

Time Out

Hong

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HENRY TANG
CHIEF EXECUTIVE
(2012-2017)

THE NEXT BOSS OF HONG KONG



* Relax
folks, the
election's
rigged

Peeping Wong The artist takes an impression at his Videotage show



Inner visions

In his latest exhibit at Videotage, Hong Kong-based video artist Morgan Wong continues his exploration into the notion of time and space. He talks to **Fiona Ng**

It's been a nostalgic return to Videotage for Morgan Wong. Having had his first major breakthrough exhibit at the non-profit art space in 2007, the Hong Kong-based video artist is now back for an artist-in-residence programme and solo show which features his latest media art creation, *Untitled – Agnosia Series I*. As its name suggests, the video montage contemplates the inability to recognise objects through the abstraction of its physical form. True to his roots, Wong has chosen the iconic symbol of Hong Kong's finance and commerce – the IFC Two Tower – as his main motif for abstraction. “It all started with the culture shock I experienced when I came back to Hong Kong [after a brief stay overseas],” says Wong. “I wanted to convey the feeling of not really knowing where you belong.”

Prior to the current residency, the City University graduate in Creative Media had travelled and worked in various countries, spending more than a year working as a press co-ordinator for the alternative space Beijing Commune, which was founded by art critic and curator Leng Lin in 2004. Wong was in charge of dealing with the press, attending art fairs, closing sales and communicating with artists. “Coming back to Hong Kong made

me rediscover the city and look at it from a different perspective,” says Wong on his new solo exhibition. “When I was doing research for this project, I was gazing at the Hong Kong skyline and thought how generic it looked. It was pretty much a multitude of lights. And I thought to myself: the lives of the people behind those lights were probably pretty generic too. I wanted to create something that conveys the generic nature of city life.”

Wong has captured this notion of the generic by first recording the image of the IFC on video, before extracting elements inside the windows and pixelating them. The result is a blurry image where you can almost see what's going on inside the windows – but not exactly. Only colours, lights and faint outlines are visible. The idea of the generic is thus encapsulated within the repetitive pattern of the masses of windows on the IFC tower, as well as through the use of colour, whereby the artist chose to use only whites and yellows.

Before his latest project, Wong spent two months last year at an artist residency in S-AIR, Sapporo, where he immersed himself in the Japanese culture and lifestyle, and created works which explored the ideas of cross-cultural

communication. Among his many creations during the residency is a video installation depicting the artist's attempt to communicate with an elderly Japanese chef using Chinese characters. “He didn't speak any Chinese and I didn't speak any Japanese, but we managed to communicate through Chinese characters somehow,” says Wong.

Another work created during his Sapporo residency explores the notion of time and space. Previously exhibited at Para/Site Art Space under the theme of *Fax Machine*, Wong has transformed the concept of time difference between Hong Kong and Japan into a performance and photograph documentation. “I was thinking that faxing between Hong Kong and Japan would involve a time difference, so I decided to walk backwards around a small forest in the middle of a Sapporo winter. The concept was to portray time reversal. It's quite an absurd concept because it's actually impossible to do so in real life.” This work has since been showcased in Korea and Barcelona.

Experimentation is clearly important to this young man, as, despite being labelled as a ‘video artist’, he nonetheless refuses to be confined to the artistic limitations of one medium. The artist enjoys fusing fine arts with creative media, stating that the former provides the framework for him to further develop

ideas for a project in the latter. However, Wong does acknowledge his interest in expressing his ideas through digital video. “I believe each artistic medium has its own strengths in allowing an artist to express their ideas. One is not better or worse than the other.”

Wong has been exhibited widely around the world and his work can most recently be seen at the group exhibit in the Milan Triennale Design Museum and Turin Palace Museum

(Palazzo Chiabrese) in Italy, which lasts until September 11. When asked about the difference in reactions to his works across the different countries that they've travelled to, Wong stresses that art should be experienced on a personal level and that it would be a case of over-generalisation if his audience's responses were categorised based on their cultural differences. In any case, the artist is merely

aiming to push the boundaries of his audience's perception of what art can be. “The work I did in Japan was more conceptual-based,” he says by way of introduction. “Since the audiences [in that region] are normally more exposed to [the traditional art forms], like paintings and sculptures, my work could have widened their horizons as to what art can encompass.”

Morgan Wong's solo exhibition, **Untitled – Agnosia Series I**, is at Videotage until **Jul 10**.

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