social issues in "Joker" and "Batman", this project breaks stereotypes through the "ability-gender decoupling" combat system and enhances the depth of thought with structural issues, meeting the audience's expectations for narrative deepening.

### Adaptation of Industrial Form for Innovation:

In response to the demand for "high concept + strong issues" content in streaming media, a modular narrative structure is developed to ensure immersion while expanding the card materials to adapt to fragmented consumption scenarios and enhance the potential for multi-platform dissemination.

MATCHING



## (1) CURATORIAL CONCEPT

The exhibition of "Neon Dawn: Uprising" takes "immersive heroic narrative" as its core.

Through the spatial design that combines digital and physical elements, it transforms the suspense tension, visual impact and story core of the trailer into a multi-dimensional sensory experience. The exhibition aims to immerse the audience in the world of the film, allowing them to experience the struggle of superheroes against the "Equal Future" plan. Through immersive experiences, it reveals the process of fighting against technological alienation, while conveying the theme of "the right to freedom of choice".

CURATION  
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## 07. CURATION & EXHIBITION STRATEGY



## (2) EXHIBITION DESIGN AND ARRANGEMENT

### ① Spatial Planning (Hybrid Exhibition)

Physical exhibition area: Original character design drafts, storyboards, and technical process displays.

Digital Exhibition Area: Trailer projection, interactive installations.

### ② Zoning design

Entrance area: Neon signs and a wall of dynamic posters featuring highlights create a cyberpunk atmosphere.

Narrative Area: The full trailer is projected and played in a loop, complemented by surround sound effects to enhance the narrative feel.

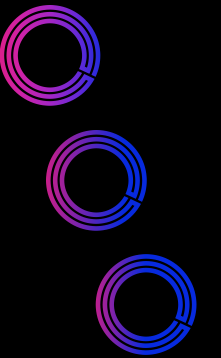
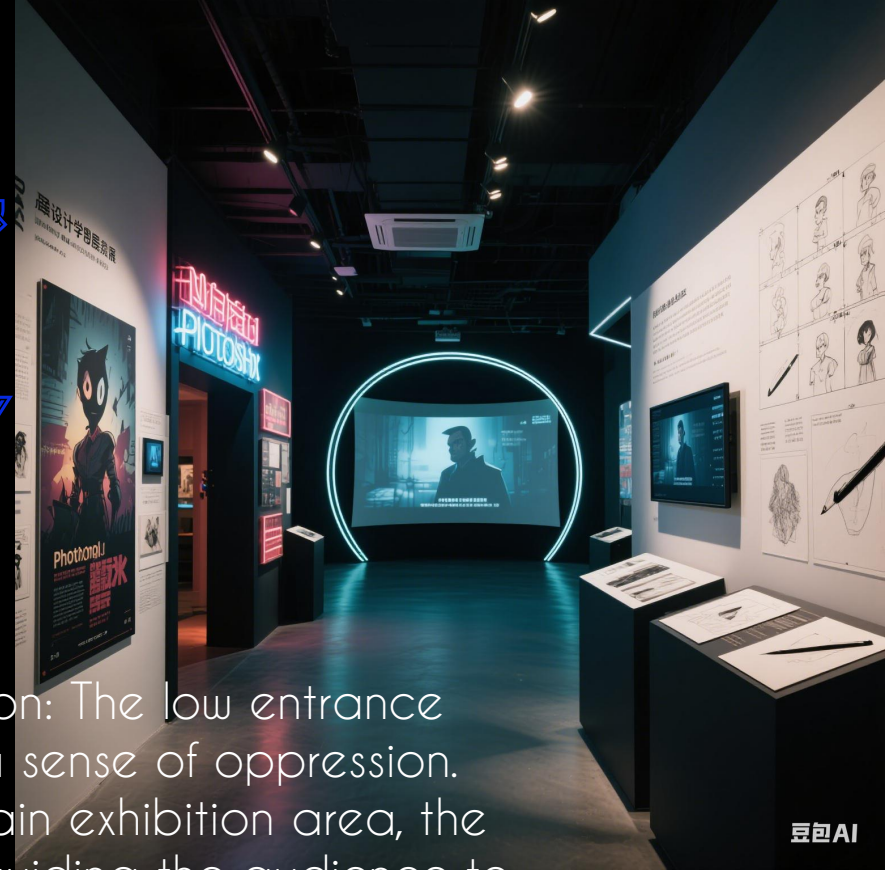
Creation Area: Showcases the original Photoshop storyboard drafts, Premiere editing process, and brush technique explanations.

## 07. CURATION & EXHIBITION STRATEGY

### ③ Layout details

Height and circulation: The low entrance passage simulates a sense of oppression. After entering the main exhibition area, the space is spacious, guiding the audience to gradually delve into the narrative rhythm of "conspiracy exposure".

Lighting design: High-contrast colors (red and blue neon) and bold line lighting are adopted to echo the visual style of the trailer. The suspenseful scenes are complemented by local spotlights and dynamic shadows.

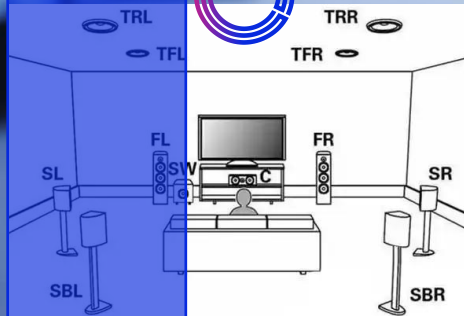




### (3) TECHNOLOGY AND LOGISTICS ASPECTS

- ① Hardware requirements: Customized neon light strips (entrance area), physical display stands (for Posting posters and original manuscripts), 4K projectors (main exhibition area), touch screens (interactive area), and surround sound systems.
- ② Software requirements: Procreate (plot storyboard drawing), Premiere (trailer editing), Photoshop (poster production).
- ③ Logistics coordination: Install and debug the equipment three days in advance, test the stability of audio and video synchronization and interaction programs, and ensure independent power supply for high-power-consuming equipment.

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EXHIBITION  
STRATEGY



#### (4) SUPPLEMENTARY MATERIALS

① Promotional materials: Brochures available for audience collection, including posters, character information cards, and plot introductions.

② Digital extension: Create a dedicated website ([www.neondawn.com](http://www.neondawn.com)) to provide behind-the-scenes information such as drafts, storyboards, and creative ideas.

③ Promotion strategy: Launch the topic # My Equal Future # on short videos on social media platforms to encourage users to share their own choice stories.



CURATION  
CURATION  
CURATION

## 07. CURATION & EXHIBITION STRATEGY





8. CASE STUDY OR SIMILAR INDUSTRY EXAMPLE

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| Analysis Dimension    | Black Panther (2018)   | Black Panther: Wakanda Forever (2022)   | Future Improvements  |
|-----------------------|--|---|--|
| Narrative Framework   | Male-dominated "royal succession" narrative  | Female collective leadership, but with rushed character arcs (e.g., Shuri becoming Black Panther abruptly)  | Allow female characters flaws and growth (e.g., trials, failures)  |
| Female Role Design    | Support roles: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shuri (tech support)</li><li>• Okoye (loyal guard)</li><li>• Nakia (emotional catalyst)</li></ul> | Diverse abilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shuri (tech + combat)</li><li>• Okoye (military leader)</li><li>• Nakia (diplomat)</li></ul>   | Independent motivations (e.g., personal ideals beyond collective service)                                  |
| Visual Expression     | Traditional armor designs; weak functionality for female costumes  | Degendered armor (Shuri's full-body suit), but combat style remains agility-focused   | Differentiated combat styles (power/strategy-based); functional costumes (e.g., Sersi in <i>Eternals</i> ) |
| Gender Issue Handling | Clear gender roles; male-led decisions   | Female unity against male villain, reinforcing "gender opposition"  | Move beyond opposition (e.g., trauma, cultural responsibility narratives)                                  |
| Progress              | ✗ Reinforced traditional gender roles  | <div>✓ Degendered design</div> <div>✓ Diverse abilities</div> <div>✓ Emotion-driven but not weak</div>  | Balance "degendering" with humanity, avoiding tokenism   |
| Existing Issues       | Lack of female autonomy  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shuri's abrupt growth</li><li>• Female alliance lacks independent motives</li><li>• Villain gender bias</li></ul> | Deconstruct "hero = strength" gender binds; reference complex figures (Gwen Stacy, Neytiri)                |

ANALYSIS OF THE TRANSFORMATION FROM MALE TO FEMALE  
LEADS IN "BLACK PANTHER" AND "BLACK PANTHER 2"

8. CASE STUDY OR SIMILAR INDUSTRY EXAMPLE

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| Analysis Dimension | Captain Marvel (2019)  | The Marvels (2023)   | Key Issues & Improvements  |
|--------------------|--|--|--|
| Role Design        | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>"Degendered" warrior</li><li>Cosmic energy powers (avoiding body display)</li><li>Anti-authority, no romance</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Female team (Carol + Monica + Kamala)</li><li>Diverse identities: Black elite/immigrant teen</li></ul> | Issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Carol lacks growth arc</li><li>Team abilities feel cluttered</li></ul> Improve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Add flaws (e.g., energy instability)</li><li>Deepen cultural intersections</li></ul> |
| Visual Expression  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Full-body suit</li><li>Energy-based combat</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Retains degendered design</li><li>Kamala's suit includes Pakistani elements (underdeveloped)</li></ul> | Improve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Differentiate combat styles (macro/micro/shapeshifting)</li><li>Enhance cultural costume symbols</li></ul>  |
| Narrative Flaws    | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Invincibility weakens humanity</li><li>Emotional reliance on external reveals</li></ul>                                | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Weak villain (Dar-Benn)</li><li>Superficial team dynamics</li></ul>                                    | Improve: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Introduce complex female villains</li><li>Shift to psychological exploration (e.g., WandaVision)</li></ul>  |
| Progress           | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✔ First female-led origin film</li><li>✔ Metaphor for breaking social norms</li></ul>                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>✔ Diverse representation</li><li>✔ Teen perspective adds vibrancy</li></ul>                            | Future: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Balance power with vulnerability</li><li>Move beyond "identity stacking"</li></ul>   |

THE EVOLUTION AND LIMITATIONS OF THE PORTRAYAL OF FEMALE SUPERHEROES IN "CAPTAIN MARVEL" AND "CAPTAIN MARVEL 2"

8. CASE STUDY OR SIMILAR INDUSTRY EXAMPLE

8. CASE STUDY OR SIMILAR INDUSTRY EXAMPLE

| Analysis Dimension  | Existing Limitations  | Project Breakthroughs   |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Visual Symbols      | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>BP2’s traditional hero silhouettes</li><li>CM’s energy reliance</li></ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Dynamic neutral designs</li><li>Cultural-tech combat fusion</li></ul> |
| Technology Critique | Tech as tools (e.g., Iron Man’s armor)  | Tech as power systems (e.g., blockchain resistance)   |
| Core Innovations    | <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>Transform female heroes into tech-critique subjects</li><li>Avoid CM’s "hollow invincibility" or BP2’s tokenism</li><li>Balance entertainment, culture, and depth</li></ol> |   |

THE PROJECT "NEON DAWN: UPRISING" BUILDS A MORE BREAKTHROUGH SUPERHERO NARRATIVE BASED ON THE CULTURAL EMPOWERMENT OF "BLACK PANTHER" AND THE GENDER DECONSTRUCTION OF "CAPTAIN MARVEL"



## O9. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT & CAREER PATH

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As an innovative practice that integrates gender criticism, technological reflection and Asian cultural narratives, this work is not only valuable for academic research, but also has cross-industry extensibility and career development potential. Therefore, it can achieve in-depth value development through multi-dimensional industrial layout:

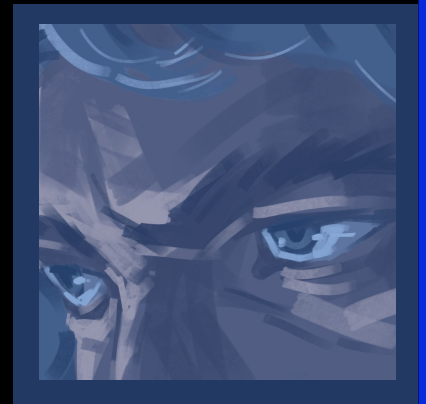
- ① In the field of the film and television industry, develop complete feature films and individual character series based on the narrative framework of "Neon Dawn: Uprising", create an Asian localized superhero IP, and construct an "equal future universe" through cross-media carriers such as comics, games, and VR to enhance the immersion of the story.
- ② At the level of cultural dissemination, promote narrative dialogues from non-Western perspectives through various international film festivals, animation exhibitions and academic forums. At the same time, collaborate with feminist institutions to transform works into gender education materials and carry out campus and community workshops.
- ③ In terms of technology integration, interactive exhibitions are carried out. Users can experience the character's predicament with virtual identities and participate in co-creation of the plot, deepening their understanding of technology ethics in an innovative form. This three-dimensional development model not only ensures commercial sustainability but also continuously expands social influence.

## (1) FUTURE DEVELOPMENT OF THE PROJECT

# 09. FUTURE DEVELOPMENT & CAREER PATH

- ① Taking the "technology-gender" dual issue framework verified by "Neon Dawn: Uprising" as the core asset, its narrative methodology such as neutralized visual symbols and cross-hierarchical role networks will become tools for subsequent creations. Community users participating in this project can continuously provide feedback for the subsequent stories of different characters in the same IP universe.
- ② Open up the underlying Settings of the "Equal Future" universe, such as the social structure controlled by technology and the neutral aesthetic system, to other creators, and allow third parties to develop derivative stories. For instance, someone proposed to create a suspense short drama titled "The Observer's Log" based on the background of the transcendent observer group where the siblings Jiang Ze and Jiang E belong.
- ③ Deepen the theme, focus on cross-media narrative and technological innovation from an Asian perspective, and shift towards creating on broader gender equality issues. Maintain the world view connection with the original work, but form an independent piece and attempt different themes within the same world view. Unify the visual identity but the narrative style can be differentiated.

## (2) CAREER PLANNING CONNECTION



# 10. CONCLUSION



- This project demonstrates how superhero media like Neon Dawn: Uprising can drive social change. By innovating in female character design and localized visual storytelling, it addresses gender representation gaps in superhero films while advancing social justice.
- The study converts art into public discourse through immersive experiences, spreading its core message: "equality means freedom of choice." Despite limitations, its "quadruple mirror" narrative and neutral visual symbols offer industry innovation benchmarks.
- As digital technology merges with social movements, superhero films must evolve beyond entertainment to inspire real-world action. This project proves that when popular culture engages with real societal struggles, it becomes a catalyst for progress.



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# Neon Dawn: Uprising

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# THANKS

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