

This is a dynamic list and may never be able to satisfy particular standards for completeness

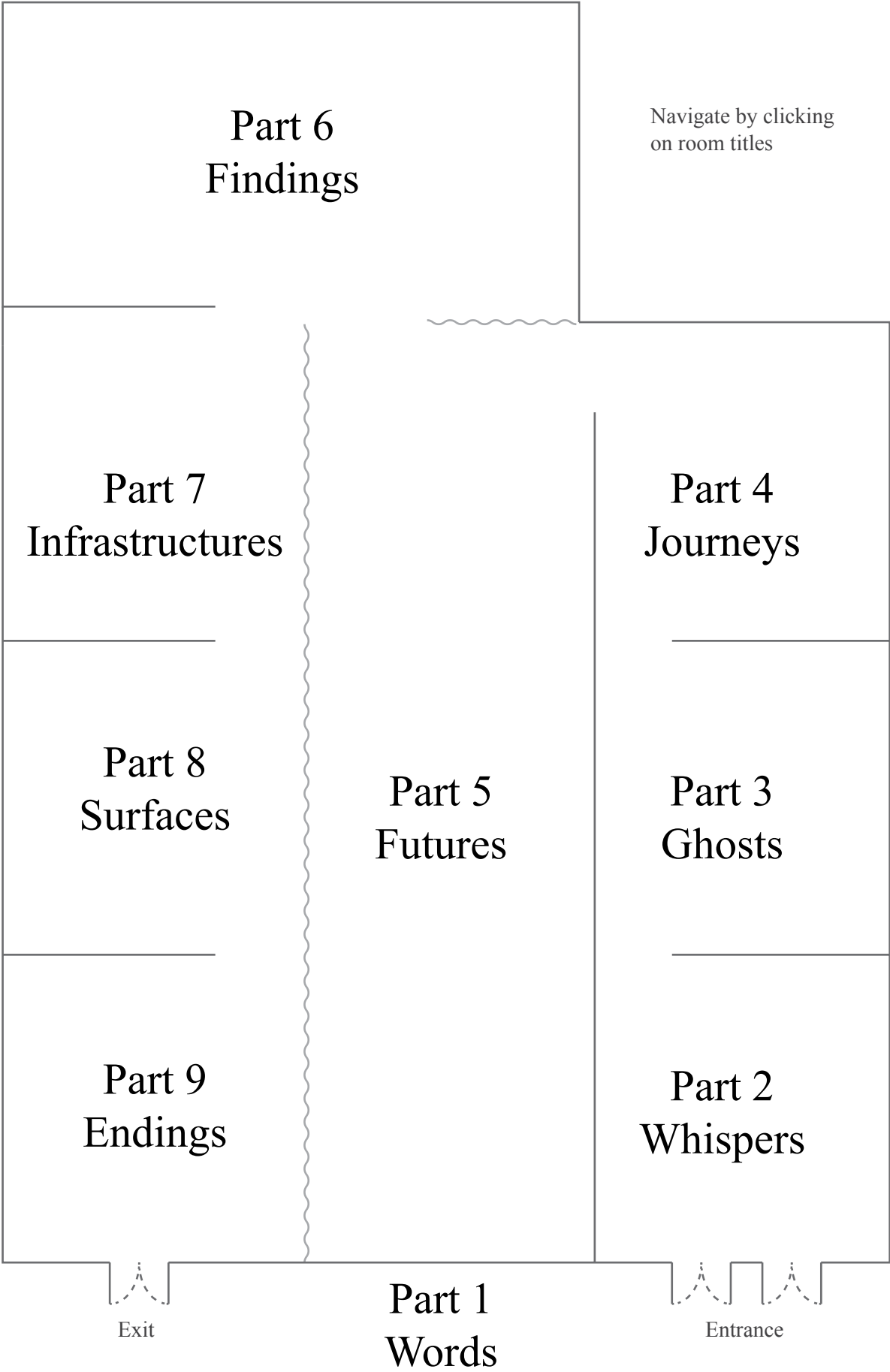
This is a dynamic list and may never be able to satisfy particular standards for completeness reads as a survey of artworks by Heman Chong.

The title of this exhibition is a readymade text-based artwork, appropriated from a disclaimer for lists on Wikipedia. An indemnity as much as a declaration of intention, its application caveats that this is not a comprehensive survey of the artist's practice.

Rather, the exhibition offers a lens into Chong's varied methods of making what he regards as cultural objects. From artworks first made in 2003—the year Chong first participated in the Venice Biennale, disavowed video art, and began to curate internationally—to recent works made specifically for this occasion, the exhibition charts trajectories of his conceptual practice across two decades marked by globalised art production and social media platforms.



Developed by the artist, the exhibition unfolds across different rooms and compositions of artworks, each organised around keywords: Words, Whispers, Ghosts, Journeys, Futures, Findings, Infrastructures, Surfaces and Endings. Much like metadata tags, these keywords suggest an ontology of the coordinated works, inviting the viewer into Chong's critical and affective interrogation of objects, situations, logics and affinities which express the human condition in the 21st century.



Part 1

Words



Words are the building blocks of narratives.

At the entry point of the exhibition are two artworks based on discarded words that have been recycled.





2006/2024

Site-specific wall installation involving a deleted novel, a file retrieved containing 239 words, a translation made from English to Chinese via Google translate, and printed posters

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

Collection of the artist

On 8 July 2006, Chong began writing a 200-page novel, *Prospectus*. The story centres on a retrospective exhibition of an artist accused of plagiarising from a younger artist—the work in question being a novel also titled *Prospectus*, which is about a master plan for an imaginary art school. Frustrated during the editing process, Chong deleted the novel.

In 2024, he engaged a data retrieval company in an attempt to recover the file, but it had been so badly corrupted that only 239 words could be salvaged.

Fragments of this meta-novel are presented in both English and Mandarin as wallpaper, covering the entrance to Chong's survey exhibition in 2025 that recalls definitive works by the artist over the last two decades.

Heman Chong in collaboration with Renée Staal
The Library of Unread Books



2016

Donated unread books, tables and chairs

Dimensions variable

Edition 1 of 9

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

A reference library amassed through a public call for donations of unread books. Described by Chong as a social sculpture, the library is also a commons, growing its inventory with each presentation.

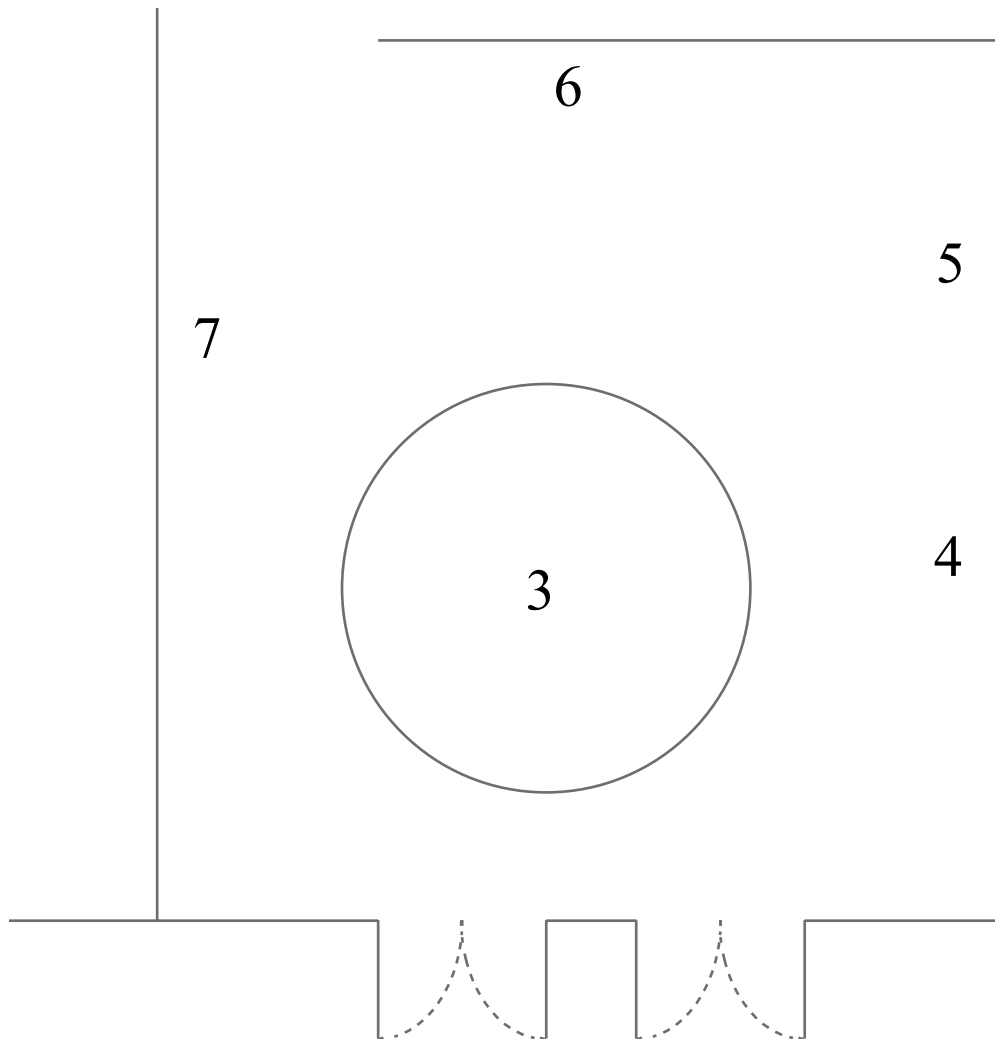
The Library of Unread Books, collected by the Singapore Art Museum, was previously presented at the Singapore Biennale 2022.

Part 2

Whispers



Of secrets and hiding in plain sight.



2024

500 rusted iron sheets

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

Collection of the artist

The sculpture consists of 500 sheets of iron cut to A4 size—the standard paper size used globally, except in the United States and Canada.

2016

Appropriated text, site-specific wall installation

Collection of the artist

Available for download from the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) website, *Simple Sabotage Field Manual* (1944) was a wartime guide to subterfuge, published by the Office of Strategic Services—the World War II predecessor of the CIA. The manual recommended deliberately hindering productivity while adhering to bureaucratic procedures.

*The Straits Times, Thursday, November 1, 2012,
Page A8*



2018

UV print on unprimed canvas

Collection of the artist

Abstracts From The Straits Times is a series based on journalistic headlines and accompanying photo documentation from *The Straits Times*, Singapore's daily newspaper. From floods to electrical outages, Chong focuses on moments of breakdown reported in Singapore's news cycle, with his method of repetition and overlap effectively "submerging" and "blacking out" their messages, mirroring the everyday glitch with the glitch that enabled and was introduced during the making of the work.

2008

Appropriated text, site-specific wall installation
(From *ArtReview* Vol. 67, No. 8, 2015)

Collection of the artist

Named after American psychologist Bertram R. Forer, *The Forer Effect* describes how individuals tend to consider general statements as personally accurate. Forer termed this the “fallacy of personal validation.” Chong appropriates statements from Forer’s original 1948 personality tests administered to his students, applying them to different contexts, including the cover of *ArtReview* magazine’s Power 100 list (Vol. 67, No. 8, 2015), which ranks the art world’s most influential figures.

2009

9,600 self-adhesive stickers applied directly onto wall;
completed within a day

Commissioned by Arnolfini Arts

Collection of the artist

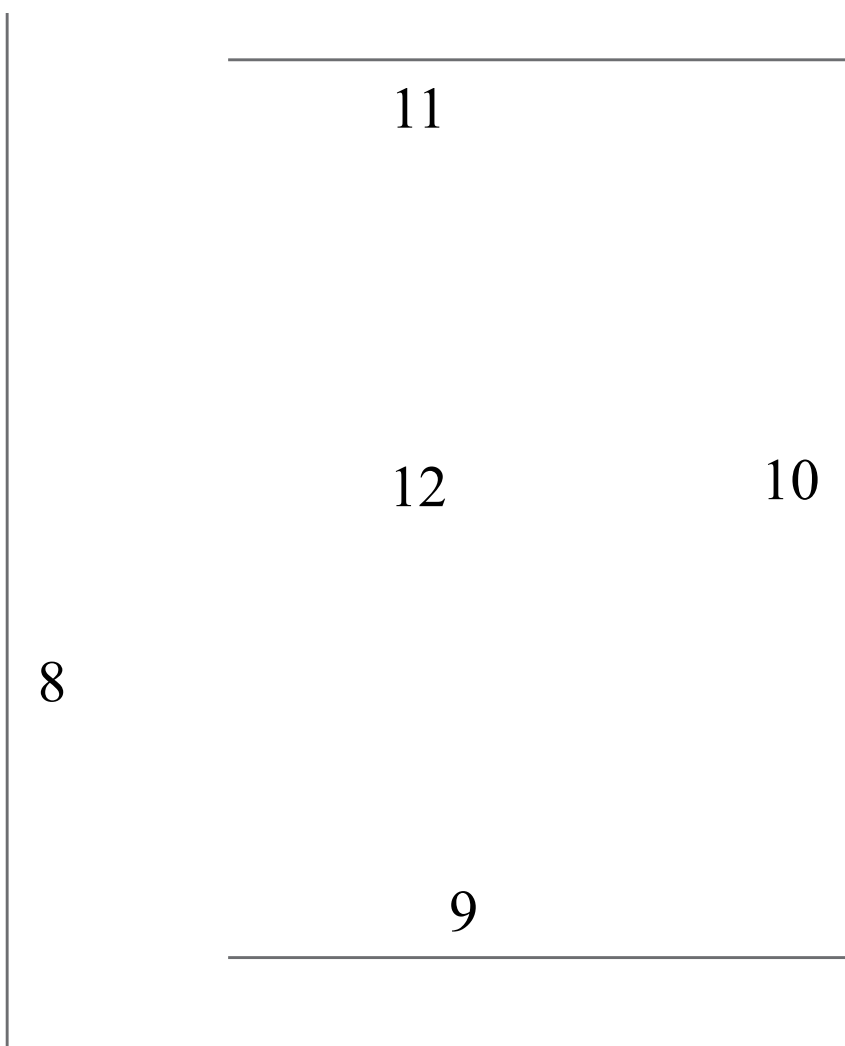
Part of Chong's long-standing *Surfacing* series (2007–2012), *Index (Down)* recalls the symbol of the red triangle used to indicate a drop in stock value. Framed by the parameter that this installation of adhesive stickers must be completed within a day, the work materialises the time and labour encapsulated in the red triangle, reflecting the market's daily fluctuations. Arranged freely, unpremeditated, each presentation of this work is a site-specific intervention, with seemingly random, organic clusters and formations emerging in the course of its production.

Part 3

Ghosts



Traces that linger, resisting endings and erasure.



***Ho Ho Ying / 180 Depot Road / 1D Gillman Heights /
#01-26 / Singapore 0410***



2017–ongoing

Acrylic on 304 stainless steel

Collection of the artist

Part of *Eternal Returns*, this work belongs to a growing collection of addresses of homes that have been demolished, a familiar occurrence in Singapore due to the widespread desire for residential upgrading. Collated through open calls on Instagram and archival research, the first presentation of the project, in the format of painted name cards, featured 15 addresses of Singapore's pioneer visual artists. Ho Ho Ying (1935–2022) was a Singaporean modern artist known for merging Chinese ink painting and abstract expressionism. In 1964, Ho co-founded the Modern Art Society in Singapore.

2018

UV print on unprimed canvas

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Foreign Affairs is a series of seemingly banal photographs of back doors to embassies encountered by the artist during his travels. These back doors mark the threshold of the exceptional space of the embassy, a physical manifestation and limit to the mutual recognition between states of their respective sovereignty and security.

2020

Screenprint and acrylic on linen

Collection of the artist

While on residency at STPI (Singapore Tyler Print Institute) in 2020, Heman Chong read and then redacted John le Carré's first book, *Call for the Dead*. Le Carré was the pseudonym of David Cornwell who had been employed by Britain's domestic intelligence service, MI5, and its foreign intelligence service, MI6, when he wrote the book. Erasing everything except for its verbs, Chong's *Call for the Dead* leaves us only with a sense of something having happened and the awareness that the text holds secrets not meant for us.

Deleted Scenes (0)



2008

Photographic collage on acid-free paper

Commissioned by Thyssen-Bornemisza Art
Contemporary TBA21

Collection of the artist

The images in *Deleted Scenes (0)* began as everyday snapshots taken on Chong's phone. Redacted and stripped of context and content, they become ghostly voids, only recalled by the artist.

Secrets and Lies (The Impossibility of Reconstitutions)



2012

326 novels within the espionage genre, deconstructed via a paper shredder

Collection of MGSR Collection

Recreated with permission 2025

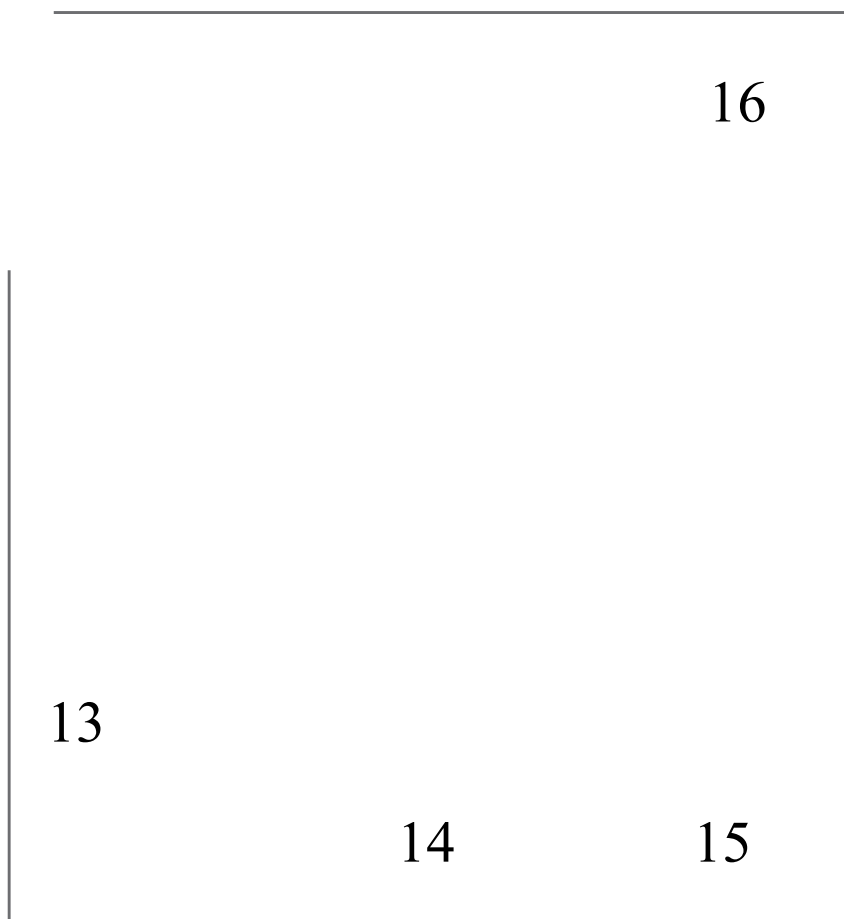
Comprising 326 spy and espionage novels shredded by the artist, the work's deconstructed form—reduced to individual lines of text—is not intended as an act of destruction but as a rearrangement of meaning that reflects the undercover and cryptic nature of their original narratives.

Part 4

Journeys



Passages of time, narrative, landscape and flights of fancy.



Works On Paper #1: Notes on Roads, Trips, and other Slips and Falls



2024—ongoing

Site-specific wall installation involving imaginary film posters and printed posters

Collection of the artist

Posters for an imaginary underground film festival of pirated feature films, produced using film stills that are themselves appropriations of low-resolution online images. In this fantasy festival, 365 films are screened over 365 days in private homes in Singapore. The location of each screening is only known an hour before it takes place via a Telegram channel.

2018

UV print on unprimed canvas

Collection of the artist

Abstracts From The Straits Times is a series based on journalistic headlines and accompanying photo documentation from *The Straits Times*, Singapore's daily newspaper. Through repetition and overlap, Chong effectively "submerges" and "blacks out" their messages, mirroring the glitch that enabled and was introduced during the making of the work.

2020

Site-specific wall installation involving 2,581 words written during an eight-hour walk across Singapore and printed posters

Collection of the artist

Commissioned for Singapore Art Museum's *Walking in the City* series—developed for the construction hoardings of the museum's former location during its renovation—*Writing While Walking And Other Stories* comprises 2,581 words written by Chong on his iPhone 11 during an eight-hour walk across Singapore.

With no defined route, time limit, or destination, Chong simply wrote and walked until he was tired, documenting the limits of his physical ability to produce. The resulting text, like his walk, has neither structure, plot, context nor punctuation, effectively capturing and compressing both activities.

2013–2024

Offset print postcards

550 pieces

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art
Development of *Perimeter Walk* supported by
M Art Foundation

Collection of the artist

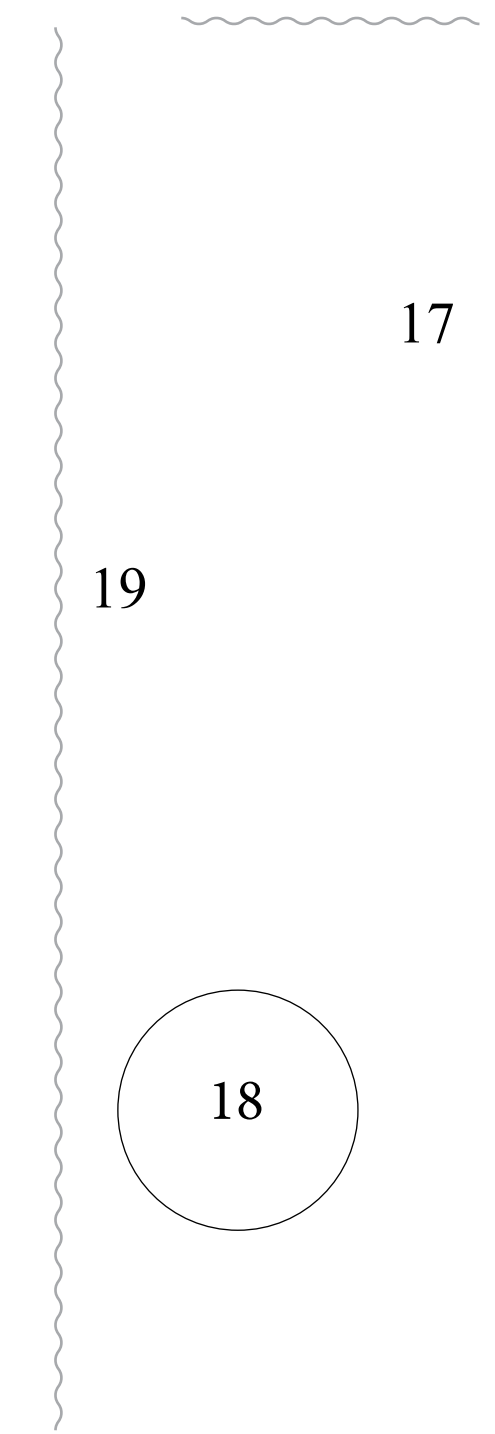
Consisting of 550 postcards that feature photographs taken by Chong as he walked the circumference of Singapore, *Perimeter Walk* captures the scenography of the island's edges. With images of sand walls, signs of border surveillance, tents, workers resting by the roadside and lush vegetation, the work contrasts with the slick and idealised branding of the city-state. Formatted as postcards, visitors are invited to partake in the circulation and consumption of these images by selecting and keeping them or sharing with others.

Part 5

Futures



The future is a construct and a horizon.



2004–2010

1,001 offset prints with matt lamination

Commissioned by NUS Museum

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Presenting 1,001 photographs captured in Singapore between 2004 and 2010, arranged across seven decades of calendar pages, the artwork projects these paradoxically emptied images of public spaces into the unknowable reaches of the future. This chronological order and design recall the strategies of 1960s conceptual art in the representation of sequential time through grid and repetition. Devoid of human presence and activity, the work seems reminiscent of the lockdowns of the recent pandemic as much as it might portend an eerily dystopian future.



2024

Acrylonitrile Butadiene Styrene (ABS)

Commissioned by UCCA Center for Contemporary Art

Collection of the artist

106B Depot Road is the address of the artist's home and studio, where he has lived and worked for 16 years. Public housing, the most common form of real estate available to Singapore's citizens, is regarded as a prized asset.

Produced from the artist's memory and description rather than architectural plans, and further translated into a built model, this reconstruction may be said to be as accurate in its realisation as the potential and projected returns of actual property.



2018/2025

UV print on fire retardant polyester cloth made into a curtain

Collection of the artist

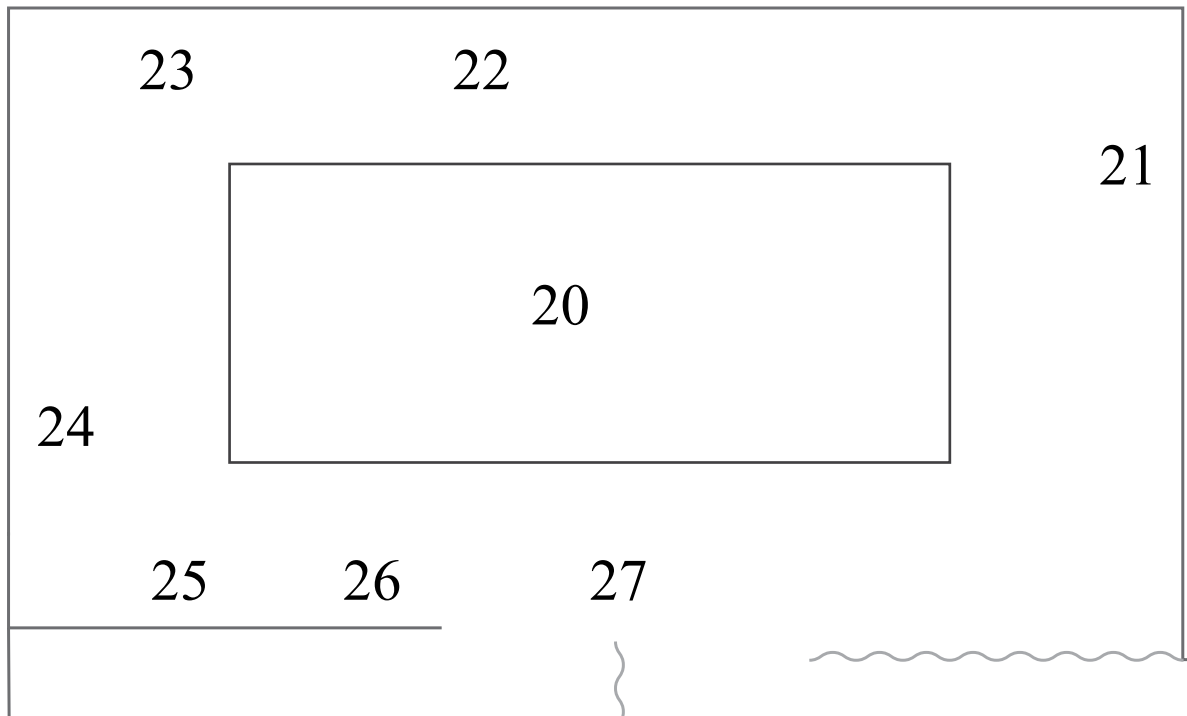
Foreign Affairs is a series of seemingly banal photographs of back doors to embassies encountered by the artist during his travels. These back doors mark the threshold of the exceptional space of the embassy, a physical manifestation and limit of the mutual recognition between states of their respective sovereignty and security.

Part 6

Findings



Of research and discoveries, simply found everyday.



Collection of the artist

A sculptural project initiated in 2003, *Stacks* is an annual and ongoing series, with each iteration developed over the course of a year that also acknowledges the rhythm of this chronological threshold. Consisting of books and glasses Chong read and used in the previous year—familiar and ordinary domestic objects, yet personally meaningful—each “stack” acts as both punctuation and a record of time passed.



***The Map and The Territory, Roadside Picnic,
The Maine Woods, The Last Thing He Wanted***

2012

4 books and 2 glasses

***The Savage Detectives, The New Life,
Small Memories, Corridor***

2013

4 books and 8 glasses

***Ministry of Moral Panic, Noli Me Tangere (Touch Me Not),
The Waves, The Left Hand of Darkness***

2014

4 books and 4 glasses

***Alif the Unseen, Elizabeth Costello A Personal Anthology,
Deliverance***

2015

4 books and 3 glasses

***Hemingway on Fishing, The Crimson Petal and the White,
Loneliness, The Petrified Planet***

2016

4 books and 4 glasses

***The Book of Other People, Extraordinary Tales,
Fear of Writing, Man Vu Mal Dit***



2017

4 books and 4 glasses

Summer of Hate, Foe, The Road, The Bluest Eye

2018

4 books and 4 glasses

***Apple & Knife, The Lovely Bones, How to buy real estate
overseas, Real Estate in Corporate Strategy***

2019

4 books and 3 glasses

***The Childhood of Jesus, Summer,
Cowboy Graves, The Flame Alphabet***

2020

4 books and 6 glasses

***Severance, Burntcoat, Wish You Were Here,
Our Country Friends***

2021

4 books and 3 glasses



***The White Book, Miles from Nowhere,
Assembly, Intimations***

2022

4 books and 3 glasses

***Fake Accounts, Beauty and Sadness,
The Besieged City, The Secret of Evil***

2023

4 books and 4 glasses

***The Information, The Information,
Breasts And Eggs, Metropolitan Stories***

2024

4 books and 3 glasses

2024—ongoing

An image archive that unfolds into videos, postcards and other objects

Dimensions variable

Collection of Mara Coson

Drawn to the presence of books, libraries and writings in paintings, *Oleanders* compiles the artist's findings while he wandered intensively through the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York over three days in March 2023. The title appropriates a still-life painting by Vincent van Gogh (1853–1890) from 1888, featuring pink oleanders in full bloom beside two books, one of which is Émile Zola's novel *La Joie de Vivre* (1884). Van Gogh included Zola's name and the title of the book in his painting—an appropriation that mirrors Chong's own appropriation from the Met.

***THIS PAVILION IS STRICTLY FOR
COMMUNITY BONDING ACTIVITIES ONLY***



2015

Vinyl letters, aluminium plate and gloss lamination

Collection of the artist

A replica of an existing sign installed in a public pavilion along Depot Road.

The Singapore Flag



2015

Site-specific wall installation, appropriated text

Materials and dimensions variable

Commissioned by Valentine Willie Fine Art

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

As with other national flags, the Singapore flag is a symbol of statehood that represents the ideals, beliefs and values of the nation. As text, the artwork reproduces an official description of the flag, rendered in the same shade of red as the state flag, allowing the flag to be imagined rather than seen.

Oops! Something went wrong. We're working on getting it fixed as soon as we can



2015

Appropriated text, site-specific wall installation

Collection of the artist

A generic error message that pops up now and then, and for all sorts of reasons. Most of the time, it is due to a website or app hiccup that can be easily fixed by something simple, like refreshing the page or clearing the cache and cookies.

[uneasy music playing] (After Gardar Eide Einarsson) ↻

2025

Acrylic on canvas

This work appropriates a caption from an episode of *Ozark*, painted in the style of the Norwegian artist Gardar Eide Einarsson who was Chong's neighbour in Berlin in the year 2003.



UV print on unprimed canvas

Abstracts From *The Straits Times* is a series based on journalistic headlines and accompanying photo documentation from *The Straits Times*, Singapore's daily newspaper. Through repetition and overlap, Chong effectively "submerges" and "blacks out" their messages, mirroring the glitch that enabled and was introduced during the making of the work.

Everything (Wikipedia)



2016

Durational performance featuring readings
of Wikipedia via a mobile device

Commissioned by Rockbund Art Museum

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

Signifying the nature of knowledge production, validation and circulation in contemporary society, Wikipedia's "free encyclopaedia" is presented in an ever-changing recitation of its crowd-sourced content. Beginning with the Wikipedia page of the day, a performer reads entries aloud while navigating the platform's multitude of hyperlinks, leading to an apparently endless trove of information.

Part 7

Infrastructures



While historically and etymologically referring to what enables military movement, infrastructure today applies to everything from state projects, laws and protocols to networks and technology—speaking to the superstructure of everyday systems that define and shape the world.

Modernity and Beyond began as videos created as part of Chong's ongoing *Ambient Walking* YouTube channel, in which he records videos while walking. The two videos, each running for over an hour, were made in 2020 within the Singapore Art Museum's (SAM) former premises on Bras Basah Road—the St. Joseph's Institution and former Catholic High School buildings. At the time, Chong had been commissioned for the buildings' hoardings, erected due to SAM's renovation. Documenting the institution in preparation for its renovation, the videos present unembellished records of the historically significant aspects of artistic and cultural infrastructure. The title of the work also alludes to SAM's inaugural exhibition of the same name, *Modernity and Beyond: Themes in Southeast Asian Art* (1996).



28

2020

Video, 4k high definition, two-channels, 16:9, colour
and sound (stereo), 68 min

Collection of the artist

Part 8

Surfaces

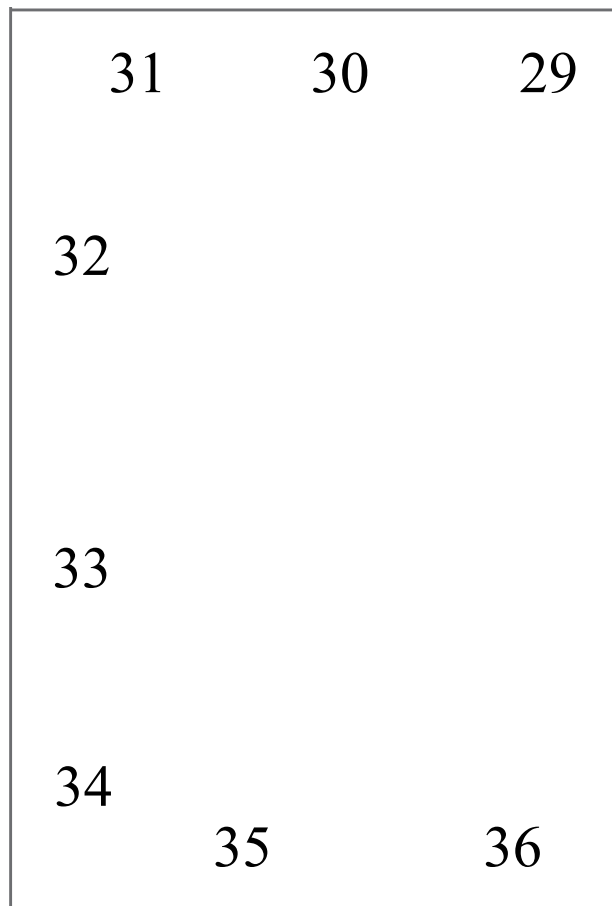


The surface of the painting is a recurrent index, interface, document and commodity.

The theorist Anna Kornbluh, writing about immediacy as a style of late capitalism and our current global political-economic landscape, notes: “A painting isn’t an efficient way to send a message or achieve a goal, but beholding its inefficient indirection can stimulate thought.”

Chong has painted since 2009, when he was commissioned to be part of a special exhibition at the Shanghai Contemporary Art Fair. His impulse to paint was inspired by a joke from art critic Jan Verwoert: “Why are conceptual artists painting again? Because they think it’s a good idea.” Chong’s painting practice is less about painting itself than about making a painting as a conceptual object.

Each painting series follows a defined set of rules, such as a specific canvas size or type of paint, et cetera. Chong’s paintings function as systems that reflect the materials and everyday parameters of his life. In turn, these paintings materialise the often-invisible systems and social relations that bestow value and meaning upon them as images and objects.



2020

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

SafeEntry is a national digital check-in system introduced in Singapore during COVID-19 to log individuals' visits to venues for contact-tracing purposes.

In 2019, the Singapore Art Museum (SAM) closed for renovations simultaneously employing the construction hoardings erected around its buildings as a space for artwork commissions. One of the two works Chong developed for the hoardings was *Safe Entry* that spanned the museum's front façade along Bras Basah Road. This installation featured the then-ubiquitous QR code pattern made familiar through contact-tracing, now enlarged, repeated and slightly distorted in the process, rendering it illegible for tracking.

A separate camera-readable QR code accompanying the mural linked directly to a video of Changi Airport Terminal 2 that Chong posted on 30 April 2020, the day before the terminal closed for renovations. The video serves as a historical document of Terminal 2, filmed on



16 April 2020, the 10th day of the Circuit Breaker, when international travel had come to a halt.

The hoarding design was subsequently translated onto canvas, as seen here in *Safe Entry Version 2.4*, intentionally painted in a flesh tone.

Emails from Strangers (kami coar)



2025

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the artist

A spam email received by the artist, forwarded as a painting.

From the series *Still Building*

2023—ongoing

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the artist

In the first painting of the series, *Still Building*, scattered name cards are painted over, hinting at unseen and lost connections. The series takes its title from *Still Building* (1992), a play by Haresh Sharma and performed by The Necessary Stage. The play follows three victims trapped in the rubble of Singapore's Hotel New World collapse in 1986 as they await rescue.

2024

Acrylic on polyester cotton

Collection of the artist

Where *Labyrinths (Libraries)* mobilises the grid, *The Book of Equators* uses the line. The series appropriates everyday polyester fabrics used in the manufacture of curtains and bed sheets. Chong chooses fabrics featuring motifs of tropical flora and fauna mass-produced in former British colonies, including Singapore. Mimicking lines of latitudes, Chong imposes these delineating lines over the patterns of the fabrics, critiquing their imperial imposition on the tropics, both in imagination and industry, as well as their role in middle-class consumption.



2025

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the artist

Labyrinths (Libraries) utilises the logic of the grid that speaks to an inherent human need to organise complexity. Echoing the ordered multiplicity of libraries, these paintings, with their oscillations of positive and negative spaces, suggest shifting perspectives of ideas and timescapes that a library can hold.

From the series *Cover (Versions)*

2025

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the artist

Wanderlust / Rebecca Solnit is part of an ongoing series *Cover (Versions)* (2009–) that marks the beginning of Chong's painting practice and sees him paint book covers for books he has not yet read but intends to. Over time, while keeping the same method and parameters for each painting, the paintings in this series have become more painterly.

Throughout the series, Chong has consistently worked with the same canvas size and a system of exaggerated brushstrokes and abstracted masses of colour. He has maintained the same brand of acrylic paint. Both canvas and paint are off-the-shelf purchases from Art Friend, an art supply store at Bras Basah Complex.

Things That Remain Unwritten #118



2018

Acrylic on canvas

Collection of the artist

Things That Remain Unwritten #118 is among Chong's most abstract paintings.



“Everything in the world began with a yes. One molecule said yes to another molecule and life was born. But before prehistory there was the prehistory of prehistory and there was the never and there was the yes. It was ever so. I do not know why, but I do know that the universe never began.”

From the series *The Hour of The Star*

2013

Acrylic on unprimed linen

Collection of the artist

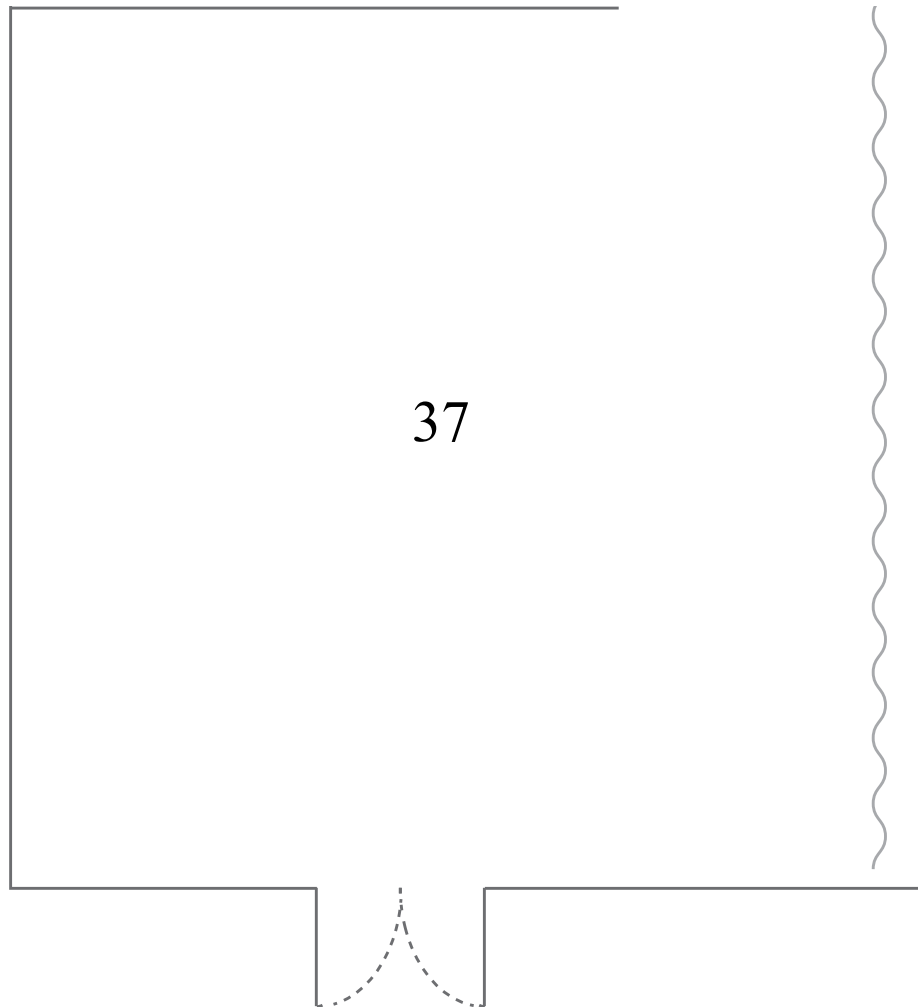
Chong’s largest painting series, *The Hour of The Star*, explores the materiality of the canvas. Working with unprimed linen, he embraces a difficult and comparatively slower process than working with primed canvas. The paintings mirror the time Chong has committed to reading *The Hour of The Star*, a 1977 novel by Clarice Lispector. Chong makes one painting in this series each year, with each title appropriating a single sentence from the book. This painting, the first in the series, features the opening sentence of the novel.

Part 9

Endings



When will I see you again?



*Monument to the people we've conveniently forgotten
(I hate you)*



2008

One million offset prints on 300-gsm paper

Commissioned by Singapore Biennale 2008

Collection of the artist

An underfoot monument, blacked-out name cards multiply to engulf the floor, introducing both texture and instability, even as its title fills the viewer with an overpowering sense of finality and the existential weight of unrealised connections.

Performance



A Short Story About Geometry

From the series *Memories*

2009

Durational performance involving an instructor, a participant and an approximately 500-word short story written by the artist

Commissoned by Musée de la danse and T:>Works

Collection of Singapore Art Museum

A short story written by Chong is taught by an instructor to an audience participant who agrees to commit it to memory, demonstrating this through an exact retelling within the session of instruction. Never published, the story exists only through oral transmission, requiring an exchange of time and effort to experience the work.

To participate, please send an email
with name and contact information to
hemanchong.memories@singaporeartmuseum.sg