



**Name in English:** James Wong Howe  
**Name in Chinese:** 黃宗霑  
**Name in Pinyin:** Huáng Zōngzhān  
**Gender:** Male  
**Birth Year:** 1899-1976  
**Birth Place:** Guangzhou, China  
**Philanthropy:**

**Profession (s):** Cinematographer

**Education:**

**Award(s):** 1954, Oscar for his black and white cinematography work on *The Rose Tattoo*; 1963, Oscar for his black and white photography work on *Hud*; named one of history's ten most influential cinematographers in an International Cinematographers Guild survey

**Contribution(s):** One of the most influential cinematographers in film history, with an admirable ability to adapt to the advances in film, from silent to sound, from black and white to color. Shot over 130 motion pictures. As a young "fourth assistant cameraman" for Cecil B. DeMille, he was able to get a canary look as though it were singing by giving it a piece of gum. DeMille gave him a 50% raise. To earn extra money at the time, he took photographs of the stars for them to keep as souvenirs. One client, Mary Miles Minter, was impressed with his ability to make her pale blue eyes seem darker. She asked him to be her cameraman. The film technology of the time had trouble registering blue eyes, and word of Howe's talent got around to other blue-eyed actors who began to ask him to shoot them. He quickly rose as a cinematographer.

He gained a reputation for his careful handling of female actresses with "Mantrap" in 1926, where he was able to magnify Clara Bow's sex appeal by lighting her in a soft glow. Howe used the environment as a way to highlight the inner workings of the characters. He helped make the audience feel it was in the boxing ring by putting a cameraman on roller skates for *Body and Soul*. He strapped cameras onto the actors' waists for a closer feel for bullfighting in *The Brave Bulls*. He used a 9mm "fish-eye" lens to suggest mental instability in *Seconds*.

Howe dealt with racism from when he was a young boy, when he had to bribe the white children in his town with candy in order for them to play with him. During World War II, he was often mistaken for Japanese, even though they were already in internment camps. He would wear a button saying "I am Chinese" to clarify. Howe was under scrutiny by the House Un-American Activities Committee (HUAC) in the McCarthy era for his work with "Reds," but he never had to testify. He returned to prominence in the 50s, winning his first Oscar in 1954 after numerous nominations (he would be nominated ten times, winning twice). A quarter of a century after his death, his work was given retrospectives at the 2002 Seattle International Film Festival and in San Francisco in 2004. He is respected as a master of cinematography by his peers.

**External Links:** <http://www.imdb.com/name/nm0002146/>