

Empty Gallery
3 Yue Fung Street
18th & 19th Floor
Tin Wan, Hong Kong

Empty Gallery is pleased to present *Apologies and Other Regrets*, James T. Hong's second solo exhibition with the gallery. Since the late 1990s, Hong has produced searing moving image works which deploy elements of experimental, documentary, and essayistic filmmaking to critically address issues of class, race, and historical trauma in America and East Asia. His research-based practice often operates along the fraught intersection of epistemological and socio-political questions, interrogating the manner in which knowledge is produced, disseminated, and manipulated in the service of power.

In our 19th floor gallery, Hong presents the newest iteration of his film *Apologies* (2012-ongoing) in a monumental three-channel version. Shown most recently at the Jewish Museum in Vienna, *Apologies* is a taxonomic investigation into that most contemporary phenomenon: the political apology. Hong's film functions simultaneously as documentation of the technics of mediatized diplomacy, and a sort of historical index of past atrocities via their—often facile—national acknowledgements. Painstakingly assembling broadcast footage of various heads of state— from Willy Brandt's historic visit to the Warsaw Ghetto to contemporary regrets over the seizure of indigenous land—*Apologies* sometimes resembles a perverse compilation of “greatest hits”, albeit one filtered through Hong's uniquely grim sense of humor and the rhythmic seriality of the structural film. *Apologies* may at first seem impenetrable, or perhaps even arbitrary, a procedural exercise whose aura of gray facticity and strained propriety contains few aesthetic charms. But after a while, the polished surfaces of these diplomatic performances start to exert their own sort of hypnotic pull. Within the overdetermined space of the public apology, attention is drawn towards the supposedly inessential. The viewer watches for inevitable fissures between script and performance, moments of either semiotic scarcity or excess, analyzing the politician's body like a text, on the hunt for insincerity or double-meanings communicated through the length of a pause or tilt of the head. Experiencing these performances in series, one is occasionally struck by a strange sense of pathos. However terrible the leader or great the crime, we are still confronted with the insufficiency of a single human body to ever contain the symbolic weight of history and nation—perhaps pointing to the essential futility of even apologizing for these events at all. *Apologies*, then, proffers itself as evidence of the failure of modern politics to address historical trauma and break free from cyclical violence—the supposed moral progress of history reduced to a formalist repetition of apologetic styles.

On our lower floor, Hong will also present a series of new sculptures entitled *Stabbed In The Back*. Referencing the famous English fable of the sword in the stone, these sculptures take the form of trompe-loeil rocks—resembling what one might find on a film set or amusement park— embedded with WWII-era Japanese bayonets. Juxtaposing the light-hearted kitsch of the fantasy prop with the brutal facticity of the murder weapon, these works point to the complex dialectic between historical truth and national mythology. Embodying the (literal) weaponization of trauma, they bear witness to the ever-present possibility for real historical violence to re- animate itself and erupt into the present.

Empty Gallery很高興為大家帶來洪子健在畫廊的第二個個展《Apologies and Other Regrets》。自二十世紀90年代末以來，洪子健創作了許多尖銳的流動影像作品，這些作品採用實驗性的、紀錄片的和散文式的電影元素，批判性地探討了美國和東亞的階級、種族和歷史創傷問題。他以研究為基礎的實踐經常在認識論和社會政治問題的充滿爭議的交叉點上展開，拷問知識是如何被生產、傳播和操縱以服務於權力的。

在畫廊的19樓空間中，洪子健以紀念碑式的三屏影像呈現他的作品〈Apologies〉(2012年至今)的最新版本。最近在維也納猶太博物館展出過的〈Apologies〉是對政治道歉這一當代現象的分類學調查。他的這部影像既是媒介化外交技術的記錄，同時也經由國家對過去暴行的——通常是膚淺的——承認，成為一種歷史的索引。從威利·布蘭特(Willy Brandt)歷史性訪問華沙猶太區到各種對掠奪原住民土地的現代致歉，〈Apologies〉悉心匯編了各國元首的電視節目片段，有時看起來像一部怪異的「最佳合集」，透過洪子健獨特和憂鬱的幽默感以及結構電影的節奏性和連續性而過濾形成。〈Apologies〉一開始可能令人費解，甚至顯得很隨意，像是一種程序性的練習，其灰色的事實和惡化的正當性所帶來的氣氛中幾乎沒有美學魅力。但過了一段時間後，這些外交表演的光鮮外表開始產生一種獨特的催眠吸引力。在公開道歉的多重決定空間內，注意力被引向那些所謂的無關緊要之處。觀眾開始觀察腳本和表演之間不可避免的裂縫，關注那些符號意義的不足或過剩的時刻，將政治家的身體當作文本來分析，尋找過長的停頓或頭部的傾斜所揭示的虛偽或雙重意義。連續觀看這些表演，人們偶爾會被一種奇特的悲愴感所打動。無論領導人多麼糟糕或罪行多麼嚴重，我們面對的仍然是一個人個體的身軀永遠不足以承載歷史和國家的象徵重量——這也許正說明，為這些事件道歉本身是根本徒勞的。因此，〈Apologies〉提供了現代政治無法處理歷史創傷和擺脫循環暴力的證據——所謂歷史道德的進步只能淪為道歉風格的形式主義重複。

在畫廊的下層空間，洪子健還將展出一系列名為〈Stabbed In The Back〉的新雕塑作品。這些雕塑參考了英國著名的「石中劍」寓言故事，以視覺陷阱般的石頭造型出現——類似於電影道具或遊樂園中的假石山——上面嵌有二戰時期的日本刺刀。將幻想道具的輕鬆詼諧和殺戮武器的殘酷事實相並置，這些作品指向歷史真相與國家神話之間複雜的辯證關係。它們體現了創傷(在字面意義上)的武器化，見證了真實的歷史暴力重新自我復活並爆發於當下的永恆可能性。