



## Hauntology

### Ho Rui An

In the history of capitalist modernity in East and Southeast Asia, student bodies appear, disappear and return. In *Student Bodies*, these bodies, at once collective and singular, stand for, at various turns of this history, the body politic of the developmental state and the radicalism produced out of its contradictions. Beginning with the students of Satsuma and Choshu from Bakumatsu-era Japan, who were the first from the country to study in the West, the film reflects upon how the “star capitalist pupil,” as Chalmers Johnson said of Japan in the postwar period, would become in the next moment, the dead student protester on the streets. Yet, no student body appears in the flesh at any point in the film. Neither are these bodies, strictly speaking, absent. Against scenes of architecture, monuments and archival material bearing the traces of their presence plays a haunted soundtrack filled by ghostly utterances that are comprehensible only through subtitles. This monstrous ambience is not a recuperation of presence but a foregrounding of that which has held on from presence’s evacuation—a hauntology.



Ho Rui An, *Student Bodies*, 2019, HD video, 26'30"

### Related Keywords

Overcoming Modernity